

## **Wheatley United Reformed Church.**

### **Election of Elders.**

#### **1. Introduction.**

1.1 In the United Reformed Church, the office of Elder within a local congregation is a significant ministry. Elders share responsibility, with the Minister of the Word and Sacraments (where possible), for the spiritual oversight of the congregation.

1.2 The elders' meeting is intended to be a distinctive and vital part of every URC congregation with the Elders collectively possessing the abilities, skills and spiritual gifts of leadership to serve the local church actively and creatively as it seeks to respond to the needs and circumstances of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

1.3 At its best, the elders' meeting is at the heart of every local congregation, providing impetus and positive influence on the mission, witness and service of the church. In short, Elders play an essential role in enabling the congregation to live fruitful lives as God's people.

#### **2. The ministry of the Elder.**

2.1 The URC recognises the ministry of the Elder is a calling rather than a job for which the church recruits personnel.

2.2 Elders are called into ministry by the church meeting which recognises that calling through the charisms (or gifts) they display in their Christian living and ordains and inducts them.

2.3 This is a ministry acknowledged by the whole URC and exercised on its behalf as well as on behalf of the local church.

2.4 However, the URC acknowledges that those who are in positions of trust within its life, and who show they have gifts appropriate for their office, should be properly equipped for the ministry to which they are called.

2.5 The Basis of Union and The Manual detail the role, promises and functions of an Elder: (a) Schedule A para. 23 (page 6) of The basis of Union sets out the ministry of Elder within the URC, (b) Schedule B (page 21) of The Basis of Union details the promise an Elder makes, with God's grace, at their ordination.

[https://urc.org.uk/images/the\\_manual/A\\_The\\_Basis\\_of\\_union\\_23\\_01\\_2020.pdf](https://urc.org.uk/images/the_manual/A_The_Basis_of_union_23_01_2020.pdf)

- Accept the office of Elder of the URC and to perform its duties faithfully;

- Pray for the minister/CRCW they will be working with (or interim moderator if no minister or CRCW is in place)
- Seek together with the minister/CRCW and each other, the will of God;
- Give due honour, consideration and encouragement;
- Build one another up in faith, hope and love;
- In dependence on God's grace, to be faithful in private and public worship;
- Live in the fellowship of the church and to share in its work;
- Give and serve, as God enables them, for the advancement of his kingdom throughout the world;
- Follow Christ and to seek to do and to bear his will all the days of their life.

(c) Schedule B (page 4) of the Manual details the functions of the elders' meeting which can be found at <https://urc.org.uk/images/the manual/B-The Manual - Section B-2019.pdf>

### **3. Why Safer Election and not Recruitment?**

3.1 The URC is committed to the safeguarding and protection of all within our church communities. The URC recognises the importance of carefully selecting, training and supporting all those with any responsibility within the Church.

3.2 Elders are ordained (prayerfully set apart to this public office in the church). They are inducted to serve in a particular congregation, in the case of Wheatley URC for three years. Elders share with the minister of the Word and Sacraments in the pastoral care and spiritual leadership of the local church. They also represent the local congregation in the wider councils of the church at synod, General Assembly and ecumenically.

3.3 As such the URC is required to have a process for those called to be elders comparable to the practice of safer recruitment for other roles within its life whilst acknowledging the need to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit by both the candidates and the church meeting. This paper sets out this process.

### **4. Safer Election of Elders in Wheatley URC.**

4.1 It is very strongly recommended that the step by step process below is followed by church meetings as the safest way to elect elders.

#### **4.1.1 Nominations:**

- During the month of **June**, the congregation will be invited to consider prayerfully who they think God may be calling to the role of Elder for the next three years.
- The only criterion is that the person nominated must be a member of Wheatley URC and preferably for longer than one year.
- Any who worship with us may be part of this process and along with church members may complete one of the slips to be found at the back of the church. This slip does not need the signature of the person being nominated, **but please speak**

**to them first and ask them to give at least a week before replying.** This to allow for a reasonable period of reflection. **All those who have been nominated should be given a copy of the leaflet 'They have asked me to be an Elder' available from the church secretary.**

- All who have been nominated are encouraged to have a conversation with the minister/interim moderator plus a serving elder including the responsibilities of an Elder with specific regard to:
  - \* The role within the local church including commitment and promises;
  - \* functions as laid out in the Basis of Union;
  - \* An overview of safeguarding procedures;
  - \* Responsibilities of trusteeship where an elder is going to be a trustee, (under 18s cannot act as trustees)
  - \* Where elders are unable to be a trustee because they are disqualified a risk assessment by the Synod Safeguarding Officer should be completed;
  - \* A Self-declaration form to be completed.
- The deadline for nominations will be the last Sunday in June.
- At their **July** meeting the Elders will prayerfully consider the names of all who have been nominated and bring these to the July Church Meeting, so that we may all pray for guidance during the summer in discerning those who are being called at this time. In this way the whole church with God's help will share in the prayerful discernment of our Elders.
- At our AGM in **September** church members will be invited to consider the names of those whose call to eldership has been discerned, and, after an opportunity for prayerful reflection, to approve those who have been discerned are called at this time. In the event of a vote, only church members present may do so.

4.1.2 Once elected the elder should:

- a) Be offered a suitable induction training programme, which might include 'elders training', with online material also available.
- b) Be given a copy of
  - URC Guidelines for the Conduct and Behaviour of Elders
  - The local church's safeguarding policy with knowledge of how to report concerns;
- c) Apply for a relevant DBS/PVG (as set out in paper T6 General Assembly 2021) through the normal channels. Where timing between election and ordination and/or induction does not allow a DBS self-declaration form should be completed;
- d) Safeguarding training is attended within 6 months of ordination and or induction.

Assembly Executive 2021/Wheatley URC May 2022.