



Ten statements of our mission and purpose

Statement 1: Spirituality and Prayer

We will grow in our practice of prayer and spirituality, nurturing strength for our witness to Jesus Christ, and developing our discernment of where God is and what God is calling us to do by reading and studying the Bible and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our faith must be at the heart of all we do. Faith is nurtured by worship and prayer, by reading and studying the Bible, by the life of our church community and by how we practice it from day to day. We must therefore seek to engage more deeply with Bible study and prayer, seek to develop worship that is engaging and joyful, seek to live faithfully and hopefully as a church community and as individuals, confident that God still talks to us and shows us how to live.

Some suggested indicators:

<i>Local Indicators</i>	<i>Synod Indicators</i>	<i>Assembly Indicators</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing opportunities for prayer and Bible study in small groups and in a variety of styles. • The number of people for whom prayer and Bible study is a natural habit - not just on Sunday. • Directly involving children and young people in prayer, Bible study and leading worship. • How far we see all we do as an 'act of worship'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How far worship, prayer and Bible study forms a part of all Synod meetings and committees. • The number of churches supported and resourced to develop their spirituality and prayer. • The number of churches taking part in specific initiatives to engage more deeply with spirituality and prayer e.g. Vision4Life. • Demonstrating clear links between policies and plans and spirituality, Bible study and prayer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How far worship, prayer and Bible study forms a part of all Synod meetings and committees. • The number of churches supported and resourced to develop their spirituality and prayer. • The number of churches taking part in specific initiatives to engage more deeply with spirituality and prayer e.g. Vision4Life. • Demonstrating clear links between policies and plans and spirituality, Bible study and prayer.

Statement 2: Identity

The URC will be a church where every local congregation will be able to say who they are, what they do and why they do it.

One of our greatest strengths is our diversity and flexibility which allows our churches to serve so creatively and effectively across a wide variety of contexts. However, constant pragmatism can lead to a lack of identity, focus and purpose. Our identity in Jesus Christ is central to our mission. We want to encourage local churches to develop mission plans specific to their local contexts, which are owned by the membership of the church, allowing them to articulate clearly to friends, colleagues and neighbours ‘who they are, what they do, and why they do it.’

Some suggested indicators:

<i>Local Indicators</i>	<i>Synod Indicators</i>	<i>Assembly Indicators</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having a clear ‘mission plan’ understood and owned by all members.• Having an up to date ‘Welcome Pack’, noticeboard and website - including resources for children.• Offering a warm space, warm coffee and warm welcome to people from any background.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of churches with a clear mission plan - expressed through a Local Mission & Ministry Review.• Provision of resources to support, enable and encourage local churches to develop their local mission plans.• Demonstrating clear links between policies and plans and ‘who we are’ as a denomination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of churches taking part in Vision4Life and the Campaign programmes exploring URC faith and mission.• Demonstrable support to Synods to nurture and develop their own regional and national identities.• Demonstrating clear links between policies and plans and ‘who we are’ as a denomination.

Statement 3: Christian Ecumenical Partnerships

We will be more confident in our identity, valuing the treasures of our tradition, discerning when to seek ecumenical partnerships, and when and how to seek the further unity of the church.

A lot has developed ecumenically since our unions in 1972, 1981 and 2000; the focus has changed from seeking further union, to forming a wide variety of partnerships - at local and national levels. Whilst our instincts remain deeply rooted in seeking further unity, we do not believe our dreams are served well by lacking in confidence, purpose and identity. Being confident in ourselves and working with others are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, empowered by the Holy Spirit, celebrating and offering our many gifts will make our partnerships stronger and may speed the way to further union.

Some suggested indicators:

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing people, finances and buildings with other local churches, e.g. youth work. • Regular opportunities for worship, prayer and reflection with other local churches for people of all ages. • Hosting or supporting Christian activities and churches not part of mainstream denominations. • Coming together with other churches to run local mission projects. • Speaking with confidence about the gifts of our URC tradition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of ecumenical partnerships appropriate to the Synod's context. • Opportunities provided to learn about our different traditions with Christian ecumenical partners. • Activities for children and young people to meet with others from different Christian traditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities provided to learn about our different traditions with Christian ecumenical partners. • The amount of Assembly-level activity and resourcing carried out in partnership with ecumenical partners. • Demonstrating clear links between our national, European and international ecumenical partnerships and the ministry and mission of our local churches.

Statement 4: Community Partnerships

We will be a church that is more active in the life of local neighbourhoods.

Many churches already have strong and long-standing links with their local communities - but others have become gathered congregations with little connection to the places where they meet to worship. An incarnational understanding of mission calls us to shape - and to be shaped - by the communities in which we worship and serve. We want to encourage local churches to get involved in their local neighbourhoods in new ways, being creative and taking risks in forming active partnerships with other local agencies, working with people of other faiths in the area to seek the benefit of those that live or work in the area.

Some suggested indicators:

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing an active role to run or support a local community project. • The number of members actively involved in local civic and political life. • Support given to members working or volunteering in local community-based organisations. • Playing an active role in work with children and young people 'outside' of the church. • Having a 'buildings policy' that encourages local groups who share our values and concerns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of churches running some form of community project or working in partnership with other local agencies. • Direct support through grants, training or other resources for community-based mission. • Involvement with other regionally-based initiatives addressing wider social, economic and environmental issues, e.g. Regional Development Agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct support through grants, training or other resources for community-based mission. • Involvement with other national initiatives addressing wider social, economic and environmental issues, e.g. community development networks.

Statement 5: Hospitality and diversity

We will be a church committed to becoming even more welcoming and hospitable, and embracing all people equally.

Our story is one of a people from rich and diverse journeys. Differences, not similarities, are the source of our vitality and strength in our common faith in Jesus Christ. This includes our church heritages, theologies, cultures, national heritages and life experiences. As a multicultural church we are building on a biblical understanding of God’s mission to which the gospel calls us to living God’s word, embodying God’s love and promoting God’s justice as we aim to include, affirm and welcome all. We will continue to live our calling of prophetic witness to holiness, hope and reconciliation, as we seek greater participation of all to reflect our rich and diverse journeys in all of our life together as a Church.

Some suggested indicators:

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The involvement of children and young people in all aspects of church life. • The extent to which the congregation reflects the make-up of the local community. • The extent to which the congregation recognises and affirms other aspects of diversity, including theological diversity. • The number of members who have undertaken ‘training’ about diversity and inclusiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of training and awareness activities about diversity and inclusiveness. • The number of churches who regularly monitor their membership and eldership to ensure inclusiveness. • Representation and participation of all minority and excluded groups (as spelt out by our Equal Opportunities policy and the Equalities Act 2010) on key councils, committees and task groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the diversity of the denomination (measured through church Annual Returns). • Appropriate numbers of black and minority ethnic ministers, church-related community workers, staff and candidates. • Representation and participation of all minority and excluded groups (as spelt out by our Equal Opportunities policy and the Equalities Act 2010) on key councils, committees and task groups.

Statement 6: Evangelism

We will be more confident to engage in evangelism, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God with friends, families and strangers, through story and action.

We need to re-claim an understanding and practice of evangelism. Learning to tell the Christian story and our ever evolving stories of faith needs to be a regular part of church life so that disciples of all ages are equipped and encouraged to share the good news of Jesus Christ in their daily lives. Equipped with a robust and reflective knowledge of the Bible and a commitment to openness, our churches will be communities where faith is explored and the questions of the present day engaged with. The call to ‘go’ into the world and ‘make’ new disciples (Matthew 28:19) being heard and taken up with imagination and creativity inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Some suggested indicators:

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning and carrying out activities whose primary function is to share the gospel.• Ensuring that worship regularly includes some form of call to faith.• The number of local church activities which attract and involve children and young people from outside the church.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The number of churches drawing on Synod resources for evangelism training and networking.• The number of churches actively engaging with Vision4Life and the Campaign programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The number of churches drawing on Assembly resources for evangelism training and networking.• The number of churches actively engaging with Vision4Life and Campaign programmes.

Statement 7: Church Growth

We will be a growing church with an increasing membership.

The numerical decline of the United Reformed Church raises profound concerns for the denomination's future sustainability. And yet a significant number of local congregations are growing in number - and other denominations are experiencing local growth points too. Whilst our growth must be qualitative in terms of our spirituality and fellowship (our faithfulness), we should be bold enough to seek quantitative growth too (our fruitfulness). With resources such as the *Vision4Life* evangelism year, *the Campaign* and *Fresh Expressions* at our disposal we have every reason to be hopeful that our denomination can grow again. We must also explore and embrace new forms of the emerging church.

Some suggested indicators:

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The numbers of new people attending church and returning for a second time. • The number of new church members. • The number of children and young people who are actively involved in church life. • Developing a 'fresh expression' or new way of doing church. • An increased profile and awareness of the church in local media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of new church members and adherents across the whole Synod. • The number of churches supported to explore Fresh Expressions or new ways of doing church. • The number of new 'communities of faith' within the Synod. • The number of people involved in TLS and similar programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The growth in URC membership by 2020. • The number of people candidating to be ministers and church-related community workers. • An increased profile and awareness of the URC in national media. • The number of churches supported to explore Fresh Expressions or new ways of doing church.

Statement 8: Global Partnerships

We will be a church that is an active partner in God's global mission with other churches around the world.

We will continue our active participation in the world church, knowing that together we will more faithfully discern God's action and call, and that by sharing our resources we will be able to respond obediently and effectively in the costly struggle for peace with justice.

Some suggested indicators:

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An active and regular link with a church overseas.• Active participation in the <i>Commitment for Life</i> programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The number of churches involved with <i>Commitment for Life</i>.• The reach and impact of the Synod's Global Partners programme.• Development of a regular 'youth exchange' programme with a global partner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The number of churches involved with <i>Commitment for Life</i>.• The take-up of resources to enable children and young people to engage with the world church.• The number of synods and churches supported to link up with global partners.

Statement 9: Justice and Peace

We will be a church committed to peacemaking and reconciliation that keeps faith with the poor and challenges injustice.

The kingdom of God is a realm in which compassion, justice and peace prevail. The gospel summons us as peacemakers and calls us to work against poverty and the structures that keep people oppressed. Together with our ecumenical partners we need to influence those in power and equip local congregations to take action against everything that undermines or destroys fullness of life. If the church, local, across the UK, and international, is to be part of a movement for change in our world, it will need to discern and understand the contexts in which we live and the issues which affect us. Only by developing a sound reputation for intelligent critique and co-ordinated action will we be able to challenge unjust structures and seek economic justice from the local to the global marketplace.

Some suggested indicators:

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a group which meets regularly to discuss and act on issues of justice and peace. • Active participation in a particular activity or campaign addressing an issue of justice. • Support to individuals - especially children and young people - who are involved in particular campaigns. • Integrating justice issues within worship in a planned and regular way. • Becoming a fair trade church. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of churches actively participating in a Synod or Assembly-promoted activity or campaign addressing an issue of justice. • Endorsement, implementation and monitoring of the revised ethical investment policy of the URC. • The number of churches supported and equipped to address issues of justice and peace in the local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of churches actively participating in a Synod or Assembly-promoted activity or campaign addressing an issue of justice. • The demonstrable impact of Mission Council or General Assembly resolutions on justice issues. • Children and young people supported and equipped to address issues of justice and peace through involvement in Children's Assembly, FURY etc.

Statement 10: The Integrity of Creation

We will be a church that has taken significant steps to safeguard the integrity of creation, to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The changing climate and its consequences for all life on planet earth cannot be over emphasised as the most significant underlying issue of our time. Being an intergenerational community of faith that trust in the God of creation past, present and to come, it is vital that the church recognizes the reality and fear present in environmental debates and lives hopefully in the present climate. Too often the ‘prophets’ who see the truth and challenge for change are outside the church. Our churches, reflecting faith in God the creator and sustainer of life in all its fullness, must discover the radical voice of care for the earth that is supported by the way we live.

Some suggested indicators:

Local Indicators	Synod Indicators	Assembly Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out an environmental audit and implementing the resulting action plan. • Giving voice to the God whose life and love is expressed in all creation through worship, Bible study and prayer. • Involving children and young people in activities focusing on care for the environment. • Production of a piece of community artwork celebrating the Creator God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of ‘eco-congregations’ or churches with clear environmental action plans. • Developing and implementing plans to become an ‘eco-Synod’. • The number of churches receiving training and support on issues of climate justice and environmental care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant year-on-year cuts to the URC’s carbon footprint. • The development of a FURY strategy responding to the challenge of climate change.