

taken place with... Worship, Faith and Order Committee, Synod Moderators,
CYDO+ team, Discipleship Team Leaders, General

General Assembly 2023 passed the following resolutions:

- 1) General Assembly recognises the work of many people in local churches amongst children, young people and families as ministry and celebrates the gifts, time and energy that are shared to introduce and journey with children and young people in faith in Jesus. Local churches are warmly encouraged to commission these people to these key ministry roles.

CYWC believes this should encourage churches to recognise and support all the army of volunteers engaged in children's, youth and family ministry. The C&Y and CYDO+ team offer a range of training, resources and wider support to supplement and promote this. A sample service of commissioning, which may be used in conjunction with the Statement of the Nature, Faith and Order of the URC as appropriate, can be found here: www.urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Service-of-dedication-for-workers-children-and-young-people-and-the-church-family.pdf

- 2) General Assembly acknowledges the ministry of Children's, Youth and Family Leaders in local churches and invites Synods to work with the Children's and Youth Work Committee and Ministries Committee to develop appropriate schemes to offer accreditation and recognition of these roles.

CYWC believe this should enable local church employed workers and lead volunteers to be recognised beyond their local church, and more formally supported by and able to contribute to Synod children's, youth and family ministry. Yorkshire Synod have led the way in developing a scheme, and Synods are keen to ensure coherence and consistency with support from CYWC and the CYDO+ team in moving forwards. CYWC wishes to strongly encourage the employers of such workers to provide appropriate pastoral support and supervision, and hope such a scheme of Synod recognition with help enable this.

- 3) General Assembly is minded that there should be a formal ministry of URC Children's, Youth and/or Family Minister and asks the Children's and Youth Work Committee, the Ministries Committee and the Education and Learning Committee to consider what would be needed to introduce such a ministry and bring proposals to General Assembly 2024.

This resolution is the most radical. To bring proposals to General Assembly 2024 requires us to have many and varied conversations about the theological, practical, and financial aspects of the envisaged posts. The CYWC would like to take the opportunity to share findings from recent conversations, give details of conversations still to take place, and request further guidance with regards to their proposed direction of travel, so that work is focussed appropriately. That's the focus of the rest of this paper.

1. Theological considerations

This is the area in which we have developed our thinking and the proposals the most. At General Assembly 2023 we were instructed to engage in conversation with the Worship, Faith and Order Committee to ensure any proposals for new ministry posts lay within the theological understanding and polity of the denomination.

It may be helpful to summarise something of the varied recognised ministry posts within the denomination.

Ordained ministry

Stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministers of Word and Sacraments

Ministers are office holders, not employees. Their posts are Synod approved pastorates or other roles. They are under the Terms of Settlement which sets out terms and conditions for service and for stipendiary the Plan for Partnership which sets out remuneration, housing etc.

Ministers may be appointed to posts approved

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Option B supports a specific call to children's, youth and family ministry and identifies this as a ministry the church needs. It enables the URC to proceed relatively quickly, potentially with the first student ministers in training in Autumn 2025 and completing EM1 in 2029.

Questions the CYWC would like to hear Assembly Executive's view upon:

- Do you believe creating a new commissioned ministry, as per option B, is the correct direction of travel for the proposals coming to General Assembly in 2024?
 - How do you see this ministry being exercised fruitfully in local contexts?
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experience may fulfil these new posts, whilst also ensuring that pathways for those exploring this kind of ministry for the first time are also encouraged.

In due course, it may also be appropriate to develop a pathway to support those wishing to transition from Synod Recognised Children's, Youth and/or Family Minister to the denominational formal ministry.

These last two practical considerations will be explored amongst the CYDO+ team and other practitioners in this ministry.

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What is clear, of course, is that serious time and resources needs to be given to the process of nurturing vocation to this and other ministries.