

## Sample Letters

Below are three letters, which local churches and their trustees in England and Wales may want to adapt and use if applying for the registration of a church building for same-sex marriage.

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- 1) A letter from me to 'whom it may concern', as a formal record of the General Assembly's decision.
  
- 2) A sample letter from a Church Secretary to the Synod Trust Company, asking the Trust to apply for registration of the building.
  
- 3) A sample letter from the Synod Trust Company to the local Register Office, making the application.

Finally there is a letter from the General Register Office at Southport, confirming that the text of these three letters meets their requirements and concerns.

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You will see that these letters address the simplest case, of a URC church rather than an LEP, with no other congregation using the building, and the Synod Trust Company as trustee of the premises. Should your situation be more complex or unusual, you may wish to seek other advice before applying.

John Proctor, General Secretary  
August 2016

From the General Secretary,  
The Revd John Proctor

14<sup>th</sup> July 2016

To whom it may concern

I hereby certify, on the authority of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church that on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2016 at Southport the General Assembly passed Resolution 7, printed on pages 32-33 of the Assembly Reports, on the matter of same-sex marriage. The relevant parts of the resolution as follows:

...

**B. General Assembly declares that the Church Meeting of each Local Church of the United Reformed Church in England and Wales is the relevant governing authority for the purpose of giving consent for the trustees of its building to seek the registration of that building for religious marriage ceremonies of same sex couples, in accordance with the provisions of Section 26A(1) of the Marriage Act 1949 as amended by the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013.**

...

**E. The General Assembly recalls that the trusts on which Local Church buildings are commonly held empower the Church Meeting to direct in what ways such a building is or is not to be used for public worship and ancillary purposes.**

**F. The General Assembly authorises the General Secretary, the Clerk, or any Deputy General Secretary to sign and furnish a copy of this resolution (or a relevant extract) in the name of the Assembly, whenever such a copy may be required by law.**

Yours sincerely,



**LETTERHEAD OF ST AGATHA'S UNITED REFORMED CHURCH**  
**99 High St, Anytown.**

From the Church Secretary,  
Secretary's name ...

date

To the Secretary of [Name] Synod Trust Company

Dear Sir or Madam,

I hereby certify, on the authority of the Church Meeting of St Agatha's United Reformed Church that on [date, not before 9<sup>th</sup> July 2016] at Anytown the Church Meeting passed the following resolution on the matter of same-sex marriage. The Meeting expressly authorised me to write to the Synod Trust Company in these terms.

**1. As the governing authority of the United Reformed Church in relation to consent to marriages of same-sex couples in St Agatha's United Reformed Church, 99 High Street, Anytown, the Church Meeting resolves to give such consent.**

**2. The Church Meeting requests the trustee or trustees of the church building at St Agatha's United Reformed Church, 99 High Street, Anytown to apply for the [church building] [principal worship area of the church building] to be registered for the marriage of same-sex couples.**

I enclose

two copies of Form 78

one copy of Form 78A

a copy of the marriage service that we intend to use

a cheque for 64 pounds

[Optional: The Church Meeting further resolved on [date] to nominate Dr Carol Singer for appointment as Authorised Person for the marriage of same sex couples at St Agatha's United Reformed Church and I enclose the appropriate application paper for this purpose.]

Signed by the Church Secretary ...

## TRUST LETTERHEAD

From the Secretary of the Trust

date

Addressed to the local Register Office  
in whose area St Agatha's church building is situated

Dear Registrar,

### **St Agatha's United Reformed Church, Anytown: the marriage of same-sex couples**

I write as Secretary of the [Name] Synod Trust Company. The Company is Trustee of the buildings of St Agatha's United Reformed Church, 99 High Street, Anytown. In the name and with the authority of the Trustees, I hereby apply for this church building [or for the principal worship area of this church building] to be registered for same-sex marriage services.

I attach documents as follows:

- a) An excerpt minute of the United Reformed Church's General Assembly, indicating that on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2016 the Assembly declared that the relevant governing authority to give consent in this matter is the local Church Meeting.
- b) An excerpt minute of the Church Meeting of St Agatha's United Reformed Church, indicating that on [date, which must be after 9<sup>th</sup> July 2016] the Church Meeting gave appropriate consent.
- c) Two copies of Form 78, and one copy of Form 78A.
- d) A copy of the marriage service that the local church intends to use.
- e) A cheque for 64 pounds.

[Optional: I further enclose an application for the appointment of an Authorised Person for the marriage of same-sex couples at this church.]

Signed by the Trust Secretary

Reverend John Proctor  
The General Secretary  
The United Reformed Church  
86 Tavistock Place  
LONDON  
W1CH 9RT

## General Register Office

PO Box 476  
Southport  
PR8 2WJ

T: 0300 123 1837  
Fax: 0151 471 4406  
Text relay: 18001 0300 123 1837  
E: [GROcasework@gro.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:GROcasework@gro.gsi.gov.uk)  
Web: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

Our reference: **C34423/2015**

22nd August 2016

Dear Reverend Proctor,

Further to The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church that took place on the 9th July 2016 at Southport the General Assembly in which a resolution was passed on the matter of same-sex marriage at URC churches.

Following on from your General Assembly we have been in correspondence to outline the requirements for individual URC church congregations, in order to outline the requirements that they need to adhere to if they choose to make an application to register for same sex marriage at their church.

To clarify we would require the following:

\*\* A letter of consent from the someone in authority at the church who is acting on behalf of the congregation which sufficiently identifies whether the author is recognised by their religious organisation as competent to give consent on their behalf.

2 x Original Forms 78

1 x Original Form 78A ( please note this must be completed, signed & dated either on the same day but no later than 1 month from the completion of the Forms 78)

Forms are available here : <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/certificate-and-application-for-the-registration-of-a-place-of-religious-worship-for-the-solemnisation-of-marriages-form-78>

Full copy of intended Marriage Service which is intended to be used for the purpose of Same Sex Marriage. \* Assurance would be needed to confirm that during any Same Sex Marriage that females are referred to as 'wife/wife' & males as 'husband/husband'.

Payment of the statutory £64.00 application fee to the register office

Please note where building's already have persons appointed as Authorised Persons, they are currently only appointed to register Opposite Sex Marriages only, they will need to be reappointed if they also wish to register Marriages of Same Sex Couples, so if possible these too should be handed to the register office at the time of application.

However if required they can be submitted at a later date, however until Authorised Persons are formally reappointed by this office, any Same Sex Marriage would then have to be attended by staff from the local register office. (for your perusal I have attached a copy of the Authorised Person Form and you will see Section C, is the area to be ticked)

On the rare occasion when it is a new application to register a new build for both worship and marriage for both Opposite Sex & Same Sex Marriage Forms 76 and accompanying paperwork to support a new application will also need to be supplied.

\*\* All the 3 sample letters you have produced for review by this office are acceptable:

A letter from yourself, confirming that the relevant governing authority of the United Reformed Church in this matter is the local Church Meeting.

A sample letter from the Church Meeting to the Trustees, indicating that the Church Meeting has given consent, and asking the Trustees to apply for registration.

A sample letter from the Trustees to the local Register Office, applying for the building to be registered for this purpose.

Please ensure you quote our reference above in any further correspondence with this office

Yours sincerely

Paul Jackson  
Casework Team  
General Register Office