

The General Secretary proposed that Sue Brown, Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor, Jacky Embrey, and Helen Mee be appointed as a Facilitation Group should the need arise for one. The resolution was agreed by consensus. Minutes from the March 2016 meeting of Mission Council were approved by Mission Council, and signed by the Moderator.

16/29 - Matters arising

1. Greenbelt report

Mr Steve Summers and Mr Dan Morrell reported on the success of the URC's first partnership with Greenbelt, which had enabled the sharing of the URC's story with over 8000 people. The theme of the URC's input was 'Scrap the Church?', which enabled much conversation. The URC is now looking forward to Greenbelt 2017, which is themed 'Common Good'. Mission Council was shown a short film of the festival, after which the Moderator expressed the thanks of the council.

2. Past Case Review

Following the decision of Mission Council in March 2016, the Revd Richard Church advised that phase two was now in progress. Synods have been given case handling guidelines. Three cases have been recorded so far.

3. Peel Commission

The Revd Professor David Thompson drew Mission Council's attention to the only remaining outstanding matter from the Peel Commission set up under Resolution 38 of the 2012 Assembly. This concerned the discipline of Elders. It is unlikely that there will be a report quickly, as this matter is complex.

4. English Church Census – update from March

Mission Council of March 2016 decided not to take part in the English Church Census. The General Secretary intimated that this had eventually not taken place in England and Wales at all. A Scottish census had taken place but it was too early to know what had been learnt from it.

16/30 - Call for nominations for a vacancy of the Mission Council Advisory Group

Following the resignation of the Revd Gethin Rhys as Convenor of the Ministries Committee, the General Secretary called for nominations of Committee Conveners to fill the vacancy on the Mission Council Advisory Group.

16/31 - Announcement of change to paper J1

The General Secretary advised a typographical error in paper J1: the end date of Ms Catriona Wheeler's current term on the URC Trust should be amended from 2020 to 2018.

16/32 - Paper M2 – Consultation on Standing Orders

The Clerk, the Revd Michael Hopkins, reminded members of Mission Council of the request to complete an anonymous questionnaire on possible changes to Standing Orders, to simplify an over-complex document, and ease decision-making. He also reminded Mission Council this process was seeking advice, not making any decisions.

16/33 - Papers H1 and H2 – Ministries: Introducing the Issues

The Moderator invited the Revd Paul Whittle and the Revd Craig Bowman to propose papers H1 and H2. Points raised in discussion included the following:

- The implication of the number of church buildings
- The importance of ministry from the retired, and its geographical pattern.
- The M&M covenant, not just providing ministry where it can be afforded.
- The value of stipendiary and non-stipendiary ministries
- Managing decline in a missional way.
- Personal restrictions on the deployment of ministers e.g. family circumstances, sending vs calling theology.
- Concerns about how we define 'members' in relation to number of members per stipendiary minister. How do we include children and young people?
- Length of time after ordination to justify investment in ministerial training.

Mission Council adjourned at 1815.

Session 3

Mission Council resumed at 2000. The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, was in the chair.

16/34 - Paper F1 – Faith and Order: Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

The Moderator invited the Convenor-elect of the Faith and Order Committee, the Revd Dr Alan Spence, to propose the resolution.

Dr Spence and the General Secretary responded to questions, and under majority voting the resolution was passed unanimously:

- a) **Mission Council welcomes the fact that the World Communion of Reformed Churches is considering association with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.**
- b) **Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council instructs the Faith and Order Committee to communicate the United Reformed Church's warm and strong support for this association.**

16/35 - Paper D2 – Finance: The Windermere Centre – Cashflow 2016

The Clerk and the Treasurer advised that Paper D2 be discussed before Paper D1, since D2 related to 2016, and D1 to 2017. The Moderator agreed.

The Treasurer, Mr John Ellis, proposed the resolution, emphasising that this related purely to the year 2016:

Mission Council authorises a sum of up to £40k to be drawn from the Church's reserves to sustain the work of the Windermere Centre during the remainder of 2016.

The resolution was passed by consensus.

16/36 - Paper D1 – Education & Learning and Finance: The Windermere Centre – Ways Forward

The Deputy General Secretary, the Revd Richard Church, proposed the resolution on behalf of the officers of the Finance and Education and Learning Committees. During discussion, those officers confirmed that whatever the decision on the use of a building for a residential centre, every effort would be made to continue other work, particularly iChurch.

The business was remaindered, and Mission Council adjourned at 2115.

THURSDAY 20TH OCTOBER

Session 4

16/37 - Mission Council opened at 0915 with Morning Prayer. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair.

The General Secretary advised that there were three papers members had requested be removed from En Bloc: A1, M1 and X1.

16/38 -Papers H1 and H2 – Ministries: Introducing the Issues

Mission Council met in groups for discussion.

Session 5

Mission Council resumed at 1115. The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, was in the chair.

16/39 - Paper G1 – Finance, part 1: Budget for 2017

The Treasurer, Mr John Ellis, proposed the resolution:

Mission Council adopts the budget for 2017 as set out in the Appendix.

After discussion, the resolution was passed by consensus.

16/40 -Paper G1 – Finance, part 2: Budget 2018 and 2019

The Treasurer reported on budget projections for 2018 and 2019, noting possible difficulties in 2019.

The Moderator thanked Mr Ellis and everyone in the finance team.

16/41 - Paper D1 – Education & Learning & Finance: The Windermere Centre – Ways Forward

Mission Council resumed consideration of Paper D1.

The Revd Dr Tony Haws, Secretary of the Windermere Centre Management Committee, thanked Mission Council for the £40k support for 2016 recently agreed, and offered background information on the challenges faced by the centre. In the interests of fairness to the centre, Dr Haws' speech was not time-limited.

After discussion, Dr Haws made a further presentation on behalf of the Windermere Management Committee.

After further discussion, the business was again remaindered. Mission Council adjourned at 1300.

Session 6

Mission Council reconvened at 1400. The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, was in the chair.

16/42 - The Moderator invited Ms Grace Pengelly, Secretary for Church and Society, to speak on the ecumenical statement on Aleppo released by the Joint Public Issues Team that morning, on behalf of the United Reformed Church and several sister Churches.

16/43 - Paper D1 – Education & Learning & Finance: The Windermere Centre – Ways Forward

Discussion resumed, and it became clear that Mission Council felt unable both to give a clear opinion on which of the options offered in paper D1 it preferred, or to pass the original resolution as proposed in paper D1.

Various tentative forms of words were offered by several members of Mission Council, and the Moderator requested the officers of the Finance and Education and Learning Committees to consider these and report to a later session.

16/44 - Announcement from the Convenor Elect of the Children's and Youth Work Committee

The Convenor-elect of the Children's and Youth Work Committee, the Revd Jenny Mills, announced that Mrs Karen Morrison had tendered her resignation as Head of Children's and Youth Work with effect from 24 February 2017, and thanked Mrs Morrison for her work. Prompted by concerns of excessive workload following staff reductions, the Committee had asked Mrs Mills and others to undertake a full review of the post.

16/45 - Paper L1 – The redevelopment of Church House

The General Secretary, the Revd John Proctor, proposed the resolution:

Mission Council notes the information supplied by the Trust in paper L1 of Mission Council October 2016, and accepts the recommendation of the Trust that the redevelopment of Church House proceed on this basis.

After discussion, the resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority, with one vote against.

16/46 - Paper J2 - Nominations

The resolution was proposed by Mrs Carol Rogers, deputising for the Convenor of the Nominations Committee, and was passed unanimously:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council approves these nominations:

- 1. The Revd Ray Adams to become Convenor of the Nominations Committee from July 2017 for a period of 4 years, and Mr George Faris as Secretary-elect until 30 June 2017, and then as Secretary until 30 June 2021.**
- 2. For the Task Group to consider the future of General Assembly, with immediate effect, as mandated by Resolution 48 of General Assembly 2016: Mrs Val Morrison, the Revd Dick Gray, the Revd Adrian Bulley, and Mrs Margaret Marshall, with the Assembly Clerk, to report to General Assembly 2018.**

3. For the Task Group to support the Church's Environmental Policy, as mandated by Resolution 32 of General Assembly 2016: the Revd Rob Weston (Convenor), the Revd Trevor Jamison, Ms Charis Ollerenshaw, Mr Tom Veitch, to serve with immediate effect until 31 July 2022.
4. Education and Learning Committee: Mr Rudolph Wontumi, to serve with immediate effect until General Assembly 2020.
5. CRCW Programme Sub-Committee: the Revd Leonora Jagessar Visser't Hooft, to serve with immediate effect until General Assembly 2020.
6. Ministries Accreditation Sub-Committee: Mrs Margaret Brock, to serve with immediate effect until General Assembly 2020.
7. Communications Committee: Ms Eilidh Cameron, to serve with immediate effect until General Assembly 2020.

16/47 - En Bloc Business

The General Secretary formally proposed the resolutions contained in *En Bloc* business, being papers C1, I1, J1, M3, M4, O1, O2 and U1. He declared an interest in the resolutions in Paper O2. All were passed by consensus.

C1: Mission Council thanks the Communications Committee for its work on the publications policy contained in paper C1 of Mission Council October 2016, and directs the committee to work on the basis of this policy until further notice.

I1: Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly resolves:

1. to request and direct United Reformed Trust (URCT) as Trustee of the Jewish Fund (the fund) to amend the purposes of the fund to 'The promotion of contact, understanding and respect among Christians, Jews and members of other faith communities, in ways consonant with the beliefs and practices of the United Reformed Church'
2. that the Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, in conjunction with the convenor and members of the Interfaith Reference Group draw up parameters for the application of the fund and a procedure for processing applications to be submitted for approval to the Mission Committee
3. to authorise the Moderator and Clerk of General Assembly to sign any deed or memorandum required for and on behalf of General Assembly as required and directed in (1) above.

J1: Mission Council nominates the persons listed to serve as Trustees of the URC Trust and of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd with immediate effect until the dates indicated:

The URC Trust

Mr Neil Mackenzie (3) [2020]

Mr Peter Pay (9) [2022]

Dr Ian Harrison (8) [2020]

Mr Alastair Forsyth (4) [2020]

Mrs Margaret Thompson (7) [2020]

Mr Emmanuel Osae [December 2019]

Mrs Val Morrison [2018]

Ms Catriona Wheeler [2018]

URC Ministers Pensions Trust

Chair: Mr Richard Nunn

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Members of the URC:

Miss Margaret Atkinson [2018]

Mr Andrew Perkins [2017]

Mrs Bridget Micklem [2019]

M4: Following the passing of Resolution 7 of the Assembly of 2016, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly:

- (a) notes that under the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2016 (Isle of Man), the marriage of same sex couples is now lawful in the Isle of Man;**
- (b) recognises that the competence and functions of Church Meetings in the Isle of Man are no different from those of any other Church Meeting in the United Reformed Church;**
- (c) accepts that the definition and role of a 'governing authority' in the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2016 are in essentials the same as those of a 'governing authority' under section 26(A)(1) of the Marriage Act 1949 in England and Wales; and therefore**
- (d) declares, for the avoidance of doubt, that paragraph B of Resolution 7 applies to Church Meetings in the Isle of Man in the context of the Manx legislation as it does to Church Meetings in England and Wales; and further**
- (e) directs that, in the Isle of Man, paragraphs C, E and F of Resolution 7 shall apply with the necessary modifications.**

O2: Mission Council resolves that:

- a) The line manager of the General Secretary should be a General Assembly Moderator, whether elect, current or immediate past.**
- b) The GA Moderator who will undertake the role of line manager of the General Secretary will be selected by a group comprising the Officers of Assembly, but excluding the General Secretary.**
- c) This group will also have the authority to seek advice from a person with line management experience and it is proposed that this should be a member of the HR Advisory Group.**

U1: Recognising that the Human Sexuality Task Group appointed in 2012 has completed its work, Mission Council resolves to thank and discharge the members of the Group.

Mission Council adjourned at 1600.

Session 7

Mission Council reconvened at 16:30. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair.

16/48 - Promotion of Reform Magazine

Mr Peter Knowles and Dr Steve Tomkins spoke about the importance of increasing the number of subscriptions to Reform magazine.

16/49 -Paper D1 – Education & Learning & Finance: The Windermere Centre – Ways Forward

Before discussion resumed, the Clerk apologised to the Moderator and to Mission Council that he had neglected to remind the Moderator that those who had shown a blue card towards the end of the previous discussion had not been offered an opportunity to speak, and requested the Moderator to offer such opportunity immediately, which the Moderator did.

Discussion continued, but it was not possible to find consensus. The Moderator invited the facilitation group to look at this business, and reminded Mission Council that although a variety of outcomes were possible, a decision of some kind would need to be made before Mission Council ended, so if consensus was still not possible the matter may be deemed urgent and addressed by majority voting.

16/50 - Papers H1 and H2 – Ministries: Resolving some issues

The Convenor of the Ministries Committee, the Revd Paul Whittle, thanked Mission Council for their group discussions on papers H1 and H2, and proposed several resolutions:

A) 16/51 - Resolution A

Mission Council asks the Ministries Committee to bring proposals for a reworked practice of call with the aim of:

- **Synods and local churches together discerning opportunities for the best use of ministers reflecting the aspirations of God's people and the needs of the local congregations;**
- **Ministers being called to service by synods;**
- **synods having the flexibility to move ministers as appropriate in response to the discernment of new opportunities;**
- **Synods engaging local congregations in a process of learning, support and encouragement to enable widespread understanding and acceptance of this understanding and working out of call.**

After discussion, including minor changes of wording reflected in the text above, the resolution was passed by consensus.

B) 16/52 - Resolution B

Mission Council asks the Ministries Committee to produce a scheme for making M&M funds available to Synods for the support of other ministries, for consideration at a future meeting of Mission Council.

After discussion, the resolution was passed by consensus.

C) 16/53 - Resolution C

Mission Council reaffirms the covenantal understanding that churches contribute to the M&M fund according to their ability and receive from it according to their mission needs. Mission Council calls for further work to be done by Ministries and Finance to promote the communication of the achievements of the covenant, to enable local churches to own and celebrate their wider mission role.

After discussion, the resolution was passed by consensus.

D) 16/54 - Resolution D

Recognising that Synods are raising M&M contributions and assessing need and local church resources in different ways, Mission Council asks the Resource Sharing Task Group to identify the formulae used in each synod and report to Mission Council regarding the commonalities and differences.

This resolution was passed by consensus.

The Moderator thanked Mr Whittle and Mr Bowman.

Mission Council adjourned at 1830.

Session 8

Mission Council resumed at 2000. The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, was in the chair.

16/55 - Paper I2 – Local Unity in Mission

The Revd Bernie Collins formally proposed the resolution, and invited the Revd Dr David Cornick, General Secretary of Churches Together in England, to address Mission Council. During discussion, concerns were expressed by the Legal Advisor about possible liability issues, and the resolution was re-worded thus:

Mission Council encourages Churches Together in England to explore the implications of Recommendation 4b of the New Framework for Local Unity in Mission document: that the denominations involved in specific instances of local co-operative working (including existing Local Ecumenical Partnerships) take responsibility for the oversight of that work; and that if they look to a Sponsoring Body to facilitate this they should nevertheless continue to hold that responsibility.

The resolution was passed by Consensus. Mission Council was led in prayer, and adjourned at 2115.

Session 9

16/56 Mission Council resumed at 0930, opening worship included remembrance of the 50th anniversary of the Aberfan disaster, to which the Clerk of the Synod of Wales, the Revd Adrian Bulley, made suitable contribution. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair.

16/57 - Election for the Mission Council Advisory Group vacancy

The General Secretary announced that two nominations for the Mission Council Advisory Group had been received: Mr Peter Knowles and the Revd Helen Mee. A paper vote would be taken during the morning's coffee break.

16/58 - Paper D1 – Education & Learning & Finance: The Windermere Centre – Ways Forward

The Moderator invited the Facilitation Group to propose the resolution that came from their consultations and deliberations, which the Revd Jacky Embrey proposed, emphasising pastoral care and taking professional advice:

Mission Council, mindful of the importance of:

- **The pastoral care of the Windermere Centre staff**
- **The requirement for proper consultation with the staff**
- **The necessity to take seriously any alternatives suggested in that consultation**
- **The value of the work of the Resource Centre for Learning (RCL) to the denomination**
- **The need to consult with the URC Trust, the Windermere Management Committee, the North Western Synod, and Carver URC**

Instructs the Finance and the Education and Learning Committees to look at the implications of ceasing to use the Windermere Centre building and to bring to Mission Council in May 2017 detailed proposals to enable a final decision to be made in the light of all the above consultations.

Mission Council thanks Christian Guild for its continuing support to the Windermere Centre but does not wish to pursue the option of a formal partnership.

Mission Council agrees that the budget support arrangements for the Centre made in November 2015 should remain in place until at least its May 2017 meeting.

Mission Council requests the Education and Learning Committee to bring forward creative proposals for the continuation and development of the RCL. This should include exploring how the work on digital discipleship may be carried forward.

The Moderator reminded Mission Council that consensus decision making was still in operation but that a decision of some sort needed to be made by 10:30am.

After discussion, two blue cards were raised. Both cardholders spoke, and agreed their concerns had been heard. The resolution was passed by consensus.

Mission Council was asked to keep this business confidential until the staff of the Windermere Centre had been informed. Information would be placed on the URC website at this point.

16/59 - Paper A1 – General Assembly 2016 and plans for General Assembly 2018

The Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee, the Revd James Breslin, presented the report, after which Mr Breslin responded to questions, noting that there were a number of factors relating to not having a children's Assembly, particularly the ability to staff safely such an event.

16/60 - Paper M1 – Walking the Way

The Revd Richard Church, Co-Convenor of the Walking the Way Steering Group, presented the report. During discussion concerns revealed some significant lack of understanding of the programme, including synods' uncertainty of how to promote it.

Mission Council adjourned for a short break at 1110.

Session 10

Mission Council resumed at 1145.

16/61 - Paper X1 – Northerly Synods Collaboration – Report on progress and learning

The Moderators of the northerly Synods presented their report. During discussion it was agreed that there was no requirement for the northerly Synods to report to Mission Council, and that these processes should remain informal, however they evolved between Synods. These partnerships were not bodies, entities, formal communication channels, or councils of the Church.

16/62 - Thanks to the Human Sexuality Task Group

The Revd Dr David Pickering expressed thanks for the work of the Human Sexuality Task Group.

16/63 - Election for the Mission Council Advisory Vacancy

The General Secretary announced that Mr Peter Knowles had been elected. He will serve for four years, or until he ceases to be a Committee Convenor.

16/64 - Report on questionnaires in relation to Paper M2

The Clerk reported that 51 questionnaires had been returned. There was a desire for standardisation and simplification of the Standing Orders, but not for radical change in any direction.

The Moderator thanked everyone involved in the Council meeting, and the General Secretary thanked the Moderators.

16/65 - Mission Council closed with worship, ending at 1300, to meet again on 12 to 14 May 2017 at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire.