

GUIDELINES FOR THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH IN LOCAL ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIPS

INDUCTIONS

The Ecumenical Committee, at its meeting in January 1997, was asked for guidance on the following question.

What does the United Reformed Church require a minister of another church to assent to when being inducted into a Local Ecumenical Partnership involving the United Reformed Church?

The committee would like to rephrase the question,

What does the United Reformed Church have to offer to an induction service in a Local Ecumenical Partnership where the minister being inducted is not from the United Reformed Church?

1. That this minister has, to some extent, been **called** by the local church to exercise ministry there is an example of corporate discernment by the whole people of God. Something more than a welcome service is therefore appropriate. Our expectation that the local church would hear the minister make a simple statement of faith, affirm the authority of the Bible, commit him/herself to a holy life, and make a public commitment to the ecumenical pilgrimage, is an offering we have to make to a service of induction. All these may be covered by the custom of the church providing the minister. Our practice of briefly telling the story of how the minister came to be called to that church is also a valuable opportunity for transparency in church affairs.
2. That the minister intends to **share ministry** with the members of the Elders' Meeting and intends to respect the ministry of the whole people of God which is exercised, for example, through some kind of Church Meeting is important to our understanding of the Church. The question 'Will you promise to exercise your ministry in accordance with the constitution?' may suffice.

In most cases, the induction will largely follow the usual form for the church to which the minister belongs and therefore these United Reformed Church offerings would be part of the ecumenical planning of the service. Their inclusion will depend on the other churches being flexible in the use of their usual induction/welcome service. When a United Reformed Church minister is being inducted to an ecumenical situation, the United Reformed Church must, in turn, be willing to adapt its service to the requirements/practices of the other churches.

As far as the *Statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church* is concerned, the committee suggests that the *Statement* be read to the minister before the service, in the presence of all those sharing in the leading of it and then, in the service, the question be put: 'Will you respect the *Statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church* as you exercise your ministry in this place?'¹

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¹ A brief outline of what each denomination formally requires at an induction is contained in a paper from the Group for Local Unity of Churches Together in England. See [03.07 Induction of Ministers](#).