

The Whole People of God

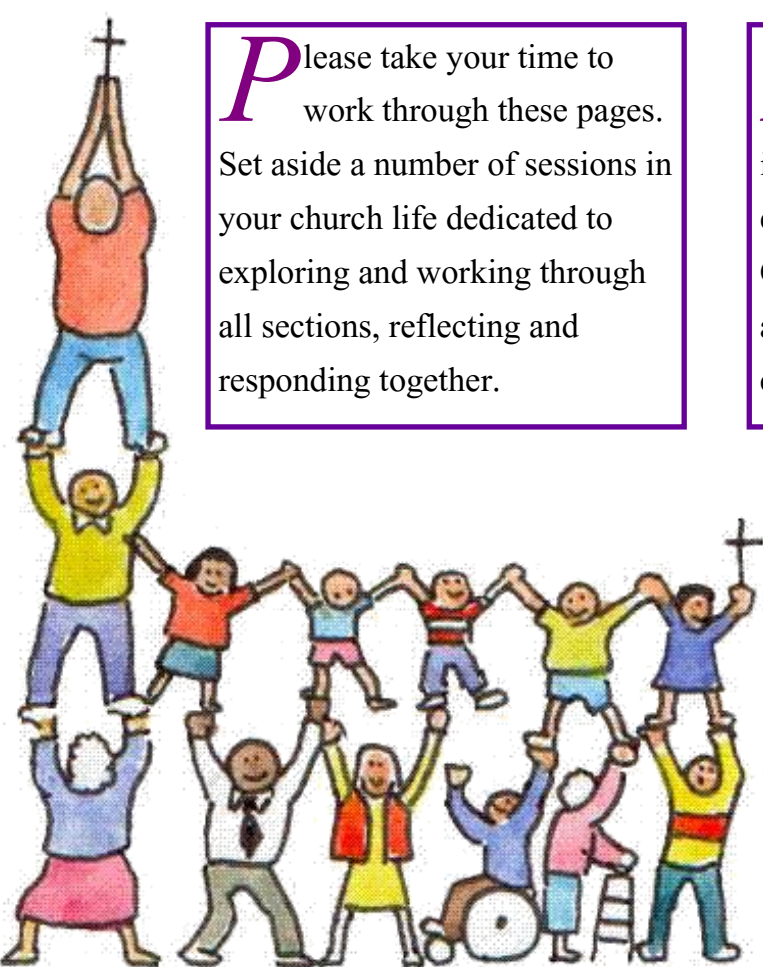
Called and Committed to God's Service

The Lord Jesus Christ continues ministry in and through the Church, the whole people of God called and committed to God's service and equipped by God for it. This service is given by worship, prayer, proclamation of the Gospel, and Christian witness, by mutual and outgoing care and responsibility, and by obedient discipleship in the whole of daily life, according to the gifts and opportunities given to each one. The preparation and strengthening of its members for such ministry and discipleship shall always be a major concern of the United Reformed Church.

The Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church (19)

What is this all about?

This resource has been created by the United Reformed Church National Synod of Wales to help the churches that make up the Synod, to explore how best we can be church today, tomorrow and into the future.



Please take your time to work through these pages. Set aside a number of sessions in your church life dedicated to exploring and working through all sections, reflecting and responding together.

All sections are relevant to everyone, if there are no children or young people in your church at present, or you are not an elder or lay preacher, or you do not know a CRCW, the sections will still help you and all of us to consider the future of the church.

In order to make the conversation creative and active, **please send your reflections and responses** on how we can best be the whole people of God serving the God's church together, to Jason Askew, the Synod Training and Development Officer at jason.askew.urcwailes@urc.org.uk

Church Members

You are a human being, made in God's image, with the breath of God giving you this amazing life, and gifts and talents to live it to the full. You are reconciled to God through Jesus. You are a child of God.

When folk talk of the need for ministry in the church, they are asking about you, your God given gifts, your talents, the part which you play in the life of the church, in bringing that Jesus effect, that reconciliation with God, to bear in your community.

As you read on, consider that image of God within you; feel the presence of the Holy Spirit within you.

What gifts do you have? What gifts would you like?

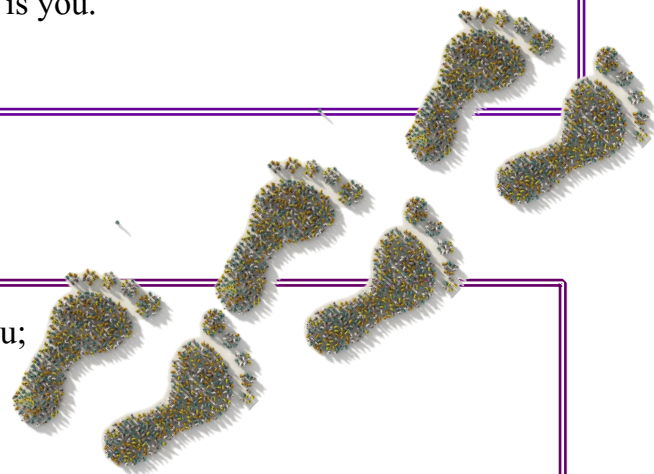
How can your experience of God help to strengthen the faith of fellow Christians and help to bring others to know that Jesus has filled that 'God shaped' hole in their lives?

How can we, you and I together, glorify and enjoy God for ever?

When people talk about 'the church', that is you.

When you read "the United Reformed Church," that is you.

Whenever it says somewhere "The National Synod of Wales" or just simply "the Synod" that is you. If someone refers to your local church by name, that is you.



Time to Reflect

Called and equipped by God, to be ambassadors of love, agents of grace and envoys of peace, together we bring God's Kingdom to bear in our world. We each have a ministry, a service, a part to play, as part of the body of Christ. Let us reflect on our part in God's church. Let us take time together to read what is below, to answer the questions and consider the next step on your journey of faith, your local church's journey together and our shared life as a Synod within this.

Building up the body (Ephesians 4:11-16)

So Christ gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of the one who is the head, that is, Christ. From Christ the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Discuss the following questions:

What does it mean for the church to be ‘*the body of Christ*’? *Look also at 1Cor 12:12-31; & Rom 12:1-13*

Paul writes: “*as each part does its work.*” What part can you play in building up the body?



Now you are the
body of Christ
and each of you is
a part of the body

1Cor 12:27

When a person is received into membership of a local church there is a prayer which tells of ministry in the church:

“God of grace, you call us to be your servant people, and gather us into the body of Christ.

We thank you for sending us N

to work with us in serving your kingdom.

Confirm us all in the power of your covenant

to live in your Spirit, to love each other

and to share the mind

of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.” Amen!



Time to Respond

Every member ministry is not a new idea, its basis is in our foundational scriptures, the Bible.

The whole people of God called to be a servant people, for the building up of the body of Christ.

- Discuss the ways you and others have served the church over the years.
- What is important to you about your faith?
- How can you encourage each other to grow in, and to live out, your faith?



Children & Young People

The Basis of Union, states “*The Lord Jesus Christ continues ministry in and through the Church, the whole people of God called and committed to his service and equipped by God for it.*” This whole people of God includes our children and young people who serve in so many different ways in our churches and witness to God’s saving love in Jesus in our communities.

When we talk about children’s and/or youth ministry, we think about how can we minister to them? But let us switch this around and say that ‘children’s ministry’ is their ministry within the church, how can they minister to us?

The ministry of our young people discuss the following questions:



- What gifts, abilities and experience do you see in the young people you know?
- Think about ways that children and young people can or do serve in the church?
- How can you encourage children and young people to play a bigger part in the life and ministry of the church?



Time to Reflect

Take a look at these real life examples of children’s ministry (click here or scan the QR Code) [Lundie Memorial Award Winners: January–March 2023 - United Reformed Church](#)



Now look overleaf at the 10 statements from the United Reformed Church Charter for Children. Discuss each statement and make notes of what these mean for your church fellowship.

United Reformed Church Charter for Children

We believe that:

1. Children are equal partners with adults in the life of the church.
2. The full diet of Christian worship is for children as well as adults.
3. Learning is for the whole church, adults and children.
4. Fellowship is for all – each belonging meaningfully to the rest.
5. Service is for children to give, as well as adults.
6. The call to evangelism comes to all God’s people of whatever age.
7. The Holy Spirit speaks powerfully through children as well as adults.
8. The discovery and development of gifts in children and adults is a key function of the church.
9. As a church community we must learn to do only those things in separate age groups which we cannot in all conscience do together.
10. The concept of the ‘Priesthood of all Believers’ includes children



“Out of the mouths of babes and infants you silence the enemy.” (Psalm 8:2)

Read 2 Chronicles 34 and discuss what it meant for the adults of the king's court when the 8 year old king Josiah walked the faithful path of devotion in God's way. At the age of 12 Josiah began to implement Godly reforms in the community, and at the age of 18 Josiah led the nation in repentance and a turning back to God. Would we go along with the ideas of such a young person?

How would you respond to that 8, 12, 18 year old in your fellowship that suggested changes in the life of the church?

Paul writes to Timothy about his ministry in the church and advises *“Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”* (1Tim 4: 12) What examples can you follow from young people connected with your church? Think about what Jesus says in Mark 10:13-16 and the need to be like children.



Time to Respond

Look at and work through the United Reformed Church “Where are the Children?” booklet which is available free following this link or QR Code [Where are the children? – United Reformed Church](#) Think of ways that you can encourage children and young people to take on ministries and responsibilities in your church. Now put it into action . . .





Eldership

When a member feels called to the ministry of eldership within the church, they may be elected by the membership, then ordained into that ministry for life, though serving for a term. Promises are made and prayers, the statement of purpose is read out, it includes this description of the ministry of eldership . . .

Eldership is a central ministry within the life of the church. Elders are those people whose gifts of oversight and leadership have been recognised from within the membership and who feel called by God to take a leading role within the life of the church.

***E**lders share with the minister in the pastoral oversight and leadership of the local church. To each is normally entrusted a group of members. In the elders' meeting they take counsel together for the whole congregation. They are responsible for making provision for Christian worship and education, for maintaining proper standards of membership, and for promoting witness and service to the community, mission at home and abroad, and the peace, unity and welfare of the Church. It is their duty to arrange for the proper maintenance of church buildings, and to ensure the oversight of church finances. Some elders represent the local church in the wider councils of the Church, and by virtue of their membership of these councils represent the whole Church to the local church."*

Called to *Serve*



Time to Reflect

Reflecting on the quote above from the URC service book, "service for the induction of elders"

- What do you think is the role of the eldership within the ministry of the church?
- Some elders are recognised within the church as Local Church Leaders. What is the role of a Local Leader?
- Both of our colleges, Northern Manchester and Westminster Cambridge deliver regular courses specially designed for elders. Might you go to one of these? Our Synod also provides training. Would you be interested?



What does the Bible say about Eldership?

Take a look at the following Bible passages:

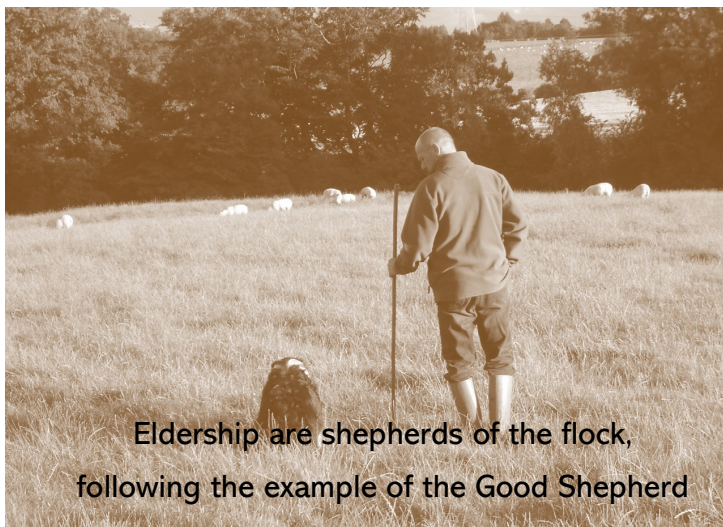
1Timothy 5:17-20; Titus 1:5-9; James 5:14-15; 1Peter 5:1-5

There is no ‘Dummies Guide to Being an Elder’ in the Bible. However, there is a good guide about the role of the eldership throughout the Scriptures. For example, looking through the passages above we discover that elders ought to be appointed in every place. These people should be of good standing and good character. They are to be shepherds of the flock and managers of God’s household. They are to direct the affairs of the church. They are to be people of prayer, indeed to have a prayer ministry.

Watching over the flock, they are eager to serve. Service is a key word, Elders are warned not to lord it over the people, but rather to be examples of the Christian life, perhaps as described in Philippians 2:1-11, a servant ministry just as Jesus’ ministry is. Furthermore, elders are accountable to the members. They are to be trustworthy with the Gospel and sound in their doctrine.

As with all service in the church we are not , for example, a fully formed elder at ordination, but we grow and learn and develop into the role, in life-long learning.

Take time to discuss the importance of Elders in your church. How might your church support and encourage your elders?



Eldership are shepherds of the flock,
following the example of the Good Shepherd

A prayer for those considering eldership

Loving God, guide me now as I seek to find your way for me. Create in me a renewed dedication to your service. Set before me the example of Christ Jesus. Fill me with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. This I pray, trusting in your grace.

Amen



Time to Respond

- Pray for the elders in your church, giving thanks for their commitment and ministry.
- Do you know someone in your church who has the right qualities to become an elder?
- Is God calling you to the ministry of eldership?



Preachers and worship leaders

The worship of the local church is an expression of the worship of the whole people of God. In order that this may be clearly seen, the United Reformed Church shall . . . provide for the training of suitable people, members of the United Reformed Church, to be preachers and worship leaders.

Some have formal training and accreditation others have an informal local recognition. The sense of the words in the Commissioning service for Lay Preachers can be understood for all preachers and worship leaders, when it recognises that this ministry in the church is vital to enable all God's people in their discipleship and to build up the body of Christ.

The Preacher . . .

has a real sense of calling and commitment to preach the Word of God.

has a good grasp of the Gospel to be proclaimed.

is in sympathy with the Basis of Union and the ethos of the United Reformed Church.

shows a willingness to use the opportunities for initial training, and to continue that training throughout their lay-preaching ministry.

shows a willingness to lead worship regularly as far as the demands of the other areas of their lives allow, whilst bearing in mind the need to take an active part in the life and work of their own church.

has the ability to reflect, in worship, the experiences of their own world of work and leisure.

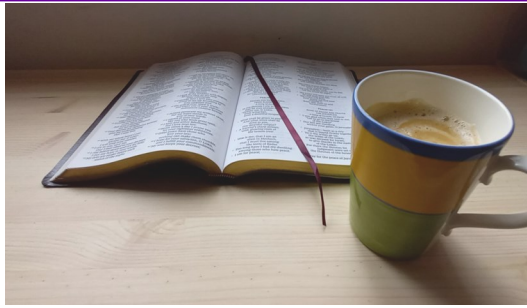
shows a willingness to become involved in forms of 'team ministry'



Time to Reflect

Consider the following questions:

- How can you encourage someone in your congregation who appears to have the gifts for this calling to discern their call to this ministry?
- How can the church support, encourage and enable preachers and worship leaders in their ministry?
- How can preachers and worship leaders develop and nurture their gifts and skills?



What does the preacher worship leader do?

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth. (2Timothy 2:15)

Search the Bible for what a preacher/worship leader is? Have another look in the Bible for a manual of how to preach and lead worship. You will find neither. However, what you will find is sermons, Jesus' sermons, Peter's sermons, Paul's sermons, and the occurrences of other preachers, bringing the Word of God to bear into their situation. You will find examples of worship leaders, from temple priests to wilderness prophets. Read through, or listen to:

Peter's first sermon (Acts 2:14-36) Paul's sermon (Acts 13:16-41)

What is the content of these sermons? Which bit connected with you most in each sermon?

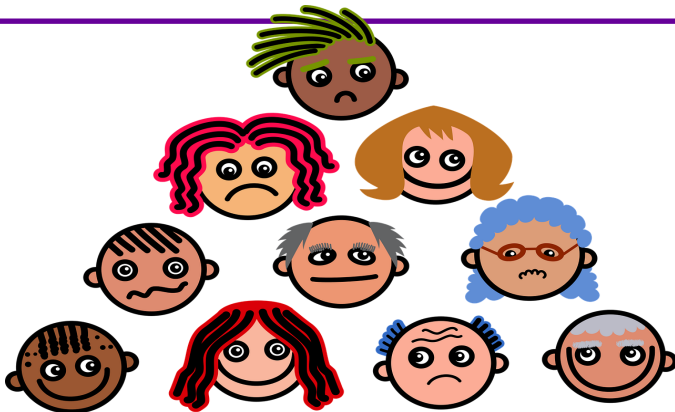
What can we learn about preaching from these sermons?

Psalm 130 (a song of approach) Psalm 145 (Praise for God's goodness)

How might this inspire our worship? What can we learn about worship from this?

Which bit spoke to your heart?

"... we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts." (1Thess 2:4).



Guess which one is the potential preacher?

A prayer for inspiration

Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of your presence, open the mind of God to us. That in your light we may see light and in your strength we may be strong.

Amen!



Time to Respond

- Pray for the preachers/worship leaders who you know.
- How can we encourage new worship leaders & preachers in our churches?
- What qualities, gifts and skills should a worship leader/preacher have?



Church Related Community Workers

Some are called to the Ministry of church related community work . . . Church Related Community Workers are commissioned to care for, to challenge and to pray for the community, to discern with others God's will for the well-being of the community, and to endeavour to enable the church to live out its calling to proclaim the love and mercy of God through working with others in both church and community for peace and justice in the world.

Church related community work . . .

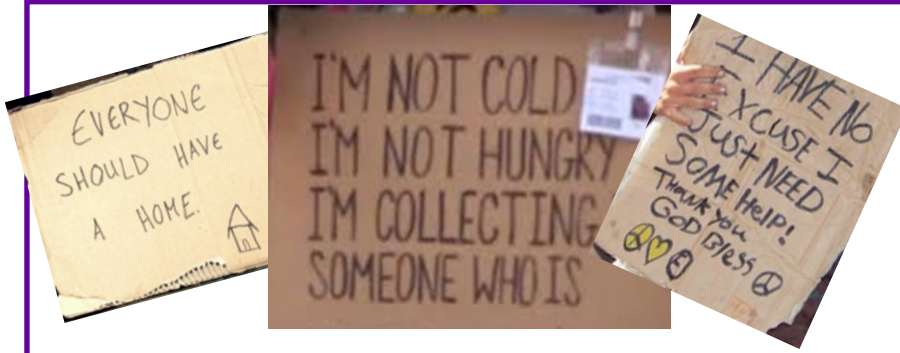
- *recognises where the Gospel is lived out by people and communities, even if they do not use the name of God*
- *involves commitment to justice and peace and is not afraid of costly involvement with people*
- *often happens among people who are disadvantaged, for example by poverty, poor health, limited education and job opportunities and broken social networks*
- *involves working with individuals and community groups, residents' and housing associations, schools, voluntary and statutory organisations*
- *challenges the church to engage with, and to reflect theologically, on local community work so that community development goals are brought into its own life – its order, outreach, worship, mission and ministry*



Time to Reflect

Our CRCW's seek to take the church out to the community and work to share the Good News in the community through community action.

- How can this be done effectively?
- How can this ministry be seen as connected to the church?
- How can this be sustained?



What the Bible has to say . . .

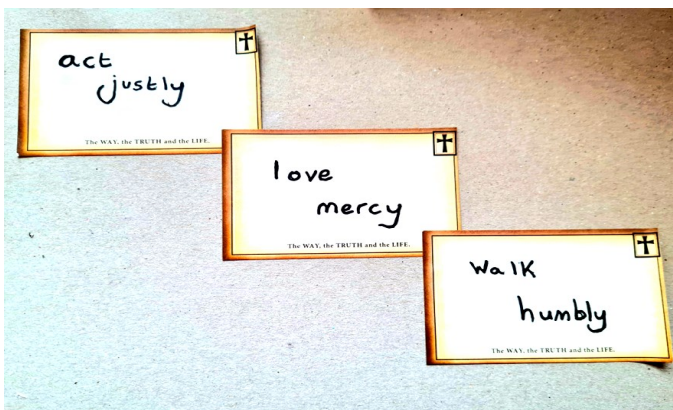
The kingdom of God has to have a positive impact in our world. From the commandments and the declaration of the Old Testament prophets, to the actions of Jesus in the Gospels, and the teachings in the Epistles, God's people have been, and are, called to ways of justice, righteousness and kindness.

“The Lord Almighty declares: Make just and faithful judgements; show kindness and compassion to the other! Don't oppress the widow, the orphan, the stranger, and the poor; don't plan evil against each other! (Zechariah 7:9-10)

When you harvest your land's produce, you must not harvest all the way to the edge of your field; and don't gather up every remaining bit of your harvest. Also do not pick your vineyard clean or gather up all the grapes that have fallen there. Leave these items for the poor and the immigrant; I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 19:9-10)

Discuss what these two passages mean for your church today.

Read Philippians 2:1-11 What does it mean for us to have the same mind and therefore actions as Jesus?



Michah 6:8

A prayer for help

Loving God, bless all our CRCWs and help us to be supportive and inspired by their ministry.

through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen!



Time to Respond

- Talk to, or find out more about the ministry of CRCWs.
- How can your community develop your local church ministry?
- Are there ways that more of you can be bridges and links between the church and the people who live and work in our immediate vicinity?



Ministers of the Word and Sacraments

Some people feel called to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. This call is thoroughly tested through the councils of the church and at the induction service of the minister, along with the promise to live a life that is holy and committed to the service of God's kingdom.

Promises are made:

Do you promise to fulfil the duties of your charge faithfully, to lead the church in worship, to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, to take your part in the councils of the Church, and to give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world?

This ministry takes place alongside the elders of the local churches. In the past 50 years this ministry has changed dramatically. The most obvious change being the number of local churches in which the ministers of the Word and Sacraments faithfully fulfil the duties to which they have been called. Also, there are now many different ways that these duties can be performed, for example as a stipendiary, a non-stipendiary, a NSM 2,3,4, Transition Ministry, Special Category Ministry, Pioneer Ministry, evangelists, enablers, Synod roles, and others. This, however, is not the first time that ministry has changed, it has always changed and adapted according to the context in which the church lives. Though the faithful duties remain the same the way in which these are fulfilled changes.



Time to Reflect

Reflecting on the duties listed above in the *Promises made* by Ministers of the Word and Sacraments, consider and discuss the following:

- how can these duties be fulfilled when a minister has many churches?
- how can the minister and the elders be more of a team ministry in order to fulfil the witness and mission in each community?
- What deployment alternatives are there to ministers having more churches?

What does the Bible tell us?



The gifts Jesus gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,
(Ephesians 4:11-12)

Ministers of the Word and Sacraments are part of the eldership team, sometimes called ‘teaching elders’, but we know that the calling of Ministers is more than teaching. In Jeremiah, a glimmer of hope is given to God’s people when they are told, “*will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding*” (Jer 3:15), there is a pastoral role, a sacramental role, and within those roles is the call to be a faithful preacher of God’s word, “*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.*” (2Tim 2:15).

How best can a minister play an active part in the eldership teams of 6 churches?

**I have
come
not to be
served, but
to serve . . .**



A prayer for ministry
Gracious God, abide with our ministers and strengthen the gifts you have given them that the ministry and mission of the whole people of God may bear good fruit!
In Jesus’ name, Amen!



Time to Respond

- What are your expectations of a Minister of the Word and Sacraments?
- How can we develop this ministry for the 21st Century?
- How can churches better share ministers among them?

The Whole People of God Looking to the Future

The priority of the church is to equip our members, our children and young people, our elders, our lay preachers, our ministers of the word and sacraments and our church related community workers to be able to work together in the service of God's kingdom, glorifying and enjoying God for ever



URC Numbers in Wales

- 81 churches
- 1700+ members
- 250+ elders
- 50+ lay preachers
- 900+ children & young people
- 1 CRCW
- 13 ministers of the word and sacraments

Our Buildings

- We meet in 81 different buildings
- 63 buildings are URC
- 18 buildings are partner denominations
- The buildings are in particular places spread far and wide across the nation
- They are a resource for our witness in the individual communities

Our Ministers of the word and sacraments

Due to less people training for ministry will likely be 9 by 2030

Servants of the Gospel

We have 1700+ members committed to serve God and his church



Time to Reflect

- How can we best be church in our communities?
- How can we all grow in our faith and discipleship?
- What can be our realistic expectations of our ministers of the word and sacraments?
- 9 ministers shared across 81 churches . . . What is the best way to use this valuable resource alongside all our members?

Hearing the word of God . . .

On meeting someone for the first time, once we have got names, where you live and the weather out of the way, the next question is almost inevitably “So, err, what do you do then?” Imagine the response if you said, “I am an encourager” or “I am a sharer” or “I am a kindness showing person” or maybe even “I speak God’s message” or “I visit sick people and pray with them” or “I lead worship”. Paul wrote to the church in Rome:

“ We have many parts in the one body, and all these parts have different functions. In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined to each other as different parts of one body. So we are to use our different gifts in accordance with the grace that God has given us. If our gift is to speak God's message, we should do it according to the faith that we have; if it is to serve, we should serve; if it is to teach, we should teach; if it is to encourage others, we should do so. Whoever shares with others should do it generously; whoever has authority should work hard; whoever shows kindness to others should do it cheerfully. Love must be completely sincere (Romans 13:4-9)

Talk to each other about what you do and what you would like to do to build up the church.

Discuss and pray for more gifts and skills to be shared in your church and your region.



Let us pray . . .

Loving God, we worship you alone and it is our hearts desire to see your kingdom come in our midst. Renew us O Holy Spirit. Equip us with the gifts that are needed at this present time. Encourage each one of us in our discipleship and service. Enable us, as church together, to bear the fruits of the Spirit and to witness to the Good News of Jesus. Indeed may we see thee more clearly, love thee more dearly and follow thee more nearly, each and every day. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen



Time to Respond

In the light of all your reading and reflection about the ministry of the whole people of God, write down your answer to the following questions and email them to jason.askew.urcwales@urc.org.uk

- What is the next step for your church?
- What is the next step for you?
- What is the next step for our Synod?