



The United Reformed Church

A short history

The United Reformed Church was first formed in 1972 by a union of the Presbyterian Church of England and the majority of churches in the Congregational Church in England and Wales. It was joined later by the Re-formed Association of the Churches of Christ in 1981 and the Congregational Union of Scotland in 2000.

The oldest churches have a history going back to the 17th century and the Reformation. Other congregations were formed during the Evangelical Revival in the eighteenth century or by denominational expansion in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Respect for individual belief and a conviction that majorities are not always right mean that the Church is not dogmatic and embraces a wide variety of opinions.

The Church sets a high value on individual conscience and the ability of its members to reach common understanding. Local congregations hold meetings to govern their affairs, with a group of elected elders having day-to-day responsibility.

A General Assembly meets bi-annually (annually until 2008) and makes policy decisions after consultation and debate. All these meetings are held in the belief that the Holy Spirit guides members of the Church in their decision-making.

The formal leadership of the General Assembly is provided by two moderators who serve together for two years, in an honorary capacity. They are elected by members of the Assembly. One moderator is a lay person and the other a minister.

A permanent staff, led by the General Secretary, services the Assembly and its committees. There are thirteen synods, each having their own synod moderators and staff to support the work of local churches. These are usually grouped together under the pastoral care of a paid minister, a man or woman, although the Church also ordains unpaid ministers.

The United Reformed Church shares the Trinitarian tradition and creeds of all the major Christian denominations.

The Bible is taken to be the supreme authority for the Church, together with certain historic statements of the United Reformed Church.