



“A Precious Resource - Offered and Shared in Partnership”

Process for the Call of a Minister to a Resource Church and Resource Area Churches

Summary Overview – Issued on 15th June 2021

Introduction

This summary paper should be read in conjunction with the two policy documents you will have received outlining the Resource Church and Resource Area Model for Ministry and the Call Process. In commending these policies to you, we pray God will lead us to the challenge of transformation and new beginnings.

Background to the Model

Within the debate preceding the adoption of this model of ministry, we were asked to consider applying three principles: flexibility, encouragement, and partnership. These are embodied in this new policy and essentially, are the challenge for us all in living with and making the best use of the precious resource of the ministers we share. Flexibility is enabled and called for in the way that Resource Ministers, in partnership with the congregations, exercise their ministry – both within the Resource Church setting and in the Resource Area. Minister, elders, and members can both encourage and be encouraged through a partnership that recognises reality but is committed to offering and being the best, it can in the circumstances.

A Gospel Model: Inadequacy is more than enough

In John 6: 9: Andrew says to Jesus in the face of the challenge of feeding the large crowd: There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people? To state the obvious: it is a case of someone possessing little in the face of huge need.

A corporate sharing of gifts, and a willingness to use them to bear fruit, must lie at the very heart of this model of ministry. The Minister can no longer be expected to be “all things to all people,” taking on multiple roles such as caretaker, administrator, secretary, cleaner, property manager etc. (something that has increased significantly over time, in our smaller churches particularly).

It is incumbent upon Resource Churches to focus on how their sharing of gifts and talents can best serve the Area Churches and to work alongside them in discerning mission and outreach within their local context. It could be suggested that the United Reformed Church finds itself in a similar place: aware of much need but concluding that the resources we have are inadequate.

Roles and Expectations

Mutual love, sharing and generosity are the bedrock of the Christian Church. Nowhere in Scripture is the isolated church set forth as the model to follow but a network of interdependent churches held together by the love of and for Jesus as Lord. This resource model of ministry has at its core the intention and hope that interdependence will grow and flourish across Areas. This will lead in time to mutual resourcing and sharing. Area churches including the Resource Church will all have resources and gifts to share. The sign of an Area working well will be the mutual sharing of gifts. All churches can resource, but particular emphasis is laid upon, Resource Churches taking the lead in resource sharing across the Area. .

It is important to emphasise that if this model of ministry is to grow and flourish in its building up of God’s Kingdom, then we need to encourage the development of “united areas” with a shared missional focus and

common purpose. We will seek to address this with sensitivity, transparency, and clarity through the Call Process, as this is important for the establishment of cohesive partnership working across the Area.

Process for the Call of a Minister

Background

This document seeks to set out in detail the process to follow, and this summary should be read alongside the Call Process document.

The Call Process recognises the need for consistency of approach across the Synod but recognising that some flexibility may be required in managing parts of the process, depending particularly on the geographical location of some of the churches.

It is important to note that all church members will “have a voice” within the Call Process and will be asked to discern through a Combined Church Meeting and a vote of the Resource and Area Churches, whether a Call should be offered to a candidate.

When a vacancy arises, the Ordained Ministry and Churches Group (OMCG) will appoint an Interim Moderator. It will be for the Interim Moderator to establish a Call Group usually made up of four representatives from the Resource Church and one representative from each of the Area Churches. (These will usually be Elders) Some flexibility as to the make-up of the Call Group may be necessary depending on context. The Interim Moderator will oversee this as appropriate.

The Interim Moderator in conjunction with the Synod Moderator will arrange a meeting with the Call Group to:

- Explain the process of the movement of ministers,
- Discuss the mission needs of the Resource and Area churches
- Clarify any issues that may have arisen for the Call Group regarding the Call Process.
- Clarify any issues around Terms of Settlement and housing issues/manse provision, so details can be provided in the full profile.
- Consider whether any preliminary work around “transition issues” with the churches is required as part of preparing for the declaration of a vacancy. This issue may be of greater importance as more churches are potentially coming together to offer Area ministry.
- Agree the percentage of votes required by the Combined Church Meeting for a Call to be offered to the prospective candidate.

It is hoped that the detailed Call Process outlined in the policy document you have received will enable all churches to create the space and opportunity for prayerful discernment, and shared conversation.

In Conclusion

The gospel remains the same as always. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and for ever. But the church has to change according to the times it finds itself in, effectively employing the resources it has but willing to give all that it has to its mission and ministry. Our Synod Deployment and complementary Call Process Policy is an attempt at faithfulness in response to the latest challenges facing the United Reformed Church regarding deployment.

The Ordained Ministry and Churches Group endorsed by Synod Council, commend these two policy documents to you, praying that new and fruitful ministry and mission will grow as we continue to reform and transform in obedience to the Living Christ.