

WESLEYAN REFORM UNION OF CHURCHES

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Who We Are

The "Wesleyan Reform Union of Churches" is a Union of about 100 self-governing local churches spread throughout the country that work together to reach the communities in which they are situated. The Union serves its churches through various committees, departments and personnel, and by encouraging and supporting individual churches in their effort to grow spiritually and numerically as they seek to fulfil the Great Commission.

Our Vision

Our vision is to enable God's people to grow in discipleship and evangelism, and see the Kingdom of God extended. As an umbrella body we seek to equip, support, resource and empower our churches to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the communities around them.

Our desire is to serve our churches, help mobilize our congregations, ministers and pastors to become more effective ambassadors of Christ, and advance the Great Commission in their villages, towns and cities.

History

The "Wesleyan Reform Union of Churches" was founded in 1849 by some local congregations/churches members of the Wesleyan Reform movement who, at that time, didn't want to join the Methodist Connexion. The Union was formed to give more freedom to local congregations to govern themselves, and to give more authority and value to local leadership. Today, the final authority in all matters is the Church Members meeting.

Where We Work

The Wesleyan Reform Union of Churches has individual churches as well as those who group themselves together into 'circuits' of geographical local churches for mutual support and encouragement. We currently have about 100 churches which are spread from Clydebank (Glasgow) in the North to St Just (five miles from Lands' End) in the South, as far East as Lowestoft in Suffolk and as far West as the Birmingham area. We do not, currently, have any churches in Wales or Northern Ireland. Each church is completely autonomous. Times and style of services are the decision of the local church and there is a wide variety throughout the Union.

Churches also have a number of varied activities, which are applicable to their particular situation, running throughout the week. These are not published in the Year Book but can be found on our Union web site (www.thewru.com) clicking on "locations" and then on the individual churches.

What we do

The "Wesleyan Reform Union" of Churches exists to serve Jesus Christ by serving our ministers, pastors and local churches. The Union is made up of individual and autonomous local churches but we share a common purpose; to fulfil Christ's great commission.

The aims of the Union are to extend God's love and encourage closer fellowship among the Churches of the Union, to promote unity of action in ways which best serve the Lord Jesus Christ and to encourage and equip churches in evangelism and discipleship in their local communities.

The Union has a number of departments whose role is to assist local churches in their various ministries, and give opportunities to pastors and laypeople to learn and network across the Union: *Young People's Department, Home Missions, Women of Action, and Theology and Training Department*. All these departments work in partnership with local churches, and provide resources and encouragement to our Churches of Union as they seek to reach the lost in our communities, villages and towns across the country.

How We Work

The governing body of the Union is the Annual Conference which meets in June (or occasionally, July) each year.

During the periods between the Annual Conference, decisions are made by our General Committee which is made up of (up to) 20 members elected by Conference each year and a number of ex-officio members. General Committee meet four times each year.

The members of our General Committee are sub-divided into smaller committees covering such areas as "Home Missions", "Overseas Missions", and "Christian Ethics and Social Action" (CESA). We also have a "Ministerial Committee", a "Local Preachers Fellowship", a "Women of Action" (WA), a "Young People's Department" (YPD), and "Theology and Training Department".

In addition to the above we have a "Management Committee" who meet between the General Committee meetings and deal with all matters (including finance) which are not covered by the above sub-committees. All decisions made by the Management Committee are taken to General Committee for either information or ratification – depending on the circumstances.

The Role of Clergy

Ministers or Pastors (the two titles are interchangeable) are appointed to our churches in one of the two ways:

Officially through the Ministerial Committee

- These are individuals who have applied to the Union for possible ministry. They have been interviewed by the Ministerial Committee and approved for introduction to one of our churches. The local church (or circuit) has the final say as to whether or not they wish to appoint a particular individual to be their minister. If a church does not feel that the candidate is for them, the Union will then seek to make an introduction to another church.
- Ministers on the official list will be prepared for ordination over a period of time through distance learning with training given by the Union Tutor. A minimum of three years membership of the Union will be required before Ordination will be considered.
- Although the Union does not run a pension scheme, contributions will be made by the Union to the pension savings of those who join the Union designated stakeholder arrangements.
- The Ministers Provident Society (MPS) exists to give financial support to retired ministers and their surviving spouses. An annual subscription is requested from all ministers on the official list.

Independently appointed by Churches

- These are Ministers (or Pastors) who have been appointed by the local church without reference to the Union Ministerial Committee. These may be individuals who have been appointed from within the church or those who have been approached from other sources and deemed to be suitable. Names will be placed on the list of ministers on application to the General Secretary by the local church. There will be opportunity for such independently appointed ministers to apply for formal recognition by the Union.

We are committed to supporting and encouraging all our ministers and will work with them regarding a change of situation if the need arises.. We will endeavour to link new ministers with a more experienced mentor for fellowship and guidance.

Our Missionaries

We have a number of missionaries whom we support with regular gifts. They come from a variety of backgrounds and they serve in different countries. In addition, there is a 'list of Associated

Mission personnel' which lists missionaries who are either retired or no longer are members of a Wesleyan Reform Church – these folk are also supported by the Union.

Finance

The finances necessary for the running of the Union are raised by an annual "Assessment" which churches are requested to pay per member per year. Other, smaller amounts of income are received from interest, sale of publications etc. Expenses include annual staff salaries (1 full time) and four part-time members of staff, staff travel, and support for local churches as well as general administrative expenses of running the Union.

Outreach

We believe that we have been called to be "salt and light" to the world around us. Reaching people and communities is the very heartbeat of the Wesleyan Reform Union of Churches. Our vision is to see the lost saved. As we think about the love of Jesus on the cross, the forgiveness of sins that is found in him, and the darkness in the world we become passionate about the gospel of Christ.

Jesus calls us to 'go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything He has commanded' (Matt. 28:19-20). The Union provides help and support to struggling churches that need to be revitalised. We are aware that our society is becoming more and more a multi-cultural society; our local churches need to be encouraged to work cross-culturally, and to engage in creative outreach initiatives.

If you're considering organising an outreach event, or you just need some outreach ideas or help, just contact the office.

Home Missions

The Wesleyan Reform Union of Churches is passionately committed to introducing people to Jesus Christ. Our mission is to tell the good news of Jesus and make disciples. We are here to share God's love for everyone, through a mixture of fun and more thought-provoking events for children, young people and adults. Consistent with our goal to serve, we have tools, resources, and information you can tap into. We always seek to inspire, encourage and work with our local churches as they strive to impact the lives of people in their communities.

We want to see every local church become a 'missionary station', and every church member equipped to serve like Jesus; to love and reach the lost, and to care for the poor and the needy.

Holding community outreach events is a good way to present the love of Christ and reach whole communities with the gospel. We know it can be difficult to mobilise individuals and members of the church to share their faith. We can come to you to meet with you and members of your church/congregation and help you with the planning and the running of your outreach event.

Availability of Help & Support

If you would like any information or help in your work and ministry, please get in touch. We would love to hear from you! We are here to inspire, train and encourage you as you seek to build the Kingdom of God in your community.

Communication

The Union publishes a bi-monthly magazine entitled "Contact". Each edition follows a different theme but also has an "around and about" section as well as points for prayer and forthcoming dates etc. We also send out by email on an occasional basis a document entitled "Excited about Mission" telling of evangelistic initiatives which have taken place, or are planned, in our churches. This is a real blessing and you are encouraged to ask to be put on the mailing list – please contact Andy Wilcock on doc@thewru.co.uk if you wish to receive it regularly.

Theology & Training Department

The goal of our Theology and Training Department is to help and enable all those involved in the local Church ministry to develop their knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith, and put it into practice.

Our heart's desire is to see our churches renewed and strengthened as they reach the lost in our communities. We would like to see all those involved in local church ministry i.e. volunteers, workers, preachers and pastors equipped for continuity and change.

We also want to invest in the future generation as we train younger leaders and challenge them to stir up the gift of God which is in them.

The Training Department will soon be able to offer a range of training through long distance learning, residential training days, seminars on a wide range of issues (including Children's and Youth Work, evangelism and discipleship), and give people opportunities to get involved in short-term mission at home and abroad.

Opportunities

We have a range of opportunities for engaging in Christian ministry, from Children's and Youth work to local preaching and full-time Pastoral Ministry. If you feel the Lord may be calling you to serve in any capacity we would be happy to explore with you and your local church or circuit the opportunities that may be available for you.

We now live in a fast changing and multicultural society, and the mission field is on our doorstep. We are happy to receive enquiries from Christians wanting to go into ministry; all you need is enthusiasm and a sense of God's call upon your life. We are happy to help you fulfil your call, and where possible, we will endeavour to facilitate training for you.

Important Dates

- Annual Conference is held in June or July each year. This is a three-day residential event where our business is discussed and decisions concerning the Union are made. Everyone is welcome to attend either as a delegate or a visitor.
- Half Yearly Meetings are held in November each year, and deal with business between Annual Conferences. Again, all are welcome to attend.
- Ministers Fraternal is a two day residential event held in September or October each year. This is where our ministers and pastors meet for prayer, fellowship, teaching and mutual encouragement. All ministers and pastors on the full and independently appointed lists are strongly encouraged to attend.
- Local Preachers Retreat is held in October each year. This is a day of teaching for all preachers within the Union and open to all.

Contacting us

The telephone number for Church House is 0114-272-1938 and the email addresses for members of staff are:

- General Secretary (Colin Braithwaite) gen.sec@thewru.co.uk
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- Union Tutor (Ady Rugeruzza) adyrugeruzza@hotmail.co.uk
- Union Safeguarding Officer (Marjorie Mottershaw) ruth.roberts6@btopenworld.com