

Assembly resumed at 0930. The Moderator, the Revd Clare Downing, was in the Chair.

Worship

Opening worship was led by the Chaplain, the Revd Helen Everard, and included Bible Study led by the Revd David Coleman.

Following notices by the Convener of Business and the Assembly Clerk, the Moderator read the names of those ministers of Word and Sacrament ordained since February 2020, and Jubilee ministers:

Ordained Ministers

Stephen Manyeh Ansa-Addo	Lee Barbara Battle
Sarah Louise Fitton	Ceri Ann Gardner
Susan Henderson	Aiyana Aurora Gardner-Houghton
James Hamilton	Daniel Rawdon Harris
Matthew James Rigden	

Jubilee Ministers

Celebrating 70 years of ordained ministry in 2021:
Basil Ernest Bridge.

Celebrating 60 years of ordained ministry in 2021:

Derrick Peter Ackling	Kenneth Douglas Alway-Jones
Marjorie Ayton	Arthur Jack Beeson
Anthony Gerald Burnham	David Vandeppeer Clarke
Wilfred Kievill Gathercole	Michael Edmund Heard
Max Armstrong Moore	David Cranford Morgan
Barry Richard Parker	Roger Kaye Scopes
Brian John Slater	John Malcolm Smith
Harold Robert Tonks	Alan David Trinder
Adrian John Wells	

Celebrating 50 years of ordained ministry in 2021:

Anthony John Addy-Papelitzky	John Colbeck Durell
Graham Beresford Edwards	Anthony James Lawford Jones
Barbara Meachin	Terry Oakley
Michael John Bemrose Spencer	Brian Sadler Stone
Alan Edward Thomasson	Colin Peter Thompson
Michael John Wear	

The Chaplain led Assembly in prayers of thanksgiving.

Ministries: Disciplinary Policy for Office Holders

The Convener of Ministries, the Revd Paul Whittle, presented the paper and moved Resolution 23:

Following questions and discussion, the Revd Sally Thomas proposed that the Resolution be withdrawn and referred back to the Ministries Committee for further work; which was seconded by Mr Steve Powell.

Upon being put to the vote, the proposal *fell*.

The Revd Alex Clare-Young proposed the inclusion of 'age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation' in the policy document at 12.2.14. The amended clause would thus read:

Harassment of, or discrimination against, employees, contractors, or members of the public, related to age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

Mr Whittle accepted this alteration, and the Assembly agreed.

The Resolution was put:

Resolution 23

General Assembly adopts the Disciplinary policy for Office Holders as outlined in Appendix One on this paper.

Assembly agreed.

The Moderator, Mr Peter Pay, was in the Chair.

Safeguarding Advisory Group: Additions to URC Structure and Rules of Procedure

The Revd Adrian Bulley introduced and proposed Resolutions 44 and 45.

Resolution 44

General Assembly resolves to make the following additions to the Structure:

Functions of Church Meeting: [numbering to be determined]

- a) To appoint a Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator.*
- b) To adopt and promote implementation of safeguarding policy in line with General Assembly recommendations.*
- c) To receive regular safeguarding reports from the church safeguarding co-ordinator.*

Functions of Elders' Meeting: [numbering to be determined]

- a) To satisfy themselves that all necessary procedures are in place to achieve the aims of the church's safeguarding policy.*
- b) To adopt best safeguarding practice for all church activities.*
- c) To report to Church Meeting and to synod.*
- d) To report to the building trustees, charity regulators and insurers when advised to do so by the Synod Safeguarding Officer.*

Functions of synod: [numbering to be determined]

- a) To appoint a Synod Safeguarding Officer or equivalent.*
- b) To have oversight of, and to support, monitor and report safeguarding related activities and issues within local churches, and amongst ministers, officers and staff of the synod.*
- c) To take all necessary powers and actions positively to promote implementation of good practice in accordance with the safeguarding policy statement adopted by the General Assembly.*
- d) To adopt best safeguarding practice for all its own activities and events.*

Functions of General Assembly: [numbering to be determined]

- a) To appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead.*
- b) To have oversight of local churches and synods, monitoring practice.*
- c) To adopt a safeguarding policy statement and procedures for use throughout the whole United Reformed Church.*
- d) To advise on all matters of safeguarding throughout the church.*
- e) To adopt best safeguarding practice for all its own activities and events.*

The Revd Paul Ellis proposed an amendment under 'functions of a church meeting (b)':

To adopt and promote implementation of safeguarding policy in line with General Assembly recommendations or those of another denomination with whom it is in a formal partnership.'

Seconded by Mr Keir Hounsome

The amendment was *carried*

The Revd Dr Romilly Micklem proposed an amendment under 'Functions of Elders Meeting':

c) To report to Church Meeting and to Synod on matters arising under the church's safeguarding policy.

Seconded by the General Secretary.

The amendment was *carried*

The amended Resolution now read:

Resolution 44

**General Assembly resolves to make the following additions to the Structure:
Functions of Church Meeting: [numbering to be determined]**

- a) To appoint a Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator.**
- b) To adopt and promote implementation of safeguarding policy in line with General Assembly recommendations or those of another denomination with whom it is in a formal partnership**
- c) To receive regular safeguarding reports from the church safeguarding co-ordinator.**

Functions of Elders' Meeting: [numbering to be determined]

- a) To satisfy themselves that all necessary procedures are in place to achieve the aims of the church's safeguarding policy.**
- b) To adopt best safeguarding practice for all church activities.**
- c) To report to Church Meeting and to synod on matters arising under the church's safeguarding policy.**
- d) To report to the building trustees, charity regulators and insurers when advised to do so by the Synod Safeguarding Officer.**

Functions of synod: [numbering to be determined]

- a) To appoint a Synod Safeguarding Officer or equivalent.**
- b) To have oversight of, and to support, monitor and report safeguarding related activities and issues within local churches, and amongst ministers, officers and staff of the synod.**
- c) To take all necessary powers and actions positively to promote implementation of good practice in accordance with the safeguarding policy statement adopted by the General Assembly.**
- d) To adopt best safeguarding practice for all its own activities and events.**

Functions of General Assembly: [numbering to be determined]

- a) To appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead.**
- b) To have oversight of local churches and synods, monitoring practice.**

- c) To adopt a safeguarding policy statement and procedures for use throughout the whole United Reformed Church.
- d) To advise on all matters of safeguarding throughout the church.
- e) To adopt best safeguarding practice for all its own activities and events.

The amended Resolution was put:

Assembly *agreed*.

Mr Bulley moved Resolution 45:

Resolution 45

General Assembly resolves to make the following additions to the Rules of Procedure:

Safeguarding Implementation: [numbering to be determined]

1. Church Meeting:

- a) To appoint a Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator who is cognisant of current safeguarding policy, practice and procedure.
- b) To receive regular – at least annual – safeguarding reports from the Church Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

2. Elders' Meeting:

- a) To present an annual safeguarding report to Church Meeting and an annual safeguarding return to synod.

3. Synod:

- a) To appoint a Synod Safeguarding Officer with the necessary experience, qualifications and current knowledge.
- b) To arrange for safeguarding training as appropriate.
- c) To collate church safeguarding returns and forward them to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

4. General Assembly:

To appoint a Designated Safeguarding Lead with the necessary experience, qualifications and current knowledge.

Following questions and discussion, Resolution 45 was put:

Assembly *agreed*.

The General Secretary moved that '*General Assembly refers this constitutional change to synods and local churches and asks for response by 31st March 2022*'.

Assembly *agreed*.

Community Awards Presentations

Assembly viewed a video on the Congregational Insurance Community Project Awards, and celebrated the 2020-21 award-winning projects:

Spire Café, Farnham

Sanctuary Café, Lymm

Lea Road URC Food Project

Chorley Repair Café

Messy Vintage, Shrewsbury URC

West Midlands Synod: Modern Day Slavery

The Revd Steve Faber, on behalf of West Midlands Synod, presented the paper and moved Resolution 50:

Resolution 50

General Assembly expresses its wish that there be a statement of URC policy on modern-day slavery, and directs the General Secretariat to undertake the research and preparation of such a proposed policy for Church House and Assembly business, consulting with other officers and committees as necessary. The draft policy is to be proposed to Mission Council / the Assembly Executive or General Assembly no later than the Assembly meeting in 2023.

Seconded by Mr Mervyn Davies.

Assembly *agreed*.

Mr Faber moved Resolution 51.

Resolution 51

General Assembly directs the Safeguarding Advisory Group / the Safeguarding Committee to draft, in consultation with others as necessary, clear guidance, including any necessary amendments to Good Practice 5 and Safeguarding training, that will help churches and individuals identify those subject to this form of abuse and how to take steps to prevent it.

Seconded by Mr Mervyn Davies.

Assembly *agreed*.

Safeguarding

The Revd Adrian Bulley moved Resolution 46:

Resolution 46

General Assembly resolves that, effective from the close of General Assembly 2022
a) The Mission Council's Safeguarding Advisory Group be disbanded, with thanks for all those who have given so generously of their time and expertise over the years, and
b) A Safeguarding Committee be established as a standing committee of the General Assembly with the membership and terms of reference as described.

The Revd Paul Whittle moved the addition of a representative of the National Synod of Scotland to the Committee membership, in view of that Synod's different safeguarding context. This addition was welcomed by Mr Bulley, and Assembly *agreed*.

Mr Bulley moved resolution 47:

Resolution 47

General Assembly adopts the safeguarding policy statement outlined in this report and commends it to church meetings, elders' meetings and synods for consideration and implementation.

Assembly *agreed*.

Finance and Ministries Committees: Stipendiary Ministry Target Numbers

Mr Ian Hardie presented the report and moved Resolution 22:

Resolution 22

In view of both the uncertain future impact of the ongoing coronavirus restrictions on the finances of the Church and the likely impact of unprecedented additional pension contributions on the direct cost of stipendiary ministry, General Assembly directs that

- **in preparing the 2022 and 2023 budgets for the Church the Finance Committee and the URC Trust disregard resolution 19 of the 2012 General Assembly; and**
- **the Finance and Ministries Committees bring their suggested replacement for the 2012 resolution to the 2023 General Assembly.**

Following questions and discussion, the Resolution was put:

Assembly *agreed*.

Assembly adjourned.

Assembly resumed at 1400. the Moderator, the Revd Clare Downing, was in the Chair.

Assembly received notice of the closure of the local churches listed below:

Synod 1 – Northern Synod

Berwick-upon-Tweed United Reformed Church, 1 December 2020

Crookham United Reformed Church, Cornhill-on-Tweed, 29 November 2020

Synod 3 – Mersey Synod

St. Andrew’s United Reformed Church, Handbridge, Chester, 31 August 2020

St. George’s United Reformed Church, Little Sutton, Ellesmere Port, 31 August 2020

Stoneycroft United Reformed Church, Stoneycroft, Liverpool, 19 July 2020

Synod 4 – Yorkshire Synod

East Hull United Reformed Church, Hull, 20 September 2020

Greasbrough United Church, Rotherham, 4 February 2021

Synod 5 – East Midlands Synod

Lutterworth United Reformed Church, Lutterworth, Leics., 31 March 2021

Synod 6 – West Midlands Synod

Church of St Nicholas, Warndon, Worcester, 30 September 2020

Dudley United Reformed Church, 31 December 2020

St. Columba’s United Reformed Church, Coventry, 31 December 2020

Synod 7 – Eastern Synod

David Livingstone United Reformed Church, Harlow, 10 May 2020

Great Baddow United Reformed Church, Chelmsford, 31 July 2020

Long Melford United Reformed Church, Suffolk, 20 March 2021

Princes Street United Reformed Church, Norwich, 25 October 2020

Wickhambrook United Reformed Church, Suffolk, 1 February 2021

Synod 8 – South Western Synod

Christchurch, Estover, 31 March 2021

Kingskerswell United Reformed Church, Kingskerswell, 14 November 2020

Lakeway United Church, North Tawton, 31 March 2021

Synod 9 – Wessex Synod

Worplesdon United Reformed Church, Rickford, Worplesdon, 14 November 2020

Synod 10 – Thames North Synod

Christchurch at Whetstone United Reformed Church, Whetstone, 31 July 2020

Regent Square at Lumen United Reformed Church, London, 10 July 2020

St Anne’s and St Andrew’s, West Kilburn, London, 19 July 2020

Colnbrook and Poyle United Church, Colnbrook, 30 March 2021

Synod 11 – Southern Synod

Gomshall United Reformed Church, Dorking, Surrey, 27 September 2020

St Mark’s United Reformed Church, Hastings, 26 July 2020

Synod 12 – Synod of Wales

The Church in the Park, Old Colwyn, 12 April 2020

Cefn-y-bedd United Reformed Church, Cilmerly, Builth Wells, 28 July 2020

Synod 13 – Synod of Scotland

Avonbridge United Reformed Church, Wallacestone, Falkirk, 1 October 2020

The Chaplain led Assembly in prayer.

Equalities Committee

The Convener of the Equalities Committee, the Revd Anne Lewitt, presented the committee's report.

Equalities Committee: Affirmative action towards an anti-racist Church

Ms Lewitt moved resolutions 15-18 as printed, which it was agreed would form a composite resolution.

General Assembly instructs the Equalities Committee to form a small group to:

Resolution 15

Explore how the URC might implement a policy of 'affirmative action' to address the persistent underrepresentation of Black and ethnic minority people in Assembly-appointed posts (see table in appendix one).

Assembly *agreed*.

Resolution 16

Specifically explore the possibilities and practicalities of a recruitment policy which actively engages with, and addresses, the current racial imbalance in Assembly-appointed posts.

The Revd Dr Romilly Micklem proposed an amendment to replace 'addresses' with 'seeks to correct'.

Seconded by the Revd Andrew Mudharara.

The amendment was put, and was *carried*.

Resolution 16 (as amended)

Specifically explore the possibilities and practicalities of a recruitment policy which actively engages with, and seeks to correct, the current racial imbalance in Assembly-appointed posts.

Assembly *agreed*.

Resolution 17

Explore the possibilities and practicalities, including any related costs, of an experience and skills development programme equipping participants for Assembly-appointed posts.

Mr Anthony Obi-Ezekpazu proposed an amendment deleting all words after 'programme'.

Seconded by Mrs Jane Bunyan-Murray.

Following discussion, the amendment *fell*.

Following further discussion, the proposers withdrew Resolution 17.

Resolution 18

To bring recommendations arising from the work of the small group to General Assembly 2022.

Assembly agreed

For clarity, and on the advice of the Assembly Clerk, the agreed parts of Resolutions 15-18 will be recorded as a single resolution as follows:

Resolution 15

General Assembly instructs the Equalities Committee to form a small group to:

- **Explore how the URC might implement a policy of ‘affirmative action’ to address the persistent underrepresentation of Black and ethnic minority people in Assembly-appointed posts (see table in appendix one).**
- **Specifically explore the possibilities and practicalities of a recruitment policy which actively engages with, and seeks to correct, the current racial imbalance in Assembly-appointed posts.**
- **Bring recommendations arising from the work of the small group to General Assembly 2022.**

For the avoidance of doubt, the above composite resolution includes all the text agreed by General Assembly in resolutions 15, 16 and 18, resolution 17 having been withdrawn.

Assembly adjourned.

Assembly resumed at 1600. The Moderator, the Red Clare Downing, was in the Chair.

The Clerk moved adoption the minutes of Friday's sessions.

Assembly *agreed*.

Israel Palestine Report

Mr Dan Morell presented a revised Resolution 34, with the agreement of the Mission Committee.

Resolution 34

General Assembly requests the Mission Committee to find ways to help educate and resource Synods, local churches and members to become aware of EU guidelines on the labelling of products produced in Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian Territories and to strongly consider not purchasing these from retailers.

Mr Morell then proposed the amendment:

The Mission Committee will initially report back on this to General Assembly 2022.

Seconded by Mr Brandon Stein

The amendment *fell*.

Following questions and discussion, Resolution 34 was put:

Assembly *agreed*

The Convener of the Mission Committee, Mrs Sarah Lane Cawte, moved Resolution 35:

Resolution 35

General Assembly encourages local churches and members to actively play a part in supporting the Palestinian economy through the purchasing of Palestinian products available in the UK. These include but are not restricted to: Palestinian olive oil and food products, embroidery and olive wood carvings, cards, books, clothes and health / beauty products.

The Revd Steve Faber proposed an amendment to remove 'actively play' and replace with 'actively to consider playing'.

Seconded by the Revd Josh Thomas.

The amendment *was carried* and the amended resolution was put:

Resolution 35

General Assembly encourages local churches and members actively to consider playing a part in supporting the Palestinian economy through the purchasing of Palestinian products available in the UK. These include but are not restricted to: Palestinian olive oil and food products, embroidery and olive wood carvings, cards, books, clothes and health / beauty products.

Assembly *agreed*.

Parallel Sessions

Assembly divided into groups as follows:

- A: Mission Committee and Nominations Committee
- B: Ministries Committee and Faith and Order Committee
- C: Equalities Committee and Communications Committee
- D: Children's and Youth Work Committee and Finance Committee
- E: Education and Learning and Business Committee

Assembly adjourned.

Assembly resumed at 1830. The Moderator, the Revd Clare Downing, was in the Chair.

Stepwise

Assembly viewed a video update on the progress of the Stepwise programme.

Communications Committee

The Convener of the Communications Committee, the Revd Dr Peter Stephenson, was on sabbatical and unable to the present. In his absence, the Secretary, Mr Andy Jackson, presented the report of the Communications Committee, along with a video presentation of the Committee's work.

Mr Jackson responded to a number of questions and comments.

Communications Committee: Digital Charter and Social Media Guidelines

Mr Jackson moved Resolution 14:

Resolution 14

General Assembly commends the new Digital Charter and updated Social Media Guidelines to all who engage with the Church digitally.

Following questions and discussion, the Resolution was put:

Assembly *agreed*.

URC 50th Jubilee

Assembly viewed a video outlining plans for celebrating the 50th anniversary of the formation of the United Reformed Church.

Three initiatives were particularly highlighted:

- resource pack for local churches
- service of thanksgiving at Methodist Central Hall on Saturday 1st October 2022
- worship resources competition

Worship

The Chaplain led Assembly in worship.

Assembly adjourned.