



Resolutions

Mission Council

Report on the work of Mission Council, 2018-20

Resolution 1

page 4

General Assembly gives final approval to the proposal that: There shall be one Moderator of General Assembly, serving for one year. This Moderator may be a minister (of word and sacraments or CRCW) or an elder. Each Synod may nominate one minister and one elder each year, but only one Moderator will be elected.

Resolution 2

page 4

General Assembly gives final approval to the proposal that: The name of Mission Council shall be changed to Assembly Executive.

Mission Council

Assembly 2018 Resolution 5: report on responses

Resolution 3

page 12

General Assembly gives final approval to its resolution to add a further question to Schedule B [of the Basis of Union] for elders as follows:

- Q: Do you promise as an elder of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, unity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always so far as you are able to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?
- A: By the grace of God I do, and all these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ministerial Disciplinary Process and Incapacity Procedure

The Clerk and General Secretary, for MIND (ministerial incapacity and discipline advisory group)

Resolution 4

page 15

General Assembly adopts the following amendments to the Basis of Union and Structure of the URC:

Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church

Schedule E, Paragraph 4 – delete the word ‘ministerial’ before ‘rights of membership’.

The Structure of the United Reformed Church

Paragraph 1(4) – Add heading ‘Definitions’ and reword:

- 1.(4) Unless otherwise expressly stated or clearly excluded by the context,
- (a) the expressions ‘Minister’, ‘Ministers’, ‘ministry’ and ‘Ministerial’ when used in the Structure shall refer to the ministry of Word and Sacrament;

- (b) the expression ‘the Disciplinary Process’ shall refer to the Process established by the General Assembly under paragraph 2(6)(xxi), but includes any process so established for similar purposes before the adoption of that provision;
- (c) the expression ‘the Incapacity Procedure’ shall refer to the Procedure established by the General Assembly under paragraph 2(6)(xxiii), but includes any process so established for similar purposes before the adoption of that provision.

Paragraph 2(1) – in function (ix), insert (subject to paragraph 2(7)(ii)) before ‘to suspend or remove names’.

Paragraph 2(4) – add to the duties of Moderators of Synods:

‘fulfil the responsibilities ascribed to the Moderator of Synod under the Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure’.

In the Functions of Synod, delete the initial ‘A’ and the words in brackets.

Function (xvii) – delete existing text and replace with the following:

‘To discharge the functions required under the Disciplinary Process to be exercised by the Synod, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Process may provide’.

Function (xviii) – delete existing text and replace with the following:

‘To discharge the functions required under the Incapacity Procedure to be exercised by the Synod, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Procedure may provide’.

Function (xxi) after ‘Disciplinary Process’ delete ‘contained in Section O’.

Paragraph 2.(5) – In sub-paragraph (A), after ‘the following functions’, delete the words in brackets.

In the Functions of Ecumenical Area Meetings, Function (viii), delete ‘contained in Section O’ and the cross-reference in brackets.

Functions (xxi) to (xxvii) – delete existing text and replace with the following:

- (xxi) to establish, and from time to time to review, amend or replace a Process for dealing with cases of Discipline involving Ministers or Church-Related Community Workers;
- (xxii) to discharge the functions required under the Disciplinary Process to be exercised by the Assembly, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Process may provide;
- (xxiii) to establish, and from time to time to review, amend or replace a Procedure for dealing with cases of Incapacity involving Ministers or Church-Related Community Workers;
- (xxiv) to discharge the functions required under the Incapacity Procedure to be exercised by the Assembly, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Procedure may provide.

Renumber the last two functions (xxv) and (xxvi).

Insert new paragraph 2(7) as follows:

Restriction on exercise of conciliar functions

2(7)

- (i) As soon as any Minister or Church-Related Community Worker becomes the subject of a case under the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure, no council of the Church shall exercise any of its functions in respect of that person in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the conduct of that case, save as provided for by the Process or Procedure itself.
- (ii) The function of the Church Meeting to maintain standards of membership shall not be exercised in a disciplinary context in respect of any member of the local church who is at that time a Minister or Church-Related Community Worker; nor shall any such member be removed from the Roll of Members or the membership of that person be suspended by the Church Meeting for disciplinary reasons.
- (iii) The decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) under the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding, and once so initiated that case shall be resolved only by the steps for which that Process or Procedure provides.

Paragraph 5 – delete existing opening text and replace with the following:

- 5. The procedure for dealing with references and appeals not concerned with the Incapacity Procedure or the Disciplinary Process is as follows:

Paragraph 5.4 – delete final sentence and replace with the following:

No procedure governed by this paragraph shall be used to review or appeal against decisions reached under the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure.

Delete paragraphs 6 and 7 in their entirety.

Resolution 5

page 15

General Assembly adopts the ‘Process for dealing with cases of discipline involving ministers and church related community workers’ (‘Disciplinary Process’) accompanying this Resolution in place of the existing Process.

Resolution 6

page 15

General Assembly makes the amendments accompanying this Resolution to the ‘Procedure for dealing with cases of incapacity involving ministers and church related community workers’ (‘Incapacity Procedure’).

Resolution 7

page 15

The provisions of the new Disciplinary Process concerning appointments to the Assembly and Synod Standing Panels for Discipline, the Disciplinary Investigation and Commission Panels, and the posts of Assembly Representative for Discipline and Secretary to Assembly Commissions are to come into force at the close of this session of the General Assembly. The Assembly instructs Synods to make their appointments to Standing Panels at the earliest opportunity, and instructs Nominations Committee to bring nominations for Assembly appointees under the new Process to the Assembly Executive in November 2020, so that all those appointed can receive initial training in the new procedures before the remainder of the Process comes into force. The new Process is to come fully into force at the

close of the meeting of Assembly in 2021 and govern cases coming to the notice of Moderators of Synods or the Assembly Representative for Discipline on or after that date, provided that the amendments to the Basis and Structure mentioned in Resolution 4 have by then been ratified. Cases pending under the current Process at that date are to be dealt with as the transitional provisions of the new Process provide. The amendments to the Incapacity Procedure are to take effect at the close of the meeting of Assembly in 2021, provided that the amendments to the Basis and Structure mentioned in Resolution 4 have by then been ratified.

Resolution 8

page 15

The Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group to the Assembly Executive (MIND) is instructed to make arrangements to offer the training mentioned in Resolution 7, and also to prepare Notes for Guidance to assist those engaged or concerned in the new Process, the first edition of such Notes to be published online before the Assembly Executive's meeting in March 2021.

Ministerial Disciplinary Process and Incapacity Procedure

Appendix C to MIND Paper to General Assembly 2020

Resolution 9

page 40

Below are the proposed amendments referred to in Resolution 6 of the main MIND paper (page 18) to the 'Procedure for dealing with cases of incapacity involving ministers and church related community workers' ('Incapacity Procedure').

Church changes not previously reported to General Assembly

Resolution 10

page 45

General Assembly notes the closures, with praise to God for the worship and witness offered by these fellowships across the years.

Resolution 11

page 46

General Assembly celebrates Church Without Walls as a new ecumenical worshipping congregation within Walton Churches Partnership, Milton Keynes, and therefore receives it as a congregation of the United Reformed Church.

Resolution 12

page 47

General Assembly receives the ecumenical New Lubbesthorpe Project as a Mission Project of United Reformed Church.

Resolution 13

page 47

General Assembly authorises Mission Council to act on its behalf in considering applications for new Mission Projects at Love's Farm, St Neots, and at North Avenue, Chelmsford, both in Eastern Synod.

Children's and Youth Work Committee

Children's and Youth Work Review and Five-Year Strategy

Resolution 14 page 58

General Assembly urges all United Reformed Churches (especially those near universities and colleges) to use Fusion's Student Linkup and SCM Connect, enabling students to explore a wider range of churches and have more opportunity to commit to a place of worship that they feel is appropriate.

Resolution 15 page 58

General Assembly recognises the climate emergency and challenges all councils, committees and local churches to do everything possible to make URC events and activities eco-friendly, as urged by URC Youth Assembly.

Communications Committee

Communications update, including *Reform* magazine

Resolution 16 page 65

General Assembly encourages all churches without websites to set one up as a matter of urgency, and to consider using the URC's iChurch initiative.

Resolution 17 page 65

General Assembly welcomes the new look and feel of print publications used since 2019, and encourages all Synods, committees and departments to use the design and digital visual identity guidance from the communications team, so that all materials produced by the Church can share the same quality and consistency.

Resolution 18 page 65

General Assembly encourages all members and friends of the Church to read *Reform*, the magazine of the United Reformed Church, and to subscribe to it so that, as it also approaches its 50th anniversary, it can continue to challenge, debate, refresh, enrich and inform.

Education and Learning Committee

The Way Forward

Resolution 19 page 91

General Assembly endorses the direction for the Education and Learning Committee described in the Way Forward paper.

Pensions Committee and Finance Committee

URC Pension Schemes – Facing up to some serious challenges

Resolution 20 page 144

The General Assembly, being representative of Local Churches, Synods and the whole Church, confirms the Church's commitment to the pensions promises already made, and wishes any consideration of future pension arrangements for

the Church's Ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers, missionaries and staff to keep clearly in mind:

- a) The Church's warm gratitude for the commitment, gifts and service of those who work among us and serve in our name;
- b) The Church's desire to deal with these people honourably in their retirement;
- c) The Church's desire to act as a responsible employer, for the people we employ and for our stipendiary office-holders.

Resolution 21

page 114

General Assembly thanks Dr Chris Evans, on his retirement as Convener of the Pensions Committee, for his conscientious and careful service in this role and thanks all those across the Church who are involved in the current Integrated Risk Management Project for their hard work and their willingness to work towards a resolution of the significant pensions challenges that face the Church.

Resolution 22

page 114

General Assembly authorises the directors of the URC Trust to amend its guarantee of the Ministers' Pension Fund provided to the URC Ministers' Pension Trust in response to the changing regulatory environment, but limited to the available resources of the URC Trust.

Ministries Committee

Gift Policy

Resolution 23

page 156

General Assembly adopts the policy contained in this paper.

Schedule E

Resolution 24

page 159

General Assembly approves the changes to Schedule E of the Basis of Union as outline in this paper.

Pastoral Supervision for Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers

Resolution 25

page 162

General Assembly adopts the policy for pastoral supervision as contained in this paper.

Environmental Task Group

Environmental Policy progress review

Resolution 26

page 188

General Assembly directs the Environmental Task Group to consult on a travel and expenses policy for the URC which (i) encourages consideration of the purpose of travel and its environmental impact, (ii) introduces a carbon budget for international travel on URC business, and (iii) incentivises low-carbon travel modes, with a view that proposals should be brought to a future General Assembly, or to the Assembly Executive if necessary.

Walking the Way Steering Group

Where Next?: The future of Walking the Way, living the life of Jesus today

Resolution 27

page 195

General Assembly, in affirming the work of the Walking the Way steering group, encourages those who plan the Church's budget to seek ways of funding its continuing work at the level indicated in Appendix E of this paper, according to the priorities set out in the paper.

Nominations committee

Report to General Assembly 2020

Resolution 28

page 203

General Assembly appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pages 204 to 223 of the *Book of Reports*, subject to the additions and corrections contained in the supplementary report to Assembly.

Safeguarding Advisory Group

URC Safeguarding Strategy 2020-2025

Resolution 29

page 227

Having already endorsed the safeguarding strategic plan 2020-2025 through Mission Council, General Assembly acknowledges that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility in the United Reformed Church.

General Assembly directs all local churches and synods and those who oversee safeguarding arrangements in the Church to implement the safeguarding strategic plan in ways that promote the welfare of the URC and the well-being of the community in which the Church is placed.

Safeguarding Advisory Group

URC Safeguarding Strategy 2020-2025

Resolution 30

page 255

General Assembly

- a) encourages Elders Meetings and/or Church Meetings to install 'public-access defibrillators' on an external wall of their Church buildings, wherever possible.
- b) encourages Synods to offer financial support where possible to help churches purchase and install these defibrillators.
- c) resolves that, if successful, this initiative be used to mount national and local press campaigns to promote the profile of our churches as safe, caring and compassionate communities.