

## **Mission Council**

Report on the work of Mission Council 2020-2021

### **Resolution 01**

**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 02**

**page 4**

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

### **Resolution 03**

**page 9**

General Assembly resolves to create a General Assembly 'Minister for Digital Worship' post, full-time, for an ordained minister of Word and Sacraments under the terms of the Plan for Partnership and to fund appropriate administrative and digital editing support. As General Assembly post it will be for an initial term of seven years, with the possibility of renewal.

### **Resolution 04**

**page 9**

General Assembly instructs the General Secretariat, through consultation with the Human Resource Advisory Group, to finalise a Job Description and Person Specification for the role.

### **Resolution 05**

**page 18**

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.**

## **Business Committee**

Mission Council Advisory Groups (by private members resolution from the Clerk and Convenor of the Business Committee)

### **Resolution 06**

**page 32**

General Assembly resolves that from the close of General Assembly 2021, all Mission Council Advisory Groups shall become Advisory Groups of the General Assembly, and instructs the Business Committee to reflect further on whether further work and / or greater clarity is needed on the differences between Standing Committees and Advisory Groups.

## **Children's and Youth Work Committee**

URC Children and the future of Pilots

### **Resolution 07**

**page 33**

General Assembly celebrates the work of Pilots over the past 85 years, its association with URC, and affirms our current local Pilots Companies.

### **Resolution 08**

**page 33**

General Assembly approves and encourages Children's and Youth Work Committee in the creation of 'URC Children' as an umbrella to support the rich diversity of Pilots and all other expressions of children's work in local churches.

### **Resolution 09**

**page 33**

General Assembly instructs Children's and Youth Work Committee to cease using staff time and funding on work exclusively for Pilots, and instructs the committee to support Pilots sub-committee to explore options for the future, including the care of local Companies and Friends On Faith Adventures Groups, in the light of this.

## **Children's and Youth Work Committee**

URC committees and online meeting

### **Resolution 10**

**page 47**

General Assembly requests all General Assembly committees and task groups to have at least one meeting each year entirely online and not during normal working hours (9-5 Monday to Friday).

### **Resolution 11**

**page 47**

General Assembly also encourages all General Assembly committees and task groups to have the ability for people to join online for all meetings, with 50% of meetings each year to be held outside of normal working hours (9-5 Monday to Friday).

### **Resolution 12**

**page 47**

General Assembly also invites all councils of the Church at a Synod and local church level to consider these resolutions to see where they can implement them into their structures.

## **Communications Committee**

Digital Charter and Social Media guidelines

### **Resolution 14**

**page 59**

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

## **Equalities Committee**

Affirmative action towards an anti-racist church

General Assembly instructs the equalities committee to form a small group to:

### **Resolution 15**

**page 74**

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).

**Resolution 16****page 74**

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

**Resolution 17****page 74**

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

**Resolution 18****page 74**

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

**Pensions Committee and Finance Committee**

URC Future Pensions – time for a change of approach

**Resolution 19****page 90**

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 20****page 90**

General Assembly, recognising that the significant changes to the legal and regulatory framework for defined benefit pension schemes are making the two current URC pension schemes disproportionately expensive for the benefits they deliver, agrees in principle to the closure to future accruals of both the Ministers' Pension Fund and the Final Salary Pension Scheme.

**Resolution 21****page 90**

General Assembly acknowledges the careful work that has already been done on these complex and sensitive matters, authorises further work to be done on developing new pensions arrangements for office holders and staff, with the aim of presenting detailed options to Mission Council in November 2021, and then final proposals to General Assembly 2022, for implementation no sooner than January 2023.

## **Finance and Ministries Committees**

Stipendiary Ministry target numbers

[Resolution 22](#)

[page 112](#)

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.

## **Ministries Committee**

URC Disciplinary Policy for Office Holders

[Resolution 23](#)

[page 125](#)

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

## **Ministries Committee**

House for Duty for ministers

[Resolution 24](#)

[page 133](#)

Mission Council adopts the policy on House for Duty as outlined in Appendix One.

## **Ministries Committee**

Schedule E

[Resolution 25](#)

[page 137](#)

General Assembly makes the changes to Schedule E as outlined in Appendix 1 of this paper.

## **Mission Committee**

Israel Palestine Report

[Resolution 26](#)

[page 155](#)

General Assembly instructs the Mission Committee to raise awareness about Holy Land pilgrimage amongst synods, local churches, ecumenical partners and individuals, underlining the importance of taking time to engage with Christian Palestinian communities and members of the local Christian churches in Israel and Palestine.

[Resolution 27](#)

[page 155](#)

General Assembly affirms that Israel is a country which is recognised within the international community of States, with all the rights and responsibilities attendant on that status.

**Resolution 28****page 155**

General Assembly affirms the United Nations commitment to a State of Palestine which is recognised within the international community of States, with all the rights and responsibilities attendant on that status.

**Resolution 29****page 155**

General Assembly condemns all acts of violence in the region of Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

**Resolution 30****page 155**

General Assembly expresses its deep concern over the worsening situation for the Palestinian people since Resolution 37 was passed in 2016, as evidenced by the subsequent work undertaken by the URC in response to that resolution. All Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, forced house demolitions and the acquisition of land by coercion, are breaches of international law. General Assembly, therefore, urges the Israeli Government to abide by international law and reverse its de facto annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories.

**Resolution 31****page 156**

General Assembly requests local churches and members to contact their constituency MPs to express concerns about the actions of the Israeli Government with respect to settlement expansion and house demolitions, and to ask what the UK is doing in response.

**Resolution 32****page 156**

General Assembly recognises the ethical principles-based approach of the URC Trusts and Pension Funds to investing and commends them in this long-established commitment, so that they can continue to avoid investing in any international company which facilitates the following activities in the occupied Palestinian territories:

- construction, production and services for the illegal settlements
- the economic exploitation of labour and the captive Palestinian market
- the illegal extraction and procurement of natural resources
- population control through private security and surveillance where it contravenes international law
- provision of specialised equipment for the forced demolition of Palestinian homes and structures
- building and servicing of the separation wall / barrier and its checkpoints on Palestinian land
- and any other breaches of international law.

**Resolution 33****page 156**

General Assembly affirms the ethical values of URC Synod Trusts and in this principled commitment requests them to ensure that they do not invest in any international company which facilitates the following activities in the occupied Palestinian territories:

- construction, production and services for the illegal settlements
- the economic exploitation of labour and the captive Palestinian market

- the illegal extraction and procurement of natural resources
- population control through private security and surveillance where it contravenes international law
- provision of specialised equipment for the forced demolition of Palestinian homes and structures
- building and servicing of the separation wall / barrier and its checkpoints on Palestinian land
- and any other breaches of international law as researched and listed by respected agencies such as the United Nations, the Who Profits Research Center (Israel), Investigate (The American Friends Service Committee).

#### **Resolution 34**

**page 157**

General Assembly requests local churches and members to be aware of EU guidelines on the labelling of products produced in Israeli settlements, and to consider not purchasing these from UK retailers.

#### **Resolution 35**

**page 157**

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.

### **Walking the Way Steering Group**

The future of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*

#### **Resolution 36**

**page 166**

In affirming that whole-of-life discipleship is the primary long-term focus of the United Reformed Church, General Assembly:

- a) requests that those reviewing the future of the URC, as agreed by Mission Council in March 2021, take full account of the importance of whole-of-life discipleship.
- b) instructs the Walking the Way Steering Group to continue its work until the end of the calendar year 2022, whereupon the work of the group in supporting the embedding of whole-of-life discipleship across the denomination will be continued by the Deputy General Secretaries for Discipleship and Mission.
- c) asks those responsible for the finances of the Church to find ways to continue the role of Walking the Way Project Manager until the end of the calendar year 2022. The Project Manager should focus firmly on embedding the whole-of-life discipleship ethos of Walking the Way across the denomination, working closely with the Deputy General Secretaries for Discipleship and Mission in collaboration with the Walking the Way Steering Group, whilst it is in place.

- d) invites all committees and groups connected with the life of the United Reformed Church to hold the whole-of-life discipleship ethos of Walking the Way at the heart of their work.
- e) instructs the Walking the Way Steering Group, through the Project Manager, and in collaboration with other Church House staff, to develop a range of resources to better embed the whole-of-life discipleship ethos of Walking the Way across the Church.
- f) welcomes collaborative work across the Church to facilitate and resource the whole-of-life discipleship ethos of Walking the Way across the Church's life, work and witness.

## **Nominations Committee**

Report to General Assembly 2021

**Resolution 37**

**page 171**

General Assembly appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on page 175 of the Book of Reports, subject to the additions and corrections contained in the supplementary report to Assembly.

## **Nominations Committee**

Eastern Synod Moderator

**Resolution 38**

**page 191**

General Assembly appoints the Revd Lythan Nevard to be Moderator of Eastern Synod from 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2028.

## **Ministerial Disciplinary Process and Incapacity Procedure**

The Clerk and General Secretary, for MIND (Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group)

**Resolution 39**

**page 194**

1. 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'.

**In the Functions of Synods**, 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'.

Delete section (B) of the Functions of Synods

**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.

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

'To discharge, concurrently with the synod, such of the functions and duties conferred or imposed by the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure upon the synod in respect of a minister or Church Related Community Worker (or former holder of either office) serving or resident within the Ecumenical Area, after proceedings involving that person are concluded, as the synod may from time to time request'.

**Paragraph 2.(6)** – After 'General Assembly is responsible for exercising the following Functions' delete the words in brackets.

**In the Functions of the General Assembly, Function (xviii)**, delete the words 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 40**

**page 197**

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 41**

**page 198**

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 42**

**page 198**

The provisions of the new Disciplinary Process concerning appointments to The Assembly and Synod Standing Panels for Discipline, the Disciplinary Investigation and Commission Panels, the Appeal Commissions List and the posts of Assembly Representative for Discipline, Secretary to Assembly Commissions for Discipline and to Disciplinary Appeal Commissions are to come into force at the close of this session of the General Assembly.

- b) 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 2021, so that all those appointed can receive initial training in the new procedures before the remainder of the Process comes into force.
- c) The new Process is to come fully into force at the close of the meeting of Assembly in 2022 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 1 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.
- d) The amendments to the Incapacity Procedure are to take effect at the close of the meeting of Assembly in 2022, provided that the amendments to the Basis and Structure mentioned in Resolution 1 have by then been ratified.

#### **Resolution 43**

**page 199**

The Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group to the Assembly Executive (MIND) is instructed to make arrangements to offer the training mentioned in Resolution 4.

### **Safeguarding Advisory Group**

Additions to URC Structure and Rules of Procedure

#### **Resolution 44**

**page 233**

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.

#### **Resolution 45**

**page 234**

**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.

### **Safeguarding Advisory Group**

Safeguarding Committee

**Resolution 46**

[page 237](#)

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.

### **Safeguarding Advisory Group**

Safeguarding policy statement

**Resolution 47**

[page 240](#)

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.

### **Safeguarding Advisory Group**

Safeguarding Training Framework

**Resolution 48**

[page 245](#)

- a) General Assembly adopts the Safeguarding Training Framework for use across the United Reformed Church.
- b) General Assembly instructs synods to oversee the implementation of the framework.

### **Safeguarding Advisory Group**

URC roles eligible for a criminal record check – updated

**Resolution 49**

[page 254](#)

General Assembly approves the updated matrix of roles eligible for a criminal record check (as outlined on pages 255 and 256)

## **West Midlands Synod**

### **Modern Day Slavery**

#### **Resolution 50**

**page 257**

**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.**

#### **Resolution 51**

**page 257**

**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.**