

“An Introductory Course on the United Reformed Church”

AIM: The course seeks to explore the culture and heritage of the URC, particularly its worship, structure and organization and view of ministry. It aims to help students understand the traditions of the church to which they belong and serve and is suitable for any who wish to find out more about the URC, especially those who are in or aspiring towards some form of recognized ministry.

The course covers the following topics

Session 1 (Worship)

Session 2 (Structures)

Session 3 (History) (with contemporary issues very much in mind)

Session 4 (Ministry) (with students reflecting on their own vocation/aspirations):

There are also two sessions on study skills which candidates for ministry of Word and sacraments or CRCW ministry are required to undertake.

Who *needs* to do the course? Who *may* do it?

Candidates for the ministry of Word and sacraments/CRCW ministry are *required* by the denomination to complete this course before they start their college-based training.

Local Church Leaders in the Southern Synod are required by the Synod’s current Local Church Leaders Policy (as well as the training policy it superseded) to undertake the course. However, they do not have to do all the work that ministerial candidates do.

Nationally accredited lay preachers from other denominations (e.g. Methodist Local Preachers, Anglican Lay Readers) need to do the Introductory Course in order to gain Assembly Accreditation as Lay Preachers.

Others are welcome to do the course. Several Church Secretaries and elders have taken part in courses run in previous years.

Students meet as a tutorial group and have to submit written work before tutorials. These are not formally marked (i.e. no grade given) but enable the tutor to gauge students' development in understanding and to discern how to make the best use of time at tutorials. The tutorials will be spread over several months in order to allow time for students to prepare their written assignments.

[Arrangements are made on an *ad hoc* basis according to need. Typically the course is run during the period May-September each year to enable ministerial candidates accepted for training to complete it before they begin their college-based training. Those with an interest in undertaking the course in the future should register their interest with the Development Officer. It is expected that the course will be run in 2014.]

“United, Reformed and the Church?” – Exploring United Reformed Church Identity

BACKGROUND: The need has been identified for a study day on URC identity which makes fewer demands on the students than the “Introductory Course on the United Reformed Church”. “Many people in contemporary Britain have no idea what the United Reformed Church is or what we stand for” (Study Guide based on the Statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church) Many URC members find it difficult to explain the URC to others or are unclear about what its central values are. If you are in that position, this event is for you.

AIM: To explore the following –
What is the United Reformed Church and what are its core values?
What does it or should it mean to be a member of the United Reformed Church? What are the values to which we wish to bear witness when engaging with contemporary society or working with ecumenical partners?

[Specimen programme below. Those with an interest in undertaking the course in the future should register their interest with the Development Officer. Those with an interest in undertaking the course in the future should register their interest with the Development Officer. It is hoped that the course will be run in 2014.]

“United, Reformed and the Church?” – Exploring United Reformed Church Identity

09.40 ARRIVALS and COFFEE

10.00 OPENING WORSHIP [& REFLECTION on its CONTENTS (15 mins)]

10.15 -11.05 “Our God, we are a church reformed, A church reforming still”: Introduction – Exploring what the URC says about its Identity (Statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the URC)

11.05 – 11.25 COFFEE

11.25 -12.20 “Thanks to God whose Word was spoken”:
Reformed Worship [35 mins + discussion time]

12.20 – 12.30 Comfort Break

12.30 – 13.15 “...in all things thee to see”: Reformed Spirituality [20 mins + discussion time]

13.15 – 14.00 LUNCH

14.00 – 15.10 “We are your people, Lord, by your grace”:
Being Church in the Reformed Tradition [42 mins + discussion time]
[Wriggle breaks before “Conciliarity”]

15.20 – 16.00 “Christ is made the sure foundation... binding all the church in one”: Being United [12 mins + 28 mins]

16.00 Closing Remarks

What further work do you need to do on this subject?

Resources and Further Training:

Books: Cornick, *Letting God be God*

[Would be willing to come to work with individual elderships wrestling with putting this into practice at local level]

[Introductory Course on the URC]

What challenges have you identified for your local congregation?

What do we need to pray about as we complete today.

HYMN: 567 Thy hand, O God, has guided