

Order of service



General Assembly – Saturday 11th July, 10.30am

Act of worship

Music (from 10.15am)

Downing Place URC organists

Introduction and welcome

The Revd John Proctor

Constitution of General Assembly

Moderator, the General Assembly being met, will you now constitute the meeting with prayer.

Prayer

Derek Estill

Let us pray: Living God, through all of life, and in our meeting as the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, you are always with us.

This year though we are not physically together, we are assured that your Spirit binds us, energises us, and inspires us, as we gather together in this different way, but with the same calling, function and hope.

We pray your blessing on this time. We give thanks that we are here. We ask that your peace, love and mercy will flow through our meeting. We remember those who are unable to join us. We hold before you every church family and community in which the life of the United Reformed Church is lived.

Through what we do here, and in the communities where we live, may your kingdom come, your will be done, as we seek to walk the way of Christ.

Amen

And so, I now formally declare that the General Assembly is constituted.

Presentation of Roll of Assembly

Michael Hopkins

Organ prelude

Downing Place URC organists

Call to worship

In the beginning was the Word ...

Chaplains

John 1.1

The Bible is placed open on a table

As the Word incarnate, God made Godself known in the world. Through word in letter and voice, we are called to listen and proclaim. Happy are those who keep my ways. Hear instructions and be wise, and do not neglect it.

Happy is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. For whoever finds me finds life.

Proverbs 8.32b-35a

As members of God's church scattered yet together, let us ready ourselves to listen, ready ourselves to speak, and ready ourselves to act as we worship God.

We, therefore, proclaim our faith in God and reaffirm our commitment to the work of the United Reformed Church in God's kingdom through the Statement of Nature, Faith and Order.

Statement of Nature, Faith and Order of the URC

The Revd Michael Davies, The Revd Andrew Prasad, Karen Campbell and Joanna Harris

Please join in with the words in bold

With the whole Christian Church the United Reformed Church believes in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The living God, the only God, ever to be praised.

The life of faith to which we are called is the Spirit's gift continually received through the Word, the Sacraments and our Christian life together.

We acknowledge the gift and answer the call, giving thanks for the means of grace.

The highest authority for what we believe and do is God's Word in the Bible alive for his people today through the help of the Spirit.

We respond to this Word, whose servants we are with all God's people through the years.

We accept with thanksgiving to God the witness to the catholic faith in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. We acknowledge the declarations made in our own tradition by Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Churches of Christ in which they stated the faith and sought to make its implications clear.

Faith alive and active: gift of an eternal source, renewed for every generation.

We conduct our life together according to the Basis of Union in which we give expression to our faith in forms which we believe contain the essential elements of the Church's life, both catholic and reformed; but we affirm our right and readiness, if the need arises, to change the Basis of Union and to make new statements of faith in ever new obedience to the Living Christ.

Our crucified and risen Lord, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.

Held together in the Body of Christ through the freedom of the Spirit, we rejoice in the diversity of the Spirit's gifts and uphold the rights of personal conviction. For the sake of faith and fellowship it shall be for the Church to decide where differences of conviction hurt our unity and peace.

We commit ourselves to speak the truth in love and grow together in the peace of Christ.

We believe that Christ gives his Church a government distinct from the government of the state. In things that affect obedience to God the Church is not subordinate to the state, but must serve the Lord Jesus Christ, its only Ruler and Head. Civil authorities are called to serve God's will of justice and peace for all humankind, and to respect the rights of conscience and belief.

While we ourselves are servants in the world as citizens of God's eternal kingdom.

We affirm our intention to go on praying and working, with all our fellow Christians, for the visible unity of the Church in the way Christ chooses so that people and nations may be led to love and serve God and praise him more and more for ever.

**Source, Guide, and Goal of all that is: to God be eternal glory.
Amen.**

Scripture reading: Luke 24.28-35 *Fiona Thomas*

Scripture reading Philippians 1.3-11 *Reuben Watt*

Sermon *The Revd Dr Barbara
Glasson, Ex-President,
The Methodist Conference*

Prayers for the world

In the beginning was the Word ...

From the pages of scripture,
through the words of others,
your Word comes to us.

You call us to action,
as you call us to listen,
God, who is Word incarnate
and part of every utterance of creation
and breath of wind.

For the Word was in the world ...
and brought life.

Living God, through your Word,
you brought the world into being:
you created it from a formless void,
turned chaos into order.
Although by your word,
through the power of the Holy Spirit,
we grow and flourish,

we see the world still does not know
the action of the word within it.

Therefore, as those who have heard,
those who have witnessed and bear witness, we pray:

For the parts of the world which are at war,
where conflict continues with little hope of resolution or
reconciliation.

God of peace and justice,
wars still rage in the Middle East;
conflict still divides Korea;
borders continue to be disputed between India and China;
neighbour fights neighbour,
and power and gain are sought
without concern for the cost of life.
Let your word utter wisdom
in the ear of governments and leaders
and may they hear your call for peace and restitution.

For creation that remains vulnerable to misuse
and the wastefulness of humanity.

God who cares for all,
as we see our oceans fill with plastic,
birds and fish harmed by pollution,
animals brought to the edge of extinction
because of hunting and loss of habitat,
and awesome vista become wastelands:
let your creating word utter reason
in to humanity's heart
as we advance our lifestyles
and surround ourselves with material comforts.

For relationships within the universal church
and between different faith groups that can be full of tension
because of poor communication and mistrust.

Sovereign God, your covenant is with all peoples,
with all of creation—you see us all as equal.
Yet because of culture, politics,
interpretation of holy texts, and misunderstanding,
we see division and levels of supremacy.
Let your word utter openness into view
so that we might not see difference as divisive
but only part of what makes us all
members of your wonderful creation
whom you love and show your eternal mercy.

For all those suffering from illness, facing death or grieving loss.

God of life, in recent times,
the precious nature of life has been all consuming.
We have all feared becoming ill,
contracting a virus whose treatment is experimental.
Despite daily medical advances,
we cannot protect ourselves from all disease,
and everyday people are receiving news
that leave them devastated and hope-less.
Let your word wash over those
who need to sense your peace, see a glimmer of hope<
as they fight, as they cry,
as they breathe their last breath.

For ourselves as the United Reformed Church
as we face these changing times.

In a time when many of our congregations
yearn for life to return to 'normal',
to be faced with the need to change,
to continually re-envision how to do things differently,
is a hard place, God of our courage.
Yet, when we meet as General Assembly
change is part of every report, every resolution discussed.
To do your will as you have called us,
we cannot stand still.

As we induct our new General Secretary
and Moderators of General Assembly,
let your word be heard by all generations in the church
inspiring us to step out in faith.

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was in the world and with the world ...

Word of God, present amongst us,
hear these, our words of prayer.
Amen

Song

Woking URC music group

Holy Spirit, living breath of God,
breathe new life into my willing soul.
Bring the presence of the risen Lord
to renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause your word to come alive in me;
give me faith for what I cannot see,
give me passion for you purity;
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within,
may your joy be seen in all I do.
Love enough to cover every sin
in each thought and deed and attitude:
kindness to the greatest and the least,
gentleness that sow the path of peace.
Turn my striving into works of grace;
Breath of God, show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth,
giving life to all that God has made,
show your power once again on earth,
cause your church to hunger for your ways.
May the fragrance of our prayers arise;

lead us on the road of sacrifice, that in unity the face of Christ may be clear for all the world to see.

Thanks to John Proctor and Richard Church

Derek Estill

Inductions

Narrative of call of General Secretary *The Revd Nigel Uden*

John Proctor having indicated when he would retire, Mission Council approved the process for calling a successor and the Nominations Committee suggested those to work alongside Derek Estill and me in the search.

- Some were from the Panel for Assembly Appointments, and included the Moderator-elect of URC Youth;
- some were Committee Conveners elected by Mission Council;
- and others were ex officio.

The Nominating Group thanks those who made nominations and those who received them, grateful for their careful responses.

After shortlisting and interview, the Nominating Group discerned that it would be good to invite the Revd Dr John Bradbury to accept the nomination.

Following his ready acceptance, the Mission Council of November 2019, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, appointed Dr Bradbury from 1st June 2020 until the end of General Assembly 2027.

Educated at the Universities of Edinburgh, Tübingen and Cambridge and ordained in 2004, John was first inducted to serve a pastorate in Liverpool.

In 2007, he was appointed to teach Systematic Theology and Church History at Westminster College, Cambridge, where he eventually served as Vice-Principal, including a period as Acting Principal. For the past three years, he has served United Reformed Churches in Cambridgeshire.

Both when reading his application and during the interview, the Nominating Group identified a person of:

- theological acuity;
- strategic thinking;
- pastoral sensitivity;
- warm personality.

It commends him to the church, that we might accept the rigour and promise of John's ministry. May we all complement what John brings with

- the faithfulness of our partnership with him;
- the frequency of our prayer for him;
- the Christlikeness of our love of him,

which will hold him fast through everything we now ask of him and to which we proceed to induct him, at the same time as we induct Clare Downing and Peter Pay to be Moderators of the General Assembly.

Statement of General Secretary-Elect *The Revd Dr John Bradbury*
God's call is discerned in many ways. For me, the start of discernment has always been in people taking me to one side and saying: 'have you thought...?' We believe we discern better together than apart – this call is one discerned very much in that way. I thank all the conversation partners along the way, including the appointment group.

God's call is also discerned out of our contexts, and in the light of our ongoing stories. Time and again scripture demands that we pay attention to the signs of the times, that we remain alert and watchful, expectant for the new thing that God will do in our midst. The part of my story which was about teaching Church History and Theology for 10 years was about helping us see how those who had gone before us had paid attention to the call of God in their immediate contexts. How they told the old story of our faith in new ways in each time and place that it might be understood afresh. How they had shaped the life of the Church in response to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

At the heart of the story of our faith stands the cross and the resurrection. That is the reality that shapes our living. It is not an easy story, for it calls us to take up our crosses and follow. The immediate context out of which this particular call to serve as General Secretary came is serving a group of churches in Cambridge. In the city centre, two long established congregations with proud histories, set their faces to the cross, gave up a huge amount and allowed those identities to be reinvented in response to the call of God to unite. From that has flowed rich blessings, new life, new worshipping congregations, new lives walking with Christ. I've served congregations who recognised that their work in a place was done, and set it down. Which is an ending, but from which resources are released to allow new life to emerge elsewhere. I've served congregations who faithfully keep serving their communities when many would have given up – and remain places of hope.

Those convictions and those contexts have shaped this call. I pray, and I ask for your prayers, that I may play my part in helping us together. That we may read the signs of the times well, seek new ways to proclaim the gospel, and reshape the life of the Church in faithful response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. That we will set our faces to the cross, not seeking to perpetuate structures and ways of working that were faithful for those who have gone before us, but may not be our call today. For I have learnt time and time again that beyond the loss of the familiar and the loved, as we set our face towards that cross, bursts the joy, hope, excitement, peace and new beginnings of the resurrection. I look forward to walking that way with you all in response to this new call, and ask your prayers for me, and the whole United Reformed Church, as we seek to be faithful disciples here and now. Amen.

Affirmations made by candidates

Clare, Peter and John, do you confess again your faith in one god, father, son and holy spirit?

I do

Do you believe that the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments, discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for the faith and conduct of all God's people?

I do

Peter, as an Elder of the United Reformed Church, do you, in dependence on God's grace, reaffirm your trust in Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord and your promise to follow him and to seek to do and to bear his will all the days of your life?

I do

Clare and John, as Ministers of Word and Sacrament, do you believe that Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary, lived our common life on earth, died upon the cross, and who was raised from the dead and reigns for evermore, is the gift of God's very self to the world? Do you believe that through him God's love, justice and mercy are revealed and forgiveness, reconciliation and eternal life are offered to all people? And will you faithfully proclaim this Gospel?

By the grace of God this I believe and this I will proclaim.

Do you believe that the Church is the people gathered by God's love to proclaim the reconciliation of the world to God through Jesus Christ?

I do

Are zeal for the glory of God, love for the Lord Jesus Christ, obedience to the Holy Spirit and a desire for the salvation of the world, so far as you know your own heart, the chief motives which lead you to enter this ministry?

They are

Do you promise to live a holy life, and to maintain the truth of the gospel, whatever trouble or persecution may arise?

Relying on the strength of Christ, I do.

John, as General Secretary of the United Reformed Church, do you promise to fulfil this role faithfully, to lead the church in worship, to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, to take your part in the councils of the Church, and to give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world?

By the grace of God, I do.

Do you promise as a Minister of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?

By the grace of God, I do.

Clare and Peter, as Moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, do you promised to undertake this role faithfully, to guide and enable General Assembly and Mission Council in discussion, discernment and decision-making, to encourage and build up the faith of the people of God wherever you meet them, to represent the United Reformed Church on occasions of celebration and sadness, and to give and share in leadership of the Church was we live out our shared vocations to be God's hope-filled people?

By the grace of God, I do

Do you promise as Moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?

By the grace of God, I do

Clare, Peter and John, will you undertake to exercise your ministry in accordance with the statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church?

I will, and all these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Promises to be made on behalf of General Assembly

Do you confess again your faith in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

We do

Do you receive Clare and Peter as from God to serve as Moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, and John as from God to serve as General Secretary of the United Reformed Church?

We do

Will you pray for Clare, Peter and John in their ministries, giving the due honour, support and encouragement?

We will

Induction prayer

The Revd Nigel Uden

Eternal God,
who calls all your people,
through their baptism,
to share in the ministry of Christ,
we give thanks for your church catholic and universal,
and for the United Reformed Church's place within it,
which, by your grace,
and in the power of your Spirit, is
effective in fruitful times,
durable through troubled times, and
renewed for every time.

As we enter a new chapter,
in rare circumstances,
facing inescapable challenges,
we pray with Clare, Peter and John
whom our councils have elected
to walk with us on our Emmaus Road
as companions and as leaders.

We give thanks
for their background
in the church and in the world,
for their zeal in various modes of ministry,
and for their answering of this call
to continued service in new ways.

Trusting that your good and nail-marked hand
will be gracious to them,
we rejoice that your Spirit is even now
bubbling up with gifts and fruit
to equip and sustain them.

So we ask:

Renew the gift of your Holy Spirit
on your servant who was baptised John,
as in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ
we induct him to serve as General Secretary.
May he model for us all how to decrease
that your Christ might increase,
so we love you more dearly.

Renew the gift of your Holy Spirit
on your servant who was baptised Clare,
as in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ
we induct her to serve as Moderator of this Assembly.
Through her reveal the mystery of Christ
that we might see you more clearly.

Renew the gift of your Holy Spirit
on your servant who was baptised Peter,
as in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ
we induct him to serve as Moderator of this Assembly.
May he daily live out your call
to tend the sheep and feed the lambs,
that we might follow you more nearly.

On good days, cheer them, and
on hard days, encourage them.

In their homes,
may they know peace and contentment.

With those they cherish most,
may they know support and happiness.

Alongside their colleagues in mission and ministry,
may they know trust and respect.

And in company with Peter, John and Clare,
may each of us, baptised with our own names,
produce 'the harvest of righteousness',
for the building up of the Church,
the blessing of the world and
the glory of your name.

United with one another,
with our ecumenical partners,
with all people of good will,
and with you, our God,
may we all know that
in grace we were created,
in mercy we have been sustained,
in love we will be held forever,
through Jesus Christ,
Amen

Declaration of induction

Derek Estill

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and representing the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, I declare John Paul Bradbury to be inducted as the General Secretary and Clare Downing and Peter Pay to be inducted as the General Assembly Moderators of the United Reformed Church.

May you all continue to walk in the way of Christ, following in his footsteps.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and will do this.

1 Thessalonians 5.23f

Song

Woking URC music group

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
his goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in you alone,
and I will trust in you alone,
for your endless mercy follows me,
your goodness will lead me home.*

He guides my ways in righteousness,
and he anoints my head with oil,
and my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on his pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
for you are with me, and your rod and staff
are the comfort I need to know.

Greetings from ecumenical and international representatives

The Revd Clare Downing

Introduction

Greetings coming from: Hannah Brock Womack, The Society of Friends (Quakers):

Hello friends, my name is Hannah Brock Womack and I am bringing you very warm greetings on behalf of Quakers in Britain via National Assembly.

Like you we are having to hold our annual gathering online this year and we hope that while that's a bit of a disappointment it will also bring opportunities for people to be included who couldn't otherwise come perhaps.

So I pray that you have a very fruitful and connective feeling gathering. I wanted to take this chance to say thank-you very much for the statement that you put out last year in support of myself and the rest of the fourth presidency group of Churches Together in England when I was prevented from taking up my role as fourth president of CTE and because of my same sex marriage.

Special greetings and thanks as well to the URC Youth Assembly for your strong statement also, I really appreciate that friends. Like the

URC Church Quakers of Britain don't place any barriers to service for friends who are in equal marriages or because of their sexuality and it is really good to stand with you in that.

The Right Revd Dr Martin Fair, Moderator for the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland:

It gives me great pleasure on the occasion of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church to extend to you the very warmest greetings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

In particular I want to send best wishes to your new General Secretary the Revd Dr John Bradbury and to your incoming Moderators the Revd Claire Downing and Mr Peter Pay.

We look forward in the days ahead to furthering our partnership, to finding new ways to work together and to collaborate for the good of the Kingdom. It's too often said that we're all in it together, but we hope and pray that it will be very true of our two churches. With every good wish, thank you.

Pfarrer Martin Henninger, The Church of the Palatinate:

I bring greetings from the Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz, which is familiar to you not only from Emmanuel's twinning with the Stiftskirche Landau but also from the Theological Consultation in 2018 where you gave such an excellent paper on Brexit, Church Union and Identity – naming challenges which will be part of church life over the next years.

How can we learn that our identity above all is rooted in our Lord Jesus Christ?

As General Secretary you will play an important part in shaping the future of the URC.

Jesus once said: Many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. This has been the vision behind the Covenant of Pulpit and Table between our churches which came out of the wounds of two world wars.

It is our hope and our prayer that this vision may be held strong in the face of Brexit, corona, racism and other things which are putting boundaries between people. It is our prayer, too, that you, John, together with others in this time of many challenges will be blessed and be able to lead the church towards this kingdom of God.

Knowing that I am exceeding my time I would also like to use the occasion to give a warm thank you to Nigel who as Moderator of the URC has made such a big contribution to the partnership with the Pfalz. Thank you.

The Revd Keith Haley, General Secretary, The Guyana Congregational Union:

My name is Keith Haley, an ordained minister, the Guyana Congregational Union. I'm currently serving in the position of General Secretary. On behalf of the Guyana Congregational Union I take this opportunity to extend warm and sincere greetings to the leaders and wider membership of the United Reformed Church of the United Kingdom during this time of the meeting of your partial assembly. Under normal circumstances the assembly would have been conducted at one physical location with those in attendance comfortably seated. Regrettably, it is not so on this occasion consequent to all of us having to deal with the dreaded Covid19 pandemic. This of course has challenged the Church globally as well as in our local spaces to devise ways of doing God's work as the URC through this act of worship is demonstrating today. I am happy to be sharing this moment with you and trust that our time spent in each other's virtual company will help to shape the way we chart the course for the Church to engage in the next phase of our work. May the good Lord bless, guide and direct us as we meet to advance the mission and ministry to which he has called the URC. In his name and mercy's sake, Amen.

Vote of thanks

Peter Pay

Friends, it is my privilege and my pleasure to offer, on your behalf, our thanks to our two departing Moderators, Derek Estill and the Revd Nigel Uden. They have provided leadership for us at an unprecedented time in the history of our nations and of the United Reformed Church.

Accepting the role of Moderator of General Assembly is a significant commitment of up to six years including run up and now, time as 'Immediate past Moderator'. When they took on the role, it was with the expectation that they would be chairing one General Assembly at the beginning of their time in office. In practice they will only have presided at the same number of meetings as originally planned, since the Mission Council this week took the place of the March meeting, and General Assembly is principally a service of induction, but as a pair of relative technophobes they have had to chair our first major council held virtually. We recognise their flexibility and willingness to adapt to changing needs and expectations.

Derek and Nigel have enabled us to meet and to function in ways unimaginable even at the beginning of their term of office. We have greatly appreciated their calm, good humoured and thoughtful approach to matters as they developed.

Thank you and God bless you.

May I also thank our two outgoing chaplains, Revds. Elaine Colechin and David Coaker; for the support they have given to their Moderators and for the worship they have led us in -both physically and virtually.

I am sure we would also wish to offer our thanks to the large team who have enabled this unique meeting to happen. For the work of planning, organising and co-ordinating, for the technology and indeed the logistics. Thank you for helping it to happen.

Lastly, we would wish to thank you, members of The General Assembly and friends also joining us.

Thank you for participating in this occasion and indeed for your prayers.

Prayers of Thanksgiving

We come now to our prayers of thanksgiving. Let us pray.

Living God,

We praise you with all that we have and all that we are!

We give you thanks that in every generation you call people to your service. We thank you today for John Proctor, Richard Church, Derek Estill and Nigel Uden who have served our United Reformed Church with faithfulness and dedication. During their times of service, your hand has guided them, and your spirit has whispered to them as they have lived and spoken words of leadership, counsel and guidance to the members of our denomination, to the wider church and to the world in which we live. As they pass on the privilege of leadership, may they continue in service to you and to the church in the peace of Christ, knowing that they have served and continue to serve you according to your Word.

We thank you also for others who have served the United Reformed Church in many capacities, who are relinquishing responsibilities and moving to new areas of service. May they all enjoy the assurance of your love in their hearts as they begin a new chapter in discipleship with You.

We give you thanks for John Bradbury, Clare Downing and Peter Pay. They have answered your call to service and have been appointed to leadership within the church. May you grant them the gifts they need to exercise that leadership always within your purpose and within the breadth, height and depth of your generous love.

Jesus Christ, Lord of your people gathered as your church, we praise and thank you for the work of all of our church fellowships throughout the Covid- 19 outbreak in our nations.

We praise you as we see pictures showing how the work of Your Kingdom has been continued in new and challenging ways through local churches. We thank you for visible signs of your resurrection power, for expressions of love for our neighbours which have moved out of our buildings into the communities around them.

We praise you for the imagination and courage to follow Your Holy Spirit out of our comfort zones and into new ways of sharing worship which have taken advantage of new tools to leap over barriers of time and space, sharing your good news from one room out to local, national and even international homes.

We praise you for those who have worked with recorded and printed words to connect with all who are not able to engage with the internet, and those who have worked at speed to interpret the government guidelines for our churches and to instruct us in using new technology.

In all this we thank you for signs of your Word to all, signs of faith alive, active and visible, signs of Easter life and Pentecost Power which have been breathed through all your church family even as we have experienced the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death.

We thank you for the chaplains and healthcare workers who have touched those ill and dying with gloved hands which are both your hands and the hands of their family, being a very present help to those in desperate need.

We give you thanks that Your Gospel never falters and your voice never falls silent since You bring fruit in ways which we have not even imagined as you work in and through each one of us, forgiving our faults and encouraging and strengthening us as we walk your way. We thank you today for those churches which have closed their buildings since our last Assembly: for their members, Elders and ministers, and their communities. Bless them as Your mercy calls us all to new possibilities as your people.

Holy Spirit, you call each of us to serve you and give us gifts and talents as we do. We give you thanks today for our ministers of Word and Sacraments who are celebrating 50, 60 and even 70 years in this particular calling. Let us pray in John Proctor's words:
"For these who lifted up their voices to proclaim good news of forgiveness and fulfilment, of Joy and justice

For these who have supported among us the bruised, bereaved and burdened
For these who have led us in witness, laughed with us in our delights and wept with us in our griefs
For these who have challenged us to follow Jesus, by the example of their living, by their teaching and preaching by their care for us and for others,
We give glad and rich thanks
In these days we pray for them : in strength or in weakness, in comfort or in struggle: in service or in rest –
That their living may be full of the presence of Jesus, sustaining them and visible to many around.”

We remember with gratitude those ministers of Word and Sacraments, missionaries and Church Related Community workers who have died since our last General Assembly. We hold silence as we remember them.

Short silence

In thanksgiving to God from whom all our gifts come and to whom all our service belongs we honour the names of these friends.
For they worshipped God with us,
they witnessed to us the risen life of Jesus Christ,
they worked among us in the power of the Holy Spirit.
For their example we give praise, as their lives gave praise to God.
In their footsteps we would follow, as they followed the way of Jesus from their faith we would draw confidence as the spirit lived surely within them.
Until our turn comes to join them, we ask for grace to live as Christians who serve heaven
on Earth and who need not fear passing from earth to Heaven through Jesus Christ who died as one of us and who rose in victory and life
Amen

Lord's Prayer

led by newly ordained ministers and commissioned CRCWs

We continue our prayer in the words which Jesus taught us. These are spoken for us today by some of the Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church related Community Workers, ordained and commissioned in 2019 and 2020.

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
one earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Closing of General Assembly

The Revd Dr John Bradbury

Moderator, the General Assembly has completed its business and now adjourns to meet at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, on 9-12 July 2021 or at such time and place as shall be determined.

Benediction

The Revd Clare Downing

Now to God

who by the power of the Word at work within us
is able to accomplish so much more than we can ask or imagine,
to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations,
for ever and ever.

And the blessing of God be upon us all,
the One who loves us,
the Christ who calls us
the Spirit who makes us holy,
this day and for evermore.

Amen

Music

Downing Place URC organists

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