

Record of Assembly 2020



The
United
Reformed
Church





The
**United
Reformed
Church**
**General
Assembly**

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Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Matters for consideration and action..... | 2 |
| Mission Council minutes | 3 |
| General Assembly minutes | 10 |
| Church closures..... | 19 |
| Jubilee ministers, 2019-2020..... | 44 |
| Nominations..... | 45 |
| Address to the throne..... | 64 |
| Assembly commissions..... | 66 |
| Disciplinary and incapacity cases..... | 67 |
| Resolutions index..... | 68 |

Matters for consideration and action from Mission Council, Friday 10 July

The list of Mission Council resolutions below are of particular relevance to Synods, local churches and ministers.

Virtual meetings – for all councils of the Church

Resolutions 32 and 33 are relevant to all councils of the Church, including Synods, Church Meetings and Elders' Meetings. They confirm that virtual meetings may be legitimately arranged and held, and give standing orders for conducting these.

Synods

The following resolutions are particularly relevant:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 15 Climate emergency | 34 Children and Youth Friendly Churches |
| 17 Design of printed URC materials | 37 Legacies of slavery consultation |
| 25 Pastoral supervision | 39 Synod nominations to Mission Committee |
| 29 Safeguarding | 40 Safeguarding training |

Local churches

The following resolutions are particularly relevant:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 14 Linking students to local churches | 29 Safeguarding |
| 15 Climate emergency | 34 Children and Youth Friendly churches |
| 16 Local church websites | 37 Legacies of slavery consultation |
| 18 Reform magazine | 40 Safeguarding training |

Ministers

The following resolutions are particularly relevant:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 20 Pensions | 29 Safeguarding |
| 23 Gift policy | 40 Safeguarding training |
| 25 Pastoral supervision | |

The wording of these resolutions is in the draft minutes of Mission Council, on pages 3 to 7 of this Assembly Record.

The papers that explain Resolutions 1-30 were prepared in the hope of an Assembly meeting, and they are therefore in the *Book of Reports*. Those that relate to Resolutions 31-33 and 42 were drafted after the *Book of Reports* was compiled. Those that relate to Resolutions 34-41 were originally prepared for the cancelled Mission Council meeting in March. All of these papers are on the URC website, here: www.urc.org.uk/july-2020.html

Draft minutes of the United Reformed Church Mission Council

First session

The meeting of Mission Council began at 10.30 with worship led by the Revd David Coaker. The Moderator, Mr Derek Estill, was in the chair.

The Moderator welcomed everyone, identifying new members and those attending as alternates. An apology was received from the Revd Kevin Watson.

Those attending for the first time or attending in a new capacity are listed below:

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| The Revd Dr Jason Askew | <i>Synod of Wales representative</i> |
| The Revd Martyn Coe | <i>North Western Synod representative</i> |
| Ms Lorraine Downer | <i>Thames North Synod representative</i> |
| The Revd Gerald England | <i>South Western Synod representative</i> |
| Mr Alan Kirby | <i>Southern Synod representative</i> |
| Ms Ella Lemon | <i>East Midlands Synod representative</i> |
| Mr Tony Obi-Ezekpazu | <i>Thames North Synod representative</i> |
| The Revd Geoffrey Clarke | <i>Moderator of East Midlands Synod</i> |
| The Revd Brian Jolly | <i>Moderator of North Western Synod</i> |
| The Revd Jamie Kissack | <i>Moderator of Yorkshire Synod</i> |
| Mr Richard Lockley | <i>West Midlands Synod representative</i> |
| The Revd Dr Robert Pope | <i>Convenor-nominate of Faith and Order</i> |
| Ms Karen Campbell | <i>Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries</i> |
| Ms Jo Harris | <i>Youth representative</i> |
| Ms Victoria Turner | <i>Youth representative</i> |

The Clerk moved Resolutions 32 and 33:

Resolution 32

Virtual meetings

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves to make the addition to the Rules of Procedure covering virtual attendance at physical meetings and virtual meetings, with immediate effect.

Mission Council *agreed*.

Resolution 33

Standing Orders for virtual meetings

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council:

- a) **re-designates the Standing Orders as “Standing Orders for physical meetings”, with immediate effect;**
- b) **adopts the “Standing Orders for virtual meetings”, with immediate effect;**
- c) **declares, for the avoidance of doubt, that where a majority of those present at a meeting are physically gathered, it shall be a physical meeting conducted according to the Standing Orders for physical meetings, and where a majority of those present at a meeting are not physically gathered, it shall be a virtual meeting, conducted according to the Standing Orders for virtual meetings;**
- d) **reminds the whole United Reformed Church of the longstanding provision in the Rules of Procedure: “1.3 ...The Standing Orders which are printed in the *Book of***

Reports to General Assembly shall apply to all meetings of the Assembly and the Mission Council and, in so far as they are applicable, to meetings of Synods, district councils and their committees.”

Mission Council *agreed*.

The General Secretary, the Revd John Proctor, proposed en bloc, Resolutions:

Resolution 10 **Church changes – closures and new causes**

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council notes the closures, with praise to God for the worship and witness offered by these fellowships across the years.

Resolution 11 **Church changes – closures and new causes**

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council celebrates Church Without Walls as a new ecumenical worshipping congregation within Walton Churches Partnership, Milton Keynes, and therefore celebrates it as a new worshipping congregation within the United Reformed Church.

Resolution 12 **Church changes – closures and new causes**

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council receives the ecumenical New Lubbesthorpe Project as a Mission Project of United Reformed Church.

Resolution 13 **Church changes – closures and new causes**

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council receives the new pieces of mission work at Love’s Farm, St Neots, and at North Avenue, Chelmsford, as Mission Projects of the United Reformed Church.

Resolution 14: Children’s and Youth Work Committee

Mission Council urges all United Reformed Churches (especially those near universities and colleges) to use Fusion’s Student Linkup and SCM Connect, enabling students to explore a wider range of churches and have more opportunity to commit to a place of worship that they feel is appropriate.

Resolution 15: Children’s and Youth Work Committee

Mission Council recognises the climate emergency and challenges all councils, committees and local churches to do everything possible to make URC events and activities eco-friendly, as urged by URC Youth Assembly.

Resolution 16: Communications Committee

Mission Council encourages all churches without websites to set one up as a matter of urgency, and to consider using the URC’s iChurch initiative.

Resolution 17: Communications Committee

Mission Council welcomes the new look and feel of print publications used since 2019, and encourages all Synods, committees and departments to use the design and digital visual identity guidance from the communications team, so that all materials produced by the Church can share the same quality and consistency.

Resolution 18: Communications Committee

Mission Council encourages all members and friends of the Church to read Reform, the magazine of the United Reformed Church, and to subscribe to it so that, as it also approaches its 50th anniversary, it can continue to challenge, debate, refresh, enrich and inform.

Resolution 19: Education and Learning Committee

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council endorses the direction for the Education and Learning Committee described in the Way Forward paper on pp91-98 of the *Book of Reports*.

Resolution 21: Pensions Committee

Mission Council thanks Dr Chris Evans, on his retirement as Convener of the Pensions Committee, for his conscientious and careful service in this role and thanks all those across the Church who are involved in the current Integrated Risk Management Project for their hard work and their willingness to work towards a resolution of the significant pensions challenges that face the Church.

Resolution 23: Ministries Committee

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council adopts the Gift Policy contained on pp157-8 of the *Book of Reports*.

Resolution 26: Environmental Task Group

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council directs the Environmental Task Group to consult on a travel and expenses policy for the URC which (i) encourages consideration of the purpose of travel and its environmental impact, (ii) introduces a carbon budget for international travel on URC business, and (iii) incentivises low-carbon travel modes, with a view that proposals should be brought to a future General Assembly, or to the Assembly Executive if necessary.

Resolution 28: Nominations Committee

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pp204-223 of the *Book of Reports*, subject to the additions, amendments and corrections contained in the supplementary report to Assembly.

Resolution 31: Ministerial Disciplinary Process

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appoints Morag McLintock as General Assembly Representative in the Ministerial Disciplinary Process from 11 July 2020 until the close of General Assembly 2021.

Resolution 34: Children's and Youth Work Committee

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council welcomes the review of the United Reformed Church's Child Friendly Church Award and commends the new Children and Youth Friendly Church scheme to replace this from 2020 as an award to be made by children's and youth work committee on behalf of the denomination to churches completing the approval process.

Resolution 35: Communications Committee

- a) Mission Council recognises the contribution of Reform to the life and work of the United Reformed Church and notes the commitment of the Communications Committee and staff team to continue its growth and development over the five-year period from January 2021 to December 2025, a period that includes the 50th anniversary of the URC and the magazine.
- b) Mission Council acknowledges with thanks the work of the Reform team and the wider Communications Team in making savings and reducing the financial cost to the Church, and endorses the further changes outlined in the report.

- c) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, and noting the decision in March 2020 by the Officers of Assembly to support Reform in 2021, Mission Council resolves to support Reform over the subsequent four year period to December 2025 by continuing with a reduced annual subsidy, not to exceed £50,000 annually, and asks the Communications Committee to make regular reports to Mission Council.

Resolution 37: Mission Committee

Mission Council accepts the plan to develop the Legacies of Slavery recommendations presented to MC in November 2019 and to consult with synods and local churches between the General Assemblies of 2020 and 2021, with the aim of bringing refined resolutions to General Assembly in 2021 or 2022.

Resolution 38: Mission and Discipleship

Walking the Way

Mission Council instructs the Walking the Way Steering Group to establish a small task group to bring forward detailed proposals for the celebration of the URC's upcoming 50th anniversary.

Resolution 39: Nominations Committee

Mission Council approves the proposals for synod nominations to the Mission Committee.

Resolution 40: Safeguarding Advisory Group

Mission Council expects a standardised approach to safeguarding training across the United Reformed Church and strongly encourages all those who are working with children, young people and adults at risk in the life of the Church to access the new basic safeguarding training.

Resolution 41: Mission Council Advisory Group

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council, approves the pattern for the routine reporting of Assembly Committees as set out in Paper U1.

Resolution 42: Contingency plans for next meeting of Mission Council

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council authorises the Officers of Assembly to take such steps as may be needed to arrange the next meeting of Mission Council, as either a virtual or a physical meeting.

Mission Council *agreed*.

The Moderator, the Revd Nigel Uden, took the chair.

Resolution 25: Ministries Committee

Pastoral supervision

The Revd Paul Whittle, Convenor of the Ministries Committee, outlined the proposed policy for the implementation of Pastoral Supervision, and moved Resolution 25:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council adopts the policy for pastoral supervision set out on pp162-7 of the *Book of Reports*.

Following discussion, Mission Council *agreed*.

Resolution 29: Safeguarding Advisory Group

Safeguarding

The Revd Richard Church, Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship), reported on the work of the Safeguarding Advisory Group and moved Resolution 29:

- a) **Having already endorsed the safeguarding strategic plan 2020-2025, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, acknowledges that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility in the United Reformed Church;**

- b) **Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council directs all local churches and synods and those who oversee safeguarding arrangements in the Church to implement the safeguarding strategic plan in ways that promote the welfare of the URC and the well-being of the community in which the Church is placed.**

Mission Council adjourned at 11.25

Second session

Mission Council resumed at 11.40; the Moderator, the Revd Nigel Uden, took the chair.

The Revd Fran Kissack proposed an amendment to Resolution 29, adding the words '*and of individuals with whom the church comes into contact*'. This was seconded by Ms Rita Griffiths.

Following discussion, the amendment was *carried*.

Ms Victoria Turner proposed an amendment to the Resolution, to replace '*the welfare of the URC*' with '*welfare in the URC*'. This was seconded by Mr Ian Hardie. The amendment was *carried*.

The amended Resolution 29 was put:

- a) **Having already endorsed the safeguarding strategic plan 2020-2025, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, acknowledges that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility in the United Reformed Church.**
- b) **Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council directs all local churches and synods and those who oversee safeguarding arrangements in the Church to implement the safeguarding strategic plan in ways that promote welfare in the URC, the well-being of the community in which the Church is placed, and of individuals with whom the church comes into contact.**

Mission Council *agreed*.

Resolution 27: Mission and Discipleship

Walking the Way

Ms Francis Brien, Deputy General Secretary (Mission), introduced the Resolution:

Mission Council, in affirming the work of the Walking the Way Steering Group, encourages those who plan the Church's budget to seek ways of funding its continuing work at the level indicated on p202 of the Book of Reports, according to the priorities set out on pp195-201.

The General Secretary moved an amendment: to add the words '*to the end of the calendar year 2021*'; this was seconded by Mrs Jane Baird.

The amendment was *carried*.

The amended Resolution 27 was put:

Mission Council, in affirming the work of the Walking the Way Steering Group, encourages those who plan the Church's budget to seek ways of funding its continuing work at the level indicated on p202 of the *Book of Reports*, according to the priorities set out on pp195-201, to the end of the calendar year 2021.

Mission Council *agreed*.

Mr Derek Estill took the chair.

Resolutions 20 and 22: Finance Committee

Pension Funds

The Revd John Piper, Deputy Treasurer, introduced Resolutions 20 and 22. In doing so, he outlined current issues facing the URC's pension schemes.

Mission Council adjourned at 12.50.

Third session

Mission Council resumed at 14.00; the Moderator, Mr Derek Estill, took the chair.

Resolution 20

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council, 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 22

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council authorises the directors of the URC Trust to amend its guarantee of the Ministers' Pension Fund provided to the URC Ministers' Pension Trust in response to the changing regulatory environment, but limited to the available resources of the URC Trust.

There being no discussion, Resolutions 20 and 22 were put.

Mission Council *agreed unanimously.*

Resolution 30: Wessex Synod

Defibrillators

Mrs Sue Brown, on behalf of Wessex Synod, moved Resolution 30.

- a) *Mission Council encourages Elders Meetings and/or Church Meetings to install 'public-access defibrillators' on an external wall of their church buildings, wherever possible.*
- b) *Mission Council encourages Synods to offer financial support where possible to help churches purchase and install these defibrillators.*
- c) *Mission Council resolves that, if successful, this initiative be used to mount national and local press campaigns to promote the profile of our churches as safe, caring and compassionate communities.*

In discussion, concern was expressed at the timing of the Resolution, given the difficulties being experienced by local churches during the current coronavirus crisis.

The Revd Jacky Embrey proposed that the Resolution be not put, seconded by the Revd Dr Peter Stevenson.

Mission Council *agreed* that the Resolution *be not put.*

The Moderator, the Revd Nigel Uden, took the chair.

Address to the throne

The General Secretary presented the “Address to the throne”, and sought Mission Council’s approval, on behalf of General Assembly, that it be sent.

Mission Council *agreed*.

The Moderator thanked the General Secretary, the Assembly Clerk and Tasneem Choudhury for arranging the meeting; he also thanked Andy Jackson and communications team, and the team from Affinity for their technical guidance and expertise. He said: in en bloc we noted new mission projects, and closed churches, and they will be noted by General Assembly, as will the retirement of John Proctor and Richard Church. Thanks to them, and to those for whom this will be their last Mission Council in their current roles:

The Revd James Breslin
The Revd Dave Coaker
The Revd Elaine Colechin
The Revd Jacky Embrey
The Revd David Grosch-Miller
Dr Jim Merrilees
The Revd Jenny Mills
The Revd Fiona Thomas
The Revd Kevin Watson and
Mr Alan Yates.

Closing worship was led by the Revd Dave Coaker.

Mission Council adjourned at 14.35.

Minutes of a meeting of the United Reformed Church General Assembly

By video conference, on Saturday 11 July 2020 at 10.30.

The Assembly met by video conference, because of government prohibitions on large gatherings during the public health emergency caused by Covid-19.

The Revd John Proctor, General Secretary, welcomed members and invited the Moderators to constitute the Assembly, meeting by video conference on 11 July 2020, with prayer. Mr Derek Estill, Moderator, duly constituted Assembly.

The Revd Michael Hopkins, Clerk, laid the Roll of Assembly on the table.

Roll of Assembly

Moderators 1. Mr Derek Estill *until 11 July 2020*, then the Revd Clare Downing
2. The Revd Nigel Uden *until 11 July 2020*, then Mr Peter Pay

Clerk 3. The Revd Michael Hopkins

Assistant Clerk 4. The Revd Sarah Moore

General Secretary 5. The Revd John Proctor *until 31 August 2020*.
6. The Revd Dr John Bradbury

Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources)
7. Mrs Jane Baird

Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)
8. The Revd Richard Church *until 31 July 2020*.

Deputy General Secretary (Mission)
9. Ms Francis Brien

Conveners of General Assembly Standing Committees, except the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee

10. Assembly Arrangements – The Revd James Breslin, *until 11 July 2020*, then:
Business Committee – The Revd Adrian Bulley
11. Children’s and Youth Work – The Revd Jenny Mills
12. Communications – The Revd Dr Peter Stevenson
13. Education and Learning – Mr Alan Yates
14. Equalities – The Revd Anne Lewitt
15. Faith and Order – The Revd Dr Alan Spence
16. Finance – Mr Ian Hardie (Treasurer)
17. The Revd John Piper (the Deputy Treasurer)
18. Ministries – The Revd Paul Whittle
19. Mission – The Revd Bernie Collins
20. Nominations – The Revd Ray Adams

Convenor of the United Reformed Church Trust

21. Mrs Val Morrison

Immediate-past Moderators

22. The Revd Kevin Watson *until 11 July 2020*, then Mr Derek Estill
23. Mr Alan Yates, *until 11 July 2020*, then The Revd Nigel Uden

Former Moderators (two places)

24. The Revd Professor David Thompson
25. The Revd Dr Elizabeth Welch

Resource Centres for Learning

26. Northern College staff – The Revd Dr Adam Scott
27. Northern College student – Ms Fliss Tunnard
28. Scottish College staff – The Revd Lindsey Sanderson
29. Scottish College student – Mrs Louise Sanders
30. Westminster College staff – The Revd Peter Ball
31. Westminster College student – Mr Adam Earle

United Reformed Church Youth (three places)

32. Mr Reuben Watt
33. Miss Jo Harris
34. Miss Victoria Turner

United Reformed Church Chaplain to HM Forces (one place)

35. The Revd David Haslam

Each synod has 16 places – at least six of which shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Workers, and at least six of which shall be elders or “lay”. Any two within the 16 places are reserved for representatives aged under 26 at the time of appointment.

Northern Synod

36. The Revd Dave Herbert (Synod Moderator)
37. Ms Melanie Campbell (Synod Clerk)
38. The Revd Sue Fender
39. The Revd Joan Grindrod-Helmn
40. Ms Ann Honey
41. The Revd Dr Matthew Prevett
42. The Revd Jane Rowell
43. Mrs Margaret Armstrong
44. Mrs Wendy Bradley
45. Mrs Margaret Brock
46. Dr Donna Moore
47. Ms Linda Robson
48. Ms Maureen Shepherd
49. vacant
50. vacant
51. vacant

North Western Synod

52. The Revd Brian Jolly (Synod Moderator)
53. Mr Mike Hart (Synod Treasurer)
54. Mr Mal Breeze
55. The Revd Martyn Coe
56. The Revd Alison Termie
57. The Revd Seoyoung Kim
58. The Revd Dr Rosalind Selby
59. The Revd Dr Marion Tugwood
60. The Revd Martin Whiffen
61. Miss Denise Fitzpatrick
62. Mr Chris Lamb
63. Mr Peter Melvin
64. Mr Lawrence Moore
65. Mrs Marilyn Piper
66. vacant
67. vacant

Mersey Synod

68. The Revd Jacky Embrey (Synod Moderator)
69. Mrs Rita Griffiths (Synod Clerk)
70. The Revd Cath Atkinson
71. The Revd Dr. Nick Jones
72. The Revd Stuart Radcliffe
73. The Revd Jenny Travis
74. The Revd Ruth Wilson
75. Ms Emily Dudley*
76. Mrs Barbara Ellis
77. Mr Paul Franklin
78. Professor Bill Gould
79. Ms Jenny Lamb
80. Mr Keith Reading
81. Mrs Doris Rimmer
82. Mrs Lisa Spencer
83. Ms Megan Wilson*

Yorkshire Synod

84. The Revd Jamie Kissack (Synod Moderator)
85. Mrs Rosie Buxton
86. The Revd Alex Clare-Young
87. The Revd Jo Clare-Young
88. The Revd Clare Davison.
89. The Revd Fran Kissack
90. Mr Tim Crossley (Synod Clerk)
91. Mr Jacob Lowe*
92. Mrs Terri Raddings
93. Miss Lydia Raddings*
94. Mrs Janet Virr

95. Mr Alex Walker
96. Mrs Joy Weightman
97. Miss Megan Westgarth*
98. Mr Mordecai Weynberg*
99. Mr Aaron Wood*

East Midlands Synod

100. The Revd Geoffrey Clarke (Synod Moderator)
101. Mrs Helen Lidgett (Synod Clerk)
102. Mr David Greatorex (Synod Treasurer)
103. The Revd Colin Bones
104. The Revd Richard Eastman
105. The Revd Amanda Linney
106. The Revd Ruth Maxey
107. The Revd Andrew Mudharara
108. Mrs Lindsey Cole
109. Mr Martin Dixon
110. Mr Sam Goodman
111. Mr Gary Hoddinott-Leighton
112. Mr Charles Leggat*
113. Miss Ella Lemon*
114. Mrs Elaine Shardlow
115. Mrs Barbara Turner

West Midlands Synod

116. The Revd Steve Faber (Synod Moderator)
117. Mr Richard Lockley (Synod Clerk)
118. Mr Steve Powell (Synod Treasurer)
119. The Revd Cristina Cipriani
120. The Revd Fiona Elvins
121. The Revd Elaine Hutchinson
122. Ms Kirsty-Ann Mabbott
123. The Revd Carole Marsden
124. The Revd Shirley Miller
125. The Revd David Miller
126. Miss Bethany Davies*
127. Miss Elinor Davies*
128. Dr Peter Horrocks
129. Mrs Clare Nutbrown-Hughes
130. Mr Johnny O'Hanlon
131. Miss Esme Ramsden*

Eastern Synod

132. The Revd Paul Whittle (Synod Moderator) (dual qualification)
133. Mr Keir Hounsome (Synod Clerk)
134. The Revd Dr Catherine Ball
135. The Revd Paul Ellis
136. Ms Maria Lee
137. The Revd Barnabas Shin
138. The Revd Paul Stein
139. The Revd Ken Thom
140. The Revd Gillian Thomson
141. The Revd Naomi Young-Rodas
142. Mr Gil Heathcote
143. Ms Lindsey Brown
144. Mr Shannon Craig
145. Mrs Ruth Dixon
146. Ms Helen Glasse*
147. Ms George Elmer*

South Western Synod

148. The Revd Ruth Whitehead (Synod Moderator)
149. The Revd Richard Gray (Synod Treasurer)
150. Mrs Gwen Jennings (Synod Clerk)
151. The Revd Sue Cossey
152. The Revd Dr Susan Durber
153. The Revd Gerald England
154. The Revd Robert Jordan
155. The Revd Lythan Nevard
156. The Revd Tracey Lewis
157. The Revd Mark Woodhouse
158. Dr Charles Stockley
159. Mrs Beverley Stockley
160. Mrs Beverley Wride
161. vacant
162. vacant
163. vacant

Wessex Synod

164. The Revd Clare Downing (Synod Moderator)
165. Mrs Sue Brown (Synod Clerk)
166. The Revd Barrie Cheetham
167. The Revd David Downing
168. The Revd Brian Harley
169. The Revd Tessa Henry-Robinson
170. The Revd Graham Hoslett
171. The Revd Dr Romilly Micklem
172. The Revd Mary Thomas
173. Mr Edward Burr
174. Miss Jessica England*

- 175. Mr Andrew Gibb
- 176. Ms Becca Lees
- 177. Miss Maddie Loudon*
- 178. Mrs Rosie Martin
- 179. Mr Peter Pay

Thames North Synod

- 180. The Revd Dr Andrew Prasad (Synod Moderator)
- 181. Mr Simon Fairnington (Synod Clerk)
- 182. Mr Tony Obi (Synod Treasurer)
- 183. The Revd Nancy Babarinde
- 184. The Revd Sally Bateman
- 185. The Revd Ulrike Bell
- 186. The Revd Jim Gascoigne
- 187. The Revd Sally Thomas
- 188. Ms Nneoma Chima
- 189. Ms Lorraine Downer
- 190. Mr Isaac Harvey*
- 191. Ms Philippa Osei*
- 192. Mr Tim Reith
- 193. Ms Elaine Sharpe
- 194. vacant
- 195. vacant

Southern Synod

- 196. The Revd Jacob Bali
- 197. The Revd Bridget Banks
- 198. The Revd David Bedford
- 199. The Revd Russell Furley-Smith
- 200. The Revd Terry Jin
- 201. The Revd Hilary Nabarro
- 202. The Revd George Watt
- 203. Ms Maddie Anlezark
- 204. Mr John Denison
- 205. Mrs Marie Jackson
- 206. Miss Hannah Jones*
- 207. Mr Alan Kirby
- 208. Ms Dawn Powell
- 209. Mrs Linda Richards
- 210. Miss Julia Seale*
- 211. Miss Pam Tolhurst

National Synod of Wales

212. The Revd Simon Walkling (Synod Moderator)
213. The Revd Adrian Bulley (Synod Clerk)
214. Mr Chris Atherton (Synod Treasurer)
215. The Revd Julia Bartholomew
216. The Revd Julie Kirby
217. The Revd Martha McInnes
218. The Revd Dr Kathryn Price
219. The Revd Dr Phil Wall
220. Miss Jo Harris* (dual qualification)
221. Mrs Judy Harris
222. Mrs Adella Pritchard
223. Mr David Turner
224. Ms Victoria Turner* (dual qualification)
225. Mr Ben Walkling
226. Miss Sandra Wallace
227. Mrs Kate Wolsey

National Synod of Scotland

228. The Revd Dr David Pickering (Synod Moderator)
229. Mr Bill Robson (Synod Clerk)
230. The Revd Fiona Bennett
231. The Revd Andy Braunston
232. The Revd Stewart Cutler
233. The Revd Susan Henderson
234. The Revd Steven Manders
235. Ms Marie Trubic
236. Mr Bob Christie
237. Ms Morag Donaldson
238. Ms Rose Kumbanga
239. Dr Jim Merrilees
240. Mr Mark Kirkbride
241. Ms Myra Rose
242. Miss Hannah Sanderson*
243. Miss Morven Sanderson*

British and Irish Ecumenical representatives (five places)

244. The Rt Revd Dr Martin Fair (Church of Scotland)
245. The Revd Ruth Gee (Methodist Church of Great Britain)
246. The Revd Dr Callan Slipper (Church of England)
247. Mrs Hilary Treavis (Baptist Union of Great Britain)
248. Hannah Brock Womack (Religious Society of Friends)

International Ecumenical representatives (five places)

249. The Revd Keith Haley (Guyana Congregational Union)
 250. Pfarrer Martin Henninger (*Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz*)
 251. The Revd Abus Takisvilainen (Presbyterian Church in Taiwan)
 252. vacant
 253. vacant

Council for World Mission (one place)

254. vacant

*indicates those Synod representatives aged 25 or under at the time of their appointment.

+indicates those appointed to a vacant place from another Synod under Rule 1.5.

Introductions

The Moderators led an Act of Worship, during which they inducted the Revd Clare Downing and Mr Peter Pay as Moderators of the General Assembly, and the Revd Dr John Bradbury as General Secretary. The Moderator, Mr Estill, expressed the thanks of the Church to the outgoing General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship).

During worship there was an Act of Commemoration for ministers, missionaries, and Church Related Community Workers who had died since the last Assembly. Their names were:

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| James W Allardyce | Cyril Allsebrook Hobson |
| Eliza B B Armstrong | Margaret Howard |
| Edmund Arthur Banyard | Leslie Smith Ivory |
| Geoffrey Edward Beck | Norman Stanley Jenkinson |
| Peter Blezard | Gwyneth Mary Jones |
| Anthony John Bosschaert | Herbert William Jones |
| Leslie Brockett | Kenneth Charles Jones |
| Eric Carless | Stanley Owen Jones |
| Bernard Oliver Chart | Brian William Kirk |
| Beryl Audrey Chatfield | Alan James Kirkcaldy |
| John Kerr Clark | Andreas Neville Kuypers |
| Alan Coles | David Doig Laing |
| Norman C Compton-Dando | Colin Leyton |
| Graham John Cook | David McNair |
| Ernest Edwin Butler Cruchley | David Adrian Henry Mapp |
| Pamela June May Davis | Lewis Hugh Butt Neems |
| Agnes Sheila Dickson | Peter Henry Newell |
| Alan Sidney Dunstone | Derek Nuttall |
| Marshall Owen Edwards | Alyn Hywel Owens |
| James Garrow | Terence Perry |
| Jack Ernest Garside | Mary Eleanor Piggott |
| Peter Gornall | Barrett Plumb |
| Anthony Green | Roy Stanley Richards |
| Brian Michael Griffith | Eileen Ritchie |
| Gilbert William Hallows | Kenneth Ernest Roach |
| Arnold Harrison | Cecil Stewart Ross |
| Peter Hartley | Stanley Herbert Russell |

General Assembly

Malcolm Henry Ryland-Jones
Charles Denis Simons
George Ernest Smart
Allan Speight
Arthur William Spurling
David Lawrence Stapleton
David Taylor
Gwyn Lewis Thomas
Gwyneth Thomas
John Edward Thompson
Bernard George Thorogood
Geoffrey Tillison
Antony Arthur Tomlinson
Doreen Mildred Vick
Norman Eric Vivian
Anne Wales
Edward Walton
John Michael Ward
Robert Waters
Leslie Harold Watson
Robert Weighton
Donald Whitehead
Patricia Whittaker

After worship, the Moderator, the Revd Clare Downing, introduced greetings from Ecumenical guests, and the Moderator Mr Peter Pay expressed thanks to Mr Estill and Mr Uden.

The General Secretary, the Revd Dr John Bradbury, informed the Moderator that the Assembly had completed its business and would next meet at The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire, on 11 July 2021 or at such other time and place as shall be determined.

Church closures

Northern Synod

Erskine United Reformed Church, Belford

The church was founded in 1776 and celebrated more than 240 years of worship, discipleship and witness in the Christian faith. It has a colourful history, which is marked by the Presbyterian principle of Dissent. This dissenting spirit continued for many years in its early days. Erskine demonstrated an openness and adaptability, resulting in decades of church transformation, which enabled it to survive where other churches faltered.

The church's name comes from Ebenezer Erskine, a "trailblazer" minister from Cornhill who was ejected from his living following the Act of Uniformity in 1662. It is believed to have been the only church in England that bore his name.

In December 1776, a lease was negotiated for a brick-built house in Nursery Row, to be a Protestant meeting house. This was under the leadership of the Revd Mathew Pool.

Following a difficult period in 1792, the Revd John Thompson was inducted. Beginning with 19 members, he led the church through challenging times for over 50 years, ending with more than 300 members.

Many successful ministers followed, each with their own ideas on how to move forward, and served with varying degrees of success. In 1904, the Erskine "annex" which we know as the Ferguson Hall, was built. This was to ensure space was available for young people to meet for Sunday school, and to develop youth work. The hall was named after Isabella Ferguson, a stalwart of the church, who was also well loved in the community for her Christian outreach work.

Membership fluctuated during this time, and, by 1972, it was greatly reduced. This was also a significant time, when the Presbyterian Church of England and the Congregational Church in England and Wales combined to form the United Reformed Church.

Decline in membership increased, which meant a rethink in traditional structures. Nearby North Sunderland (St Cuthbert's URC) joined with Erskine and Embleton to form BEANS (Belford, Embleton and North Sunderland).

Following the closure of Embleton, in 2005 the Revd David Herbert helped guide Erskine and St Cuthbert's into a new partnership. The North Northumberland Mission Partnership was formed. Seven churches worked individually yet linked together, with one or two ministers presiding. In 2010, David Herbert became sole stipendiary minister, supported by non-stipendiary ministers and 'House for Duty' ministers from America.

Many good projects were created, focusing on families, young children and youth work. Although numbers continued to decline, Erskine strove to move forward, encouraging outreach by developing projects the whole community could get involved with. Erskine has welcomed many people, locally and from around the world, either into the congregation or as casual visitors. It was known as a place where people from other denominations or those exploring their faith, have always been welcomed.

Lay worship leaders were encouraged, and we are proud to say we now have two ladies moving forward with this, one training for ministry of Word and Sacraments, and the other as a Church Related Community Worker.

Since 2012, due to low numbers, St Cuthbert's congregation moved to Erskine under one membership and eldership, and ceased to hold services in the Anglican Church, but joining with Erskine when they could.

Erskine junior church continued once a month and a special space was created in church to welcome young people. The Belford Bouncers was set up, as a Christian music group for pre-school children. Messy Church was also explored, providing Christian activities for children after school.

Many outdoor activities with teenagers took place, inviting other churches and those who weren't associated with church in any way.

There were visits to the Greenbelt camp, horseriding, canoeing and cinema evenings, any opportunity to meet with young people to share Christian values was not missed. This was something Erskine excelled at.

The Belford cinema was set up in Ferguson Hall. This proved to be a great asset to the village. Tea, cakes and fellowship during afternoon screenings was popular and enjoyed very much. The cinema was used during worship on many occasions, which was a good way to get the message across, especially to those new to church. It also helped to strike up conversations.

We are very proud to have been successful with Belford's Dissenting History project. Researching our past was a great learning curve, and helped us to understand our beginnings. The village drama group joined in and presented plays on some of the characters we researched. Erskine was successful in securing Heritage Lottery Funding, which enabled us to update and publish our church history book, and to also finance seven display panels about characters associated with either the church or Belford during Dissenting times.

For the past 16 years, Erskine has held a month-long candle festival during December. As well as candlelit evening events, which the whole village looked forward to and supported well, people enjoyed calling in, at any time, to light a prayer candle. The church was warm and welcoming, and a comfort to many. Erskine also instigated the joint village, Belford Churches Together, Christmas card, which was delivered to over 800 homes.

Sadly, the decline in membership coupled with an ageing congregation, as well as loyal long serving elders who passed away, meant we could not carry on, or sustain the costs of our declining buildings. Therefore the decision was made to close the church on 31 December 2018, and the hall on 31 March 2019.

So from humble beginnings in a small, brick-built meeting house to the URC today, Erskine has achieved many great things. Most importantly of all, providing a special and welcoming place to meet, a place where many came into the Christian faith for the first time, moved into the village from other areas, or visited us from a different denomination and stayed.

It would be fair to say that Erskine has continued in a "trailblazer" fashion from those early days. All this is a tremendous comfort, especially to those who have been associated with Erskine all their lives, knowing how well loved as a church we have been. We are very proud of the good work that has been achieved.

St Andrew's United Reformed Church Blackhill

On 28 July 2019 St Andrew's Church closed its doors after 162 years of worship in Blackhill. The formation of the Presbyterian Church in Blackhill was largely the result of the expansion of local industries in the mid 19th century. The founding of the Derwent Iron Company (later to become British Steel) and John Annandale's Paper Mill attracted workers from Scotland,

Ireland and Northumberland, all strongholds of Presbyterianism at that time. As these workers and their families moved into the area, they brought their tradition of worship. They had no church so met at house prayer meetings. At one of these meetings, it was decided to form a Presbyterian Church in Blackhill. The congregation began worship in the local school in 1857. The site of St Andrew's was gifted by John Annandale and sons.

With the closure of the British Steel works in the 1980s and Shotley Bridge Hospital in the 1990's people moved away from the district. The church continued but membership gradually reduced each year. An elderly congregation and no young people became a cause for concern.

Many of the remaining members had lifelong connections with the church, some being direct descendants of members of the first congregation.

Over the years the church has had 16 ministers, one retired minister, the Revd Dr A.P Haws conducted our Service of Celebration , which was attended by over 100 people. The final communion service also well attended was conducted by the Revd David Herbert, the Moderator of Northern Synod.

North Western Synod

Alexandra United Reformed Church, Blackpool

A brief history of the church and fellowship, given on the occasion of the thanksgiving service at St George's URC, Blackpool, on 21 July 2018.

Over 100 years ago, a church and memorial hall were built at the corner of Alexandra Road and Bolton Street. The first Congregational Church in South Shore, it became known as Alexandra United Reformed Church. Over many years, outstanding learned ministers answered the call and brought Christian teaching, guidance, support and fellowship to many inside and outside the church.

It was a very thriving church with a large congregation, with many activities. Groups included men's Fellowship, Boys' Brigade, junior church, youth club, Bible study, and not only one but two football teams. Alexandra became a very active church, visited by families on holiday, children joining junior church while their parents attended the services, returning year after year.

As the years passed by, sadly the church began to experience problems with the fabric of the building. There were insufficient funds to meet the repair work needed. The church was demolished and flats now stand in its place. Fortunately the memorial hall was converted into a small church and continued to show a presence as Alexandra URC, Bolton Street.

A few years ago tragedy came. Bad weather – gales and torrential rain – came in through the brickwork, cascading down the walls. Parts of the ceiling fell down, the electricity failed and the cellar was completely flooded. The building was assessed and was declared unfit for purpose and the church building officially closed.

Since then, the small congregation continued to meet week by week in the nearby Anglican church, St Peter's, but it is now felt that it would be more appropriate to close as a separate congregation and to join with Marton URC.

Bolton Road United Reformed Church, Darwen

This church started life as a school. In 1820 John Livesey of Rough Height saw the need of the children of Sandhills and John Marsden of Lower Chapel became the school Superintendent.

General Assembly

In 1835, Eccles Shorrocks had a school built for the children of his workers and offered it for Sunday school and other purposes to the people of Sandhills.

In 1868, a school was opened at Bolton Road; the Sunday school moved there and fundraising for a new building began.

In 1883, a church was formed by 39 members from Belgrave; the Sunday school had 416 children and 27 teachers, which necessitated a new building to house a congregation of 500, costing £3,500.

In 1889, the land was acquired and on 17 September 1892, the Foundation Stone for Bolton Road Congregational Church was laid. The church opened the following year.

In 1908, a jubilee service was held celebrating 15 years of worship. By 1912, electric lights were installed and it was redecorated.

In 1952, *The Northern Daily Telegraph* reported a new building to be developed on the site of Bolton Road Church, costing £15,000. Meanwhile, the old Bolton Road day school was used. On 9 May 1955, the foundation stone was laid and the new Bolton Road Congregational Church opened on 3 December 1959.

This church was the hub of the local community: it had a large congregation, a Sunday school of 70, a drama group, men's fellowship, women's guild, young ladies fellowship, uniformed groups and a youth club with its own pop group.

We give thanks to God for 126 years of faithful Christian witness to many people.

Brampton United Reformed Church

Our final service, on 24 November 2019, marked the end of 357 years of faithful worship. The church can trace its origins back to the Act of Uniformity in 1662, when the Revd Nathaniel Burnand was ejected from his living at St Martin's Parish Church. Nathaniel became the first Presbyterian Minister in Brampton, and it was not until 1672 that Nathaniel and his followers were allowed to meet in public. Meetings then were in local houses. To the right of the worship area was a replica of the Royal Coat of Arms. These were put up in churches by order of the Privy Council in the late 17th Century. By 1703, there was a meeting house in the yard of the Scotch Arms Inn.

Our church hall was the original permanent meeting house, built after the appointment of Robert Wight as Minister in 1725. He had, in 1730, a large congregation, with 101 families.

The most recent church building was erected in 1854 thanks to the work of the Revd PR Cole and the generosity of Robert Barbour and members of the congregation. It has some fine stained glass windows .

Closure does not mean failure. The United Reformed Church, when it became a denomination in 1972, never envisaged a long term existence and saw itself as "the Church born to die". Brampton URC has run its course because things have gone full circle: we are now happily in an ecumenical county, partnering with Anglican, Methodist and Salvation Army friends.

Christchurch Broadway, Morecombe

Christchurch United Reformed Church Broadway, Morecombe was the successor to Clark Street Congregational Church, and opened for worship on 25 June 1955. For 63 years, the congregation continued to worship on the site, providing Christian witness and support.

During the life of the church, members were very much part of the local community, providing opportunities for all ages. Many community groups used the premises. The church had a strong youth group, and church choir links with musical organisations including the Morecambe Philharmonic Choir often resulted in concerts.

Due to diminishing numbers and an ageing congregation, church members felt they were no longer able to continue. In 2018, following a church meeting decision to close, they held their final service in October 2018.

Sedbergh United Reformed Church, Cumbria

Sedbergh United Reformed Church formally closed in the autumn of 2018, after a long and honourable history of fellowship and witness in the town. Unfortunately, membership levels and regular attendees fell over the last couple of decades. An active membership in single figures and morning services attended by less than ten people led to inevitable closure.

Attempts were made to form a local ecumenical partnership with the local Methodist church, but initial good intentions met with protracted governance and practical issues from both parties. Therefore the decision was made to close the URC chapel, and instead, accept an ecumenical welcome from our Methodist friends. We now worship jointly as Cornerstone Community Church, Sedbergh.

Read United Reformed Church

The beginning of the church at Read is described in the following extract of *Lancashire Nonconformity*, written at the end of the 19th century.

“The starting of the new Congregational mission in Read came about in the following way: A new factory was built there about 1884 which led to the erection of many dwelling houses, and a large increase in population. Amongst those who came to reside there were many Nonconformists, including representatives of the different Methodist bodies, Baptists and Congregationalists. They naturally wished to have opportunities of religious communion and worship, and to have established a Sunday school, to which they might send their children. By the aid of friends connected with Great Harwood Independent Chapel, and other churches in the district, services were carried on in cottages for some months. After much deliberation it was decided to proceed to the erection of a building to be called Read Congregational Mission Room, and to become definitely connected with the Church at Great Harwood.

The memorial stone of this building, which consisted of two rooms, one above the other, was laid on 8 August 1885, by Councillor Baldwin of Burnley. On 19 December following it was opened for public worship. The cost was about £400. In 1888, the Mission Room had become too small for the worshippers, and it was resolved to erect a new school chapel. A plot of land was secured adjoining the Mission Room, and the memorial stone of the new structure was laid on Saturday afternoon, 30 June 1888, by Henry Almond Esq JP of Whalley. It was opened in December following, has accommodation for 400 persons, and cost about £1,300. Mr Holroyd has charge of Read as well as Rishton. Both stations, as already stated, retain their connection with Great Harwood Church, the communicants being in fellowship there.

The old mission room then became converted into two terraced houses adjoining the church/school, and after many years the Congregational primary school disbanded in the 1970s to join with a local Anglican primary school.

The church started a ladies friendly circle which met weekly and, eventually renaming itself as the friendly circle, allowed men to join; in the end it was run by a man. They organised a ladies weekend too, where every year there was a sale of work held on the Saturday, starting and finishing with a hymn. Tables were laid at the back of the worship area behind a wooden

partition to serve tea and homemade cakes. The Sunday afternoon service was attended by many people from the village and led by a visiting preacher, often a previous minister. There was a regular music group comprising of two flutes, two violins, a guitar, a recorder and a piano. In 2001, during the time of the Revd Geoff Townsend, a lunch club was set up and continued until the closure, providing a regular monthly get together for some of the elderly of the villages.

The church was always a focus for community activities, providing a home for a uniformed group, baby clinics, a library, play and nursery schools, keep fit classes and parish council meetings, as well as being the home of the annual village pantomime and the village Christingle service. As years progressed, like many village churches, the members dwindled and they felt as part of their legacy, the building should be preserved for community use. In 2016, they approached the parish councils and organised a village meeting with this intent in mind.

The church closed in September 2018, and in the early summer of 2019 was purchased by a village hall committee. It is now the Read and Simonstone Village Hall.

St. George's United Reformed Church, Blackpool

St. George's began life as a Presbyterian Church before becoming part of the United Reformed Church in 1972. The original congregation was formed in the main from civil servants who had been evacuated to Blackpool from London during the Second World War, and who, prior to the building of St George's Church in 1955, had met as a body in various other local churches in order to practice their faith in the Presbyterian tradition. Given it was the only Presbyterian church on the Fylde coast, the church also attracted the Scottish community living and working in the area, and as such, the membership was drawn from a wide catchment area. Indeed, up to the time of closure, this tradition continued with the membership still reflecting its Scottish roots.

By the standards of the day, the building and the fittings were considered quite modern. As it was built on a relatively small site, it was also a dual purpose building. The main body of the church was not only used for services but for numerous other activities too. To facilitate this, the chancel, located at the east end of the building, could be screened off. There was a stage, at the opposite end, which was used for many years to present shows and pantomimes. In addition, the floor was also marked out as a badminton court and used as such up to the early 1980s when, in common with many other churches, as the numbers of young people attending declined, these facilities were used less frequently.

Over the years, the church hosted an evening and afternoon guild, the Good News Singers, meetings of the Scottish Society, Burns Night celebrations, traditional craft, Easter and Christmas fairs, concerts by the Blackpool Bells (hand bell ringers), a brass band and even ukulele concerts. The church was an active member of the local Churches Together group and participated in many ecumenical events. The church was also used by a dance school, various weight management classes, play groups and language classes and acted as the local polling station, all of which helped to finance the upkeep of the building.

Though the church was originally a single pastorate, in the 1980s it joined with Marton URC to form a joint pastorate. This remained so until 2012, when both churches joined with Bispham and Cleveleys URCs to form the North Fylde Pastorate (NFP). With other URCs in the area, is now part of the West Lancashire Missional Partnership.

As is usual, the pastorate in its various configurations was in vacancy several times over the years but the retirement of the NFP minister, the Revd Daniel Cheyne in 2017 and the emergence of the missional partnerships, offered an opportunity for all concerned to discuss

the future of St. George's. In addition, given the nature of the scattered congregation and as people aged, the numbers able to attend and/or maintain the other necessary functions declined. Therefore, after much prayerful thought, the membership decided to close the church in July 2018.

However, there was some small consolation in that the building was purchased by a local, well-known, professional dance school, who were keen to keep the exterior much as it was and have sympathetically adapted the interior for their use. Thankfully too, many of the fittings and fixtures also found new homes in local churches.

Of the remaining 25 members, all those who wished to do so are not only happily now members of other local URC or Methodist churches but also continue to hold bi-monthly fellowship meetings and outings. So in many respects, the life of the church continues!

St George's URC (The Hoskers), Westhoughton

(This church was omitted from being listed in the 2018 and 2020 Book of Reports due to late notification.)

St George's (The Hoskers) was opened in 1996 and was located within St George's Church of England Primary School, Bolton. The current school was built to replace a school in Hart Common, Westhoughton, which was unable to meet the requirements of the growing community. The Church in Hart Common was transferred to the school with some of the features of the old church, including stained glass windows. St George's Church was a local ecumenical partnership (LEP), supported by the Church of England, the United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church.

The church was part of an LEP (recognised but not ratified) from December 1994. It was situated to the south west of Westhoughton, on a road named 'The Hoskers' – hence the church name.

Membership had been shared by the three Churches, and members were recognised as being members of each Church. The URC group had sadly declined over a number of years, as regular members either moved or died. This resulted in the members who attended St George's being almost exclusively Anglican. The congregation gradually was subsidised by parents who wished their children to attend the Church of England school. Once that had been achieved, those families no longer regularly attended.

Ministry had been shared by each denomination providing one minister on a part-time basis. There was support from a local lay preacher (Methodist), a church development and pastoral support worker (Methodist), and lay readers from the local Anglican team, as well as local URC ministers from time to time.

The arrangement with the school – sharing one designated room within the school and using the hall on Sundays – was not entirely successful, as it gave the worshipping community no rights over the building. Consultation between the school and the church regarding the use of the designated room led to some difficulties.

One serious factor contributing to the church's closure was changes in ministry of the three denominations in recent years. Although the sponsoring denominations worked hard at valuing and celebrating the ecumenical work that took place at St George's, the current congregation totally comprises of Church of England members.

It was difficult for people to recognise that there was a church within the local community that was not just an Anglican church, as that church was within a Church of England school.

This clouded the church's identity. In addition, the liturgy was not consistent, nor was it user-friendly for the children who did attend.

A thorough review was carried out by the Greater Manchester Churches Together group in 2013, which identified that each of the denominations should adopt the model constitutions for LEPs created by Churches Together in England. That did not happen. With sadness, the North Western Synod decided to withdraw from the LEP in November 2017.

Union United Reformed Church, Stockport

Union Chapel, a Congregational church, was born in 1873, a result of the genuine faith exercised by its worshippers. During the years that followed, mission was undertaken in many forms, but mainly in bringing new folk to Christ by reaching out to them with the Gospel. Then Union joined the United Reformed Church.

Many years went by until the church relocated to Maitland Street, Stockport, during which time frequent fundraising events to keep the buildings going were undertaken. This was seen by many, although not all, as mission. Nevertheless, in the latter years, the congregation supported Revive-a-Life with funding for their orphanage in Uganda.

Over the past 30 years, Union has declined from a healthy 50+ in the congregation to an unsustainable nine or ten people, five of whom were the elders who had been serving for some 15 or more years without a break. This situation developed because of the ever-increasing age of the congregation and the lack of new members.

On 20 October 2019, Union URC died. It is the fervent prayer of all those who loved the people who were Union, that their labours will have and continue to, bear fruit for the kingdom of God. Please join with us in our prayers that the Holy Spirit will continue to take what we have given and turn it into new life in Christ!

Urswick United Reformed Church, Cumbria

This church closed on 13 May 2018. We thank God for its life.

Mersey Synod

Blundellsands United Reformed Church, Merseyside

Liverpool Presbytery opened a preaching station in the expanding port of Liverpool at the Alexandra Hall, Crosby, in November 1897.

The enthusiastic and highly qualified probationary minister, James Wallace, took charge. The congregation grew rapidly and, a choir, a Sunday school and local missions having been established, in January 1903, plans for a new permanent church building were approved to replace the temporary iron church. The Earl of Aberdeen laid the foundation stone on 14 September 1904, and the church was dedicated in November 1905.

A church hall followed, the long-awaited fulfilment of a dream. Now the sound of children's voices would become more prominent than ever before. In those summer days of the 1930s it became a tradition to invite 70 poor children from Liverpool to a picnic in the church grounds and games on the beach.

The Revd WS Minnis (Bill) was an eloquent preacher who worked to promote youth work. A high standard of music was a feature of the church during this period. During the leadership of Mr Minnis, in 1972, the Presbyterian Church in England became part of the United Reformed Church.

The Revd Jon Morgan was a new broom whose call was aimed at bringing young people into the church. He did his best but without the success that had been envisioned. After his departure, the Revd Robert Shallcross was called.

After Mr Shallcross's retirement, the congregation eventually decided that it could no longer sustain the church which in its heyday had close to 300 members. Worship and witness continued to the end with faith and hope for the future in this corner of Merseyside. The final service was on 13 October 2019.

Yorkshire Synod

Clayton West United Reformed Church, West Yorkshire

In 1791, a group of men heard the call to build a chapel in the village of Clayton West, near Huddersfield in West Yorkshire. The list of these nine men reveal them to reflect the growing cloth making industry of the time, six of them being from that background and no doubt working at the mill located down the road from the chapel. But the group also included one butcher and one inn keeper, which in view of later discussions and protestations about the opening in the village of a club selling alcohol is an interesting detail. In addition to the mill, this village was also the centre of a farming community. Over the subsequent years, the mill has closed down and the community now includes many commuters working in nearby towns.

The conveyancing document for the new chapel dated 23 April 1791 shows that the land cost £23. 2s, or 22 guineas, and the new chapel was opened on 21 April 1794. The conveyancing document was very clear that the chapel or building should be "used for public worship of almighty God by a Society of Protestant Dissenters called Independents".

After 65 years, the Old Chapel was said to be cold and damp, and on 21 July 1859 a special Church Meeting resolved "to make some effort to improve its appearance, accommodation etc". The result of this decision was that a new building was constructed at a cost of £2,125.1s 5d and was opened on 6 September 1866. It could accommodate 500 people, a reflection of the faith of those involved but also a reflection of the growing population in the rising village of Clayton West.

In the years since then there were minor adaptations to the building, the steep gradient on which it was built precluding much by way of alteration. This was a chapel for the village, annual sales of work and other events being supported by the whole community.

Positioned as it was, a few doors away from the Pentecostal church and one of the two Anglican churches in the village, there was much combined activity which also included the Methodist Church – children's holiday clubs, Christian Aid collections and the provision of regular worship in two residential homes were all shared activities.

Life in the chapel itself included garden parties, pea and pie suppers, film evenings, carol services and coach trips. Clayton West was always a church with a heart for the poor and marginalised: in 1919 they were collecting for the Syria and Palestine Relief Fund and the National Institute for the Blind. It may be said that little changes. One long held tradition was that of Sunday school queens, and many are the memories of the Sunday school anniversary in June, where the queens were crowned.

It was with sadness for an ending but celebration for Christian lives well lived and Christian witness faithfully offered that the church held its final service on 23 March 2019, attended by many friends from neighbouring churches and the local community.

Little Lane United Reformed Church

A school-church was founded by Congregationalists in the district, and built on the site in Little Lane in 1889, leaving space for a future larger building. The early years were a struggle until a radical, enthusiastic young lay pastor arrived in 1897. It formally became Girdlington Congregational Church ten years later. The records mention that in 1892 “a woman fully took a service and preached” and that it was “a decisive stage for congregational women”.

The building was enlarged in 1966 by a development which provided a hall and ancillary accommodation, and the original building was remodelled. With the advent of the United Reformed Church, the church became Girdlington URC. Later mergers with closing United Reformed Church, churches were reflected in name changes to Heaton URC (1972) and then Heaton St Andrew’s URC(1982).

There was a more radical change in 2000, when a local ecumenical partnership was formed with Girdlington Methodist/Baptist Church, called Little Lane Church. It served a diverse population with inclusive worship, pastoral support, and social activities, and it maintained support for overseas mission and wider concerns through the three denominations and local Council of Churches. The membership was enriched by the inclusion of different nationalities working in local hospitals. The building was used for local families’ celebrations and many community purposes; it also housed a Tamil-speaking congregation. Church volunteers ran a weekly cafe for 17 years and developed community women’s groups.

But eventually the church decided that there were too few members able and available to share the many responsibilities needed for its running. Thankful for all that had gone before, the church closed on 31 August 2019, and its people set out to seek new pastures.

East Midlands Synod

Clifton United Reformed Church, Nottingham

Just after the Second World War, Nottingham City Council decided to build the biggest ever housing estate. When completed, it would house over 25,000 people. The church denominations were allotted sites, the Congregationalists got a prime site.

All the churches in our denomination helped but none more than Friary; they were wonderful. While the adults met in disused workmen’s huts under a trainee minister, Stanley Whiffen and his wife, two or three lovely ladies came every Sunday morning and took Sunday school classes in a close by council school.

Our church was growing, Mr and Mrs Whiffen left us but we now had a full-time minister, the Revd Frank Newton and his wife, Brenda. At last we had our own newly built church hall. The hall was in full use, seven days a week, including evenings. There was a thriving youth club, a Boys Brigade Company with Lifeboys, Girl Guides, eventually three Brownie packs, a young girls club and a young boys club, all very capably led by our own church members. The Friary ladies still came on Sunday mornings until they handed over to our own people. We had an adults club, a ladies club, a men’s club and a drama group. These adults were also largely responsible for church cleaning, maintenance and re-furbishing. Fortunately, we had a first-class property manager and some hard working talented ladies. We were very active in community work along with the other churches on the estate.

But times were changing: more amenities were being provided, some of our leaders were leaving Clifton; then the Revd Frank Newton was called to Birmingham, so we said a sad farewell. We carried on, led by church officers, but more were leaving and by now we were the United Reformed Church. A new minister, the Revd Gertrude (Trudy) Norris, was ordained

and inducted here. Trudy worked differently but well under changing conditions; groups were having to close, members who left were not being replaced. Trudy was called to another church. Later she came back as a retired minister and formed an art group.

Sunday saw shops opening and numbers dropping. Then came the arrival of the Revd Alan Christopher White (Chris). He introduced a trainee minister, John Hayton, and his wife, Stella (now both ordained ministers). They brought in young ideas and the Church Related Community Workers, who brought young people into the building but not into the church,

Chris retired and in came Mr John New, a lay leader. We all knew John and his wife, Elsie; John had preached for us and kept us going until his retirement. We tried our best but were losing mostly elderly people through bereavement or just unable to carry on.

Our last meeting was held on 24 March 2019. Those of us that are left have decided that we will still meet occasionally at the new Larkhill Village in Clifton, which is a retirement village.

Kilby United Reformed Church, Leicestershire

The village of Kilby in the south Leicestershire countryside, was served by the chapel for exactly 96 years. The chapel first opened for worship on 16 July 1923, and closed on 16 July 2019. It was not the first Non-conformist chapel in the village; an earlier chapel was built by the Langham family in 1819 on a site nearby. The Langham family continued their tradition of supporting Kilby village and made funds available for this chapel to be built in 1923.

The chapel was the hub of village life for many years, hosting the usual festival events such as Christmas and Spring bazaars and being a country chapel, many splendid harvest festivals. The chapel was a very good meeting place and doubled as the village hall. The chapel became a United Reformed Church in 1972 and was the sister church of nearby Wigston Magna URC (WMURC). The chapel, along with WMURC, would later join four other churches in the local area to become the South Leicestershire Group, an association that would last for over thirty years. The chapel also worked alongside St Mary's Church of England, often worshipping together.

In 2018, the Church Meeting decided that it was time for the chapel to close its doors, because the membership had dropped to single figures and the cost of maintaining and running the building now exceeded their annual income. It was with a mixture of sadness and fond memories that the final service was held on 16 June 2019. Many who had fond memories of chapel life gathered to give thanks and to celebrate its life. The final act was to share in a magnificent chapel tea!

Langley United Reformed Church, Derbyshire

This church began in a house in Marlpool in 1848. Brother Mundy changed the whole of the downstairs into one room to use as a chapel. People travelled great distances to attend the church there. One story indicated an eight-mile journey on foot both ways. Meals were bought along to last the whole day.

There have been many ministers through the years. The Revd Eric Kirkman, first Minister at Langley, joint with Selston; the Revd Eric Freeman came and helped out as District Minister. We also had the Revd Cyril Jones, the Revd Peter Barker (for around ten years), the Revd Richard Alford, the Revd Paula Parish-West, the Revd Lionel Anderson (interim), the Revd Kay Cattell and the Revd Bachelard K Yemtsa.

In 1972, the members of the Church of Christ had to make the decision whether to join the URC. The decision was taken in 1981 that Langley would join the United Reformed Church. There were some things that Langley insisted on keeping: full-immersion baptisms and elders presiding over Communion.

General Assembly

The membership numbers fluctuated greatly through the years. In 1990, the decision was taken by fellowship under the guidance of the Revd Peter Barker to have a replant, which eventually led to a membership of 15 in 1997; since then, membership has reduced through members leaving and passing away. We ended up with a membership of two people attending regularly.

The church used to be called the White Chapel or the “Bread and Lard” Church; this probably stemmed from the Second World War and also the miners’ strikes.

There have been many social events over the years, from women’s meetings; luncheon clubs; breakfast club; harvest suppers; Christmas concerts. Langley also created the Fellowship of Youth, bringing Christian teachings.

Sunday school started from around 1934, led by Mr Wain. There has been a steady progression of young people learning the Lord’s message through the school’s wonderful teachings.

In 1965, Mr and Mrs Young opened the New Hall. When the hall was built, the church was also altered. There was a stove at the back of the church where, on cold nights, the fellowship would huddle round for warmth. The church used to slope to the front. Two steps went up to the Communion table on a platform with a balustrade round. The floor was levelled. There were fixed pews and two loose ones at the front. The Communion table was made in memory of William Oxley (1873-1931) Church Secretary for 18 years; his son made the big lectern.

The Communion area was altered after another church upgrade in the 2000’s. Central heating was put in and the heavy platform was taken away. Hot water was supplied to the baptistry to save having to use the very dangerous electric heater that was placed in the water.

Through loss of members, things slowly declined until we only had two full-time members left. So, in a members meeting in October 2019, the topic of closure was discussed. The members left couldn’t go on, even though they had tried a number of projects to bring life into the church. In our final meeting, in December 2019, the decision was finally made that church would close. Praise to the Lord for Langley Community Church URC.

Westwood United Reformed Church, Nottinghamshire

Westwood’s congregation has been part of the local community for the last 149 years. Prior to the present premises, two Congregational churches stood on its site, the second being built in 1867 and demolished in the 1980s to make way for the church and community centre which was dedicated on 6 December 1986.

Westwood joined the United Reformed Church in 1972. Recently the church has seen people move away from the area, and is became reliant on one family plus a few other people. The Revd Cliff Winfield had hoped that through his leadership “fruit would be born” but this wasn’t to be the case. The church held their final service on Sunday 7 October 2018.

West Midlands Synod

Gloucester United Reformed Church

In 1972, three Gloucester churches – Southgate Congregational, Tyndale Congregational and the Presbyterian Church – agreed to join the newly formed United Reformed Church. They decided to move to the church used by the Presbyterians, built by them in 1872. This was deemed to be the most suitable for the combined congregations, which was joined later by The Churches of Christ. The church was multinational and ecumenical in outlook and worship,

and did all the usual church activities ie junior church, outreach etc. We were well served by our ministers over the years; the Revd Brian Dawson, the Revd Lionel Jameson, the Revd Pauline Rate and finally the Revd Malachie Munyaneza. A major refurbishment of the building was completed in 1995, which also solved an historic damp problem in the basement, until a large flood in 2007 undid all the good work.

We were still able to hire out the premises to three other churches, non-church groups and for concerts and community activities, but this did not bring in new members. Age and infirmity took their toll, and when our Treasurer's career took him away in 2016, our minister retired in 2017 and our secretary died in that year, only two elders were left to run the church, which would have run out of money anyway within two years. After much heartache, the congregation and membership (still 25-30 strong) voted for an organised and dignified closure, which took place on 31 August 2018.

Eastern Synod

Duxford United Reformed Church, Cambridgeshire

The Church in Duxford had its foundations in a group that – both influenced by the preaching of the Anglican evangelist, the Revd John Berridge, and as a result of their dissatisfaction with their absentee Rector – broke away from the Parish Church. In 1792, a barn in Mill Lane was licensed and the growing congregation met and worshipped there for a short while before, in 1793, Benjamin Pyne, a probationer minister, purchased land for the building of a chapel and a manse. Construction of the chapel, at the total cost of just under £396, began early the following year, with local farmers hauling free-of-charge timber, bricks, tiles, stones and windows, mostly from Horseheath. The Meeting gathered for worship for the first time on 3 August 1794.

The Church was officially constituted in November 1794, and in the following month, Mr Pyne was ordained at the age of 27. At the dinner that followed the church's formation, the 20+ ministers present agreed to form a County Association of Congregational and Baptist Churches. Mr Pyne ministered at Duxford until he fell ill in 1831. At his death, in 1833, the chapel had 80 members, drawn from Duxford and the surrounding villages. The years that followed led to a large increase in those worshipping in the chapel; the 1851 Religious Census recorded a morning congregation of 350, an afternoon congregation of 400 and 80 Sunday scholars. At the same time, there were 400 rented seats and 80 free ones!

In 1854, a manse was constructed in St Peter's Street, and soon after renovated and extended. Chapels had been planted in the neighbouring villages of Hinxton and Ickleton. The church's early involvement in education continued with the establishment of a British school in Ickleton Chapel in 1846. Ministers came and went but, although membership was starting to decline, it seems that one of the high points of ministry in the second half of the 19th century was that of the Revd Thomas Sainsbury, who gave 20 years' service from 1876 and was instrumental in the chapel's centenary celebrations and renovations in 1894.

The chapel continued to be a faithful witness in the village throughout the 20th century. The hall was opened in 1931 and, following war damage, replacement windows behind the pulpit were provided in 1944. The Minister on that later date was the father of Mary Baldwin, the wife of future Prime Minister Harold Wilson.

Major renovations followed at the time of the 200 year celebrations in 1994 and the buildings were slowly brought into community use, including the arrival of the Post Office. Sadly, though, numbers declined and, with the remaining members growing frailer, the decision to close was regretfully taken in 2019. The final service was on 2 June 2019.

Little Abington United Reformed Church, Cambridgeshire

In 1826, two men registered their houses for Dissenting worship. Neither Great Abington or Little Abington parishes had any permanent Nonconformist congregation until after the 1870s, when the Congregationalists from Sawston began mission work at Little Abington, having a preaching station there from around 1888. The vicar believed their main audience to be drawn from immigrant labourers. Although the meeting house had 60 sittings in 1899, there were only seven full members in 1905 and ten in 1916. Numbers varied thereafter between five and eight.

In 1920, an ex-First World War army hut was purchased for use as a worship space and the cottage was sold. The most recent building officially opened for worship on 14 April 1921. In the 1930s, many Nonconformists came from the north-east of England and numbers attending services rose dramatically.

Churchgoer Daphne Hannah writes: "When I first came to the church in 1954, Miss May King was its leader. She was a dedicated Christian woman who lived her life for the church and the community. Mrs Mabel Germany was Church Secretary, a post she held for 40 years. Attendance has fluctuated over the years; it has been down to four or five, sometimes up to 16 or 17. In the 1980s, we had 25 children on the Sunday school register."

In 1972, the Congregational churches of England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church combined to form the United Reformed Church. Little Abington, combined with Linton, Haverhill and Castle Camps to form the Haverhill Group of United Reformed churches, under the ministry of the Revd Bill Clement. In 1996, it was agreed to split the group and in 1997, the Revd Alex Jacob was appointed Minister for Linton.

Little Abington became linked with Sawston Free Church under the ministry of the Revd Peter Ball.

In 2009 and 2010, under the ministry of the Revd Bruce Waldron, Little Abington URC held joint services with the parish church for harvest in the village institute, a local craft display, some Songs of Praise services in the evenings, and hosted for a short time a play group working with the village rector. For the last seven years, the church has continued to have weekly services on Sunday mornings, except that the third Sunday service each month was moved to the afternoon so that the minister could have regular monthly worship with the congregation.

It is with great sadness that it has been recognised this church no longer has the resources to continue to sustain its property and activity. Daphne writes: "We have been very fortunate to have had many inspiring lay preachers and ministers. There was an ecumenical Christian student group in Cambridge who led worship about every six weeks. They gave us practical help also, like painting the church ceiling, and we got to know them very well. It was good to hear over the years that some of them achieved prominent positions in the Church. We are grateful to all the faithful servants who have serviced us well over the years and to all the people who worshipped here. It is with great sadness that we feel we can no longer effectively run the church. Jesus said 'Do not be afraid little flock.' I'm sure we are not. It would be nice to think this church has influenced someone's life for the good. When we lock the door for the last time, God is not locked inside. Thankfully he is with us always. We can step forward in faith, hope and love. At the meeting where the decision was taken to close this church, representatives of the parish church attended and extended both their sympathy and a very warm and heartfelt invitation to join with the parish church."

(Extracted from www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/cambs/vol6/pp3-19)

The final act of worship was a Communion Service, led by the Revd Bruce Waldron, on Sunday 15 September; the speaker was the Revd Paul Whittle, Moderator of Eastern Synod.

North Avenue United Reformed Church, Chelmsford

The church at North Avenue was planted by the then London Road Congregational Church, which felt called to provide a church presence on the new Boarded Barns housing development. This development was to accommodate workers for the growing number of light engineering firms in Chelmsford in the mid 1920s.

The church hall was opened on 26 September 1928. Cheshunt College¹ had been approached and the newly ordained the Revd Roland S Shakeshaft had been called to the Assistant Pastorate of the London Road Church, with special charge of the work at North Avenue. Initially a committee appointed by London Road Church worked with the Minister as Executive for North Avenue. In March 1929-56, people were admitted to membership.

The Revd and Mrs Shakeshaft left after seven years with a church roll of 150 members, 34 junior members, 316 Sunday school scholars, a women's fellowship of 218, together with young people's fellowships, boys' and girls' fellowships, men's own, Scouts and Guides, all in full swing. Mr Shakeshaft has worked wholeheartedly in visiting in that happy and helpful spirit that has endeared him to the hearts of all; while Mrs Shakeshaft led the women's fellowship and helped whenever possible; she even took a Sunday Service.

From the outset, North Avenue catered for the many young people around it. Before long, it was evident that more accommodation was needed for the Sunday schools (which met in the afternoon) and Youth Work. The North Avenue Church was able to raise the necessary funds so that when the extension was opened in April 1933, it was free of debt.

During the Second World War, the North Avenue Church gave help to evacuees from London and to victims of air raids. The rooms were used as a school and served as a rest centre. The work of church and Sunday school continued as fully as circumstances allowed.

After the war, there was a return to full church life. The women's fellowship which had dropped to about 30 members, increased again to 90, the men's own restarted, and the choir expanded. Two non-uniformed Congregational youth movements began (Pilots and Church Training Fellowship) and flourished, as did a dramatic society which started in 1948. A bi-monthly '*News Bulletin*' was issued from 1949.

For the next 20 years, the membership numbers held up at around 90, although attendance at services was less than half that (with more attending the evening than the morning service). The women's fellowship continued to perform strongly, with around 50 attending each week.

In the 1970s, now a United Reformed Church, good relationships were established with the other churches which had appeared in the area as a result of the postwar expansion with the Melbourne estate. Meanwhile, a diminishing congregation at North Avenue refused to let that limit their vision and desire to witness to God's love through serving their community.

In the 1980s North Avenue URC embarked on two new outreach projects.

¹ *Theological training college for the Reformed tradition; it merged with Westminster College, Cambridge in 1967.*

² *From Minutes of the Church Meeting, 1935. Following the untimely death of her husband in his subsequent appointment, Eleanor Shakeshaft trained for ordained ministry at the specific behest of that church, where she then served. She was to be the preacher at the North Avenue Coming-of-Age Anniversary Service in 1949 and at the Women's Fellowship anniversary service which formed part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1978.*

The first of these related to young people in the area who had always been seen as a key focus of North Avenue Church's work. In 1995, two members from Witham URC felt the call to come to North Avenue and run a youth club for the local young people, helped by volunteers from the church. This was a time when there was a lot of vandalism and anti-social behaviour in the area. From this developed the idea of building a youth centre extension at the front of the premises, supported by the Essex Youth Trust.

With outside funding secured for this project, a sizeable extension was built, including a full-size sports hall. During the building works, the congregation joined with that at Trent Road URC for Sunday worship. In November 2000, there was a service conducted by the URC Eastern Synod Moderator to rededicate North Avenue URC, followed by an opportunity to view the new Youth Centre extension. The North Avenue Youth Centre continues to serve the local community, providing a safe place for young people to meet, have fun and expand their horizons.

The second project developed out of parallel discussions and led to a community cafe providing a low-cost venue for local people to meet. More building work followed to adapt the premises, and in 2012 the Jubilee Cafe opened for its first customers on Tuesdays and Thursdays, staffed mainly by volunteers from the former All Saints Church and a few from North Avenue URC. The cafe's popularity has continued to grow to the extent that in 2016 it was expanded into the main church to accommodate more customers.

North Avenue recently benefited from a council community contribution which provided the funds in 2017 for some much-needed repairs to the premises. The church also took ownership from the council of a plot of land at the rear of the church, to be made into an outside play area and garden for use by the youth centre, the church and community.

After 90 years, and despite its limited financial and people resources, North Avenue Church has continued to provide a Christian witness while seeking to serve its local community in the spirit of those who founded it in 1928. Latterly, this has been down to the commitment and faithfulness of the few remaining elders and members.

After much soul-searching, Church Meeting agreed to close, and the closing service was held on 30 September 2018.

Remaining elders and members were encouraged that the youth centre, the cafe and fellowship groups would continue to serve the community from the site under the oversight of a URC mission project, the North Avenue Christian Partnership.

Shipdham United Reformed Church, Norfolk

The congregation of Shipdham United Reformed Church, Norfolk, held a final service on 29 September 2019. The church's history dates back to the 1880s, as described below. The Independent Minister of Watton hired a room in 1832 and introduced the Revd HP Hughes to it. A Christian church was formed in 1833.

The Revd HP Hughes served until 1837, followed by the Revd GW Russell in 1842 and the Revd J Matthews from 1843 to 1855.

When Mr Matthews left Shipdham, the congregation had reduced to 11 members. A Mr Jeffreys then served the church for a time, assisting with pulpit supply until Mr Cock arrived in 1856.

In 1860, the Revd H Coke of Watton preached at the church until a barn was fitted up for worship on the Watton Road in July of the following year.

There seems to be no record available about who built the very substantial chapel and hall and its cost, but records show that the church was stable from 1833 until 1855. In February 1865, Mr Cock was elected unpaid pastor and minister but from 1860, there was no Congregational Church as such in Shipdham, despite the fine efforts of Mr Cock.

In 1860, The Revd H Coke of Watton led worship in the Old Hall and then in a barn until 1862 when the chapel was regained. Shipdham Church remained closely under the wing of Watton with the minister leading both churches. At a Special Church Meeting in 1862, a Bible was presented to Mr Cock for his “gratuitous services in administering the Word of Life”. However, either the Shipdham church did not grow to stand on its own feet or they did not receive full support from the Watton leadership. The Watton Church Account for 1873 states that their Evangelist, the Revd Brook, who had built up the Shipdham Church, could not be afforded for a second year. The future of Shipdham Church was perilous. Watton pleaded for funds and labourers to continue work at Shipdham. I assume that the Shipdham Church struggled on for a while and then closed.

We know little more till 1881, when the Church was re-opened with its own chapel.

Writtle United Reformed Church, Essex

Writtle United Reformed Church closed on Saturday 1 June 2019. A brief history is outlined below.

In 1662, the Common Book of Prayer was introduced. Ministers and laity alike, opted to not conform to this form of worship. Subsequently, in 1672, a group of Nonconformists under the leadership of John Benson started to meet for worship in a house in Writtle, and, over the next 140 years, Christians met in various houses in the parish.

Over time, the groups of Nonconformist gatherings united to form Reformed congregations, including Writtle Congregational Church, which erected its first building in 1815. As the church grew, people continued to worship there for 70 years.

In 1885, the church, whose minister and members played an active part in village life, started work to erect the most recent building, which opened, free of debt, the following year. After years of busy and active use, the church building was in need of renovation and improvement by 1925. These works were carried out by the congregation.

In 1972, the URC came into being. This special occasion brought different Reformed traditions together, including Presbyterian and Congregationalist congregations. It was around this time that Writtle Congregational Church became Writtle URC.

The church continued to work in faith and outreach in the following years, ministering to people of all ages. In 1997, the church decided to embark on a study of its place and mission in the community.

In 2002, following extensive prayer and fundraising, alterations to the church premises were carried out. From April to October of that year, the congregation worshipped in the Writtle College Chapel, returning to the church premises on The Green in November 2002.

South Western Synod

Falmouth United Reformed Church, Cornwall

As with many of our churches, the cause that would become Falmouth United Reformed Church was founded when a vicar and part of his congregation were ejected from the parish church as a result of the 1662 Act of Uniformity. Despite being, geographically, on the edge of Britain, and a long way from denominational centres of activity – an isolation that increased as many churches in Cornwall closed – Falmouth Congregational/United Reformed Church played a full part in the life of the county union and district council, providing many a chair and secretary. Members also played a full part in the life of the Church at Synod and national level.

However, the main thrust of the congregation's mission lay in Falmouth and district, where the very active Falmouth Churches Together groups were rarely without a URC chair, secretary or both. When a group of Baptist members felt it necessary to leave their home church, it was with great joy that the Congregational Church opened its doors to provide them with a home, at first as a separate congregation, but gradually integrating the two groups. Although they never formally united, the latter years of the church's life saw them working together as one congregation in all but name.

But time and demographics moved on: age and infirmity took their toll, especially among the leaders within the congregation, and in June 2019, the decision was taken that Falmouth had fulfilled its mission and would say its final Amen. For many, this was an immensely sad decision as the church had been their spiritual home throughout their lives; for others a sad decision, because they had found a warm and welcoming fellowship when they needed it most. For all the members, it is with pride that they celebrate the work of this part of God's kingdom.

Henbury, New Kingsland United Reformed Church, Bristol

The foundation stone for this church was laid on 3 April 1954. Two years before that, the church met in a wooden hut, (which was at the side of the building) and was later destroyed by fire in October 1991.

Our church was named after Kingsland Congregational Chapel, Kingsland Road, Bristol, which was badly damaged during the Second World War. The congregation there agreed on the sale of their church investing the proceeds invested in a free church at Henbury – hence New Kingsland. At the beginning of its life, the church was nurtured by the congregations at Henleaze and Redland Park.

As with any church, there have been times when life has flourished and times of struggle, but there has always been a small number of dedicated Christians who have tried to serve God and the community around us.

Over the years, we have experimented with different forms of worship, led mainly by lay preachers. We have enjoyed Messy Church which has encouraged families to join with us. We have been extremely proud to have had a Girl's Brigade Company affiliated to the church for the last 60 years.

The decision to close had been discussed over many months and was finally made in October 2018. The church was to close in April 2019.

We thank God for the presence we have had in the community over the years and are particularly thankful for all the lay preachers who have led worship for us and sustained us spiritually. We thank God also for our presence in the community and the work that everyone past and present has done.

Wessex Synod

Finchdean United Reformed Church, Hampshire

The church closed on 12 January 2019. We give thanks for its life.

Freemantle United Reformed Church, Southampton

Founded in 1885, Freemantle Congregational Church was destroyed during the Second World War, in 1940. It reopened in 1957 about half a mile from the previous site, after a seven-year building programme which included a Compton pipe organ, the envy of many churches. We became Freemantle United Reformed Church in 1972.

The church had a distinctive glass window: it depicted a boy and a girl holding up the new building above the old church, which was engulfed in flames and surmounted by the figure of Christ with open arms. These two young people were represented at the wonderful closure service we held on 8 September 2019.

During the 50s into the 80s, the church membership was very busy and active. We had fayres, cricket matches, whist games, theatre visits, women's guild, a full junior church, a Livingstone Fellowship, Pilots and more.

At the rear of the church, there was a large hall with a stage and smaller rooms. This enabled the site to be used by a large number of organisations, including the church table tennis and badminton clubs, Brownie and Girl Guides units, and two Alcoholics Anonymous groups. For 23 years, a charity offered free, freshly cooked lunches from our kitchen to the homeless and lonely every Sunday. In the late 50s, the youth group presented their first pantomime, which slowly developed into our resident amateur dramatics group. The group produced a popular annual pantomime, summer musical and reviews. Ticket prices were kept to a minimum for all the community to enjoy. However, the congregation slowly declined over the years, and eventually the church meeting regretfully agreed that the church should be closed.

Medstead United Reformed Church, Hampshire

Congregationalists began meeting in Medstead in the 1890s, initially in a house in Roedown's Road. As numbers increased, the building of a church on a plot of land donated by Mr Goatlee in memory of his son was agreed. The building, erected in 1896, which remains to this day, was made of tin with a woodwork interior. The heating was an old, black coal fire stove! Sometime later, the walls of the church were rendered in cement and pebble dash. The roof was renewed and the inside was redecorated. A kitchen, vestry and toilet were also added.

Mr and Mrs John Crawford were instrumental in establishing a pattern of morning services and a junior church, assisted by May Wooley, Chris and Rosemary Poole and Joy Giles. At its height, the junior church was very active, with an annual Christmas party and summer outings to the seaside. There are also fond memories of the children bringing musical instruments into the church to put on concerts. A ladies fellowship was also formed, which became very involved in local fundraising events.

In its twilight years, the congregation continued to meet faithfully for worship and fellowship, and to support the mission of the church both locally and abroad. Aply led by elders Jean Woods, Joy Giles and Audrey Robson, and with the devoted service of Mary Little, Ernie and Beryl Howlett, and other members of the congregation, the church remained a spiritual home to those who gathered there. Though the congregation was served by many ministers, it was the church's members who defined it; without them the love of Jesus could not have been shared so widely and for so long.

Winton United Reformed Church, Bournemouth

Winton Congregational Church, as it was then, started over 150 years ago. It was in 1868 that a mission was established by Throop Congregational Church in the area. A church building was constructed on Wimborne Road. This fellowship grew and flourished over many years, eventually becoming the United Reformed Church in 1972.

The next major change was to come in 1981, when the building on Wimborne Road was demolished and a move was made to Luther Road, a new, purpose-built building to meet 20th century needs. More recently, the building went through a major refit to bring it up to present-day needs and building requirements.

During the years that this church existed, many ministers came and served the fellowship here at Winton. Numerous people have served this church well, including secretaries, treasurers, deacons and elders.

There are many folk with memories of family celebrations, weddings, baptisms and anniversary services at the church, and we have watched as children have progressed through the junior church, the Boys' Brigade, Guides and Brownies.

The decision to close was not easy, but with falling numbers and an ageing fellowship it became more difficult keeping up with present-day requirements for the running of a church and its premises. As we closed, we gave thanks to God for all that this church has been for those who have worshipped here.

Thames North Synod

St Andrew's United Reformed Church, Iver, Buckinghamshire

In May 1928, the Revd FL Riches Lowe – with four deacons at Providence Church, Uxbridge – met with interested persons to form the Richings Park Church, which met for 18 months in a small wooden building lit by oil lamps. It then moved to the Plaza Cinema. Congregations varied from 25 to 80, serving the housing estate 1.5 miles from Iver village. St Andrew's Congregational Church was founded in 1932. A hall was added in the 1950s. St Andrew's became a United Reformed church in 1972.

The first Pastor of St Andrews was the Revd WEH Oregane, who for 30 years had been the secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society in South India. In 1954, an evening service recorded at the church by the BBC Home Service, led by the Revd Dr Leslie Cooke, gathered 150 people.

St Andrew's was an active congregation, not only in the spiritual life of its members, but more widely in the activities provided for the local community. Sadly, after 80 years, it was decided that with only five members remaining, St Andrew's would be closed on 28 April 2019.

The building of St Andrew's closed, but its spirit continues. Remaining members worship at other churches in the area. A line at the end of the opening service in 1932 read: "Our hopes for all the tomorrows have sure ground in all our yesterdays".

Southern Synod

West Landon United Reformed Church, Dover

In 1863, a Mr Mummery, passing through West Langdon on his horse, noticed that the church was in ruins. Being a prominent member of Dover Congregational Church, he used his influence to send an evangelist to West Langdon. A room was hired and a meeting was held on the last Sunday evening in December 1863, in the cottage adjoining the present chapel.

Attendance soon increased, and it became necessary to use two rooms of the cottage. A Sunday school commenced in February 1864, and in March, a Tuesday evening prayer meeting began. Mr Mummery purchased the cottages and services continued. When he visited Langdon on a Sunday evening, he found both rooms full, and decided that a better place needed to be found. The next day, he again visited Langdon and met with Mr Stiff – a builder from Dover. The present chapel was built in six weeks, and, on Sunday 23 December 1866, the chapel opened for worship by Mr Mummery, who preached to a large congregation.

In the early 1900s, four brothers and their families came up from Somerset to work in the local mines and to live in West Langdon. They had previously worshipped in a Congregational chapel in their home village near Bath, and so they found the West Langdon chapel very much to their liking. One of the brothers – Mr Joseph Parfitt – became the secretary and treasurer until his death in 1947. Since then, various members of the Parfitt family have been involved in the running of the chapel until its closure on 1 December 2019. Joseph Parfitt's granddaughter was the last secretary.

Whitfield United Reformed Church, Dover

Around 1750, a Mr Davis, an evangelist who lived in Dover, thought that there should be a church in Whitfield. Mr Davis used to travel between Dover and Deal; Whitfield formed part of his route. An independent church, in the Congregational tradition, was formed in Whitfield, allied to the Congregational Church in Dover. A church was built in 1781. The building was replaced in 1866 and remained until it closed in 2018.

Worshippers were independently minded, evidenced after the Second World War, when neither the Congregational Union of England and Wales, or the Dover church, were able to help financially towards building work that was required. Members of a family worshipping at Whitfield funded the necessary work.

In the early 1970s, a relationship was cemented between the then Minister at Dover Congregational Church and the fellowship at Whitfield. In 1977, the fellowship at Whitfield became part of the Dover United Reformed Church, but retained their independence.

Although the village of Whitfield has grown considerably, this wasn't reflected in attendance at services. With the worshippers becoming more elderly, and reducing in numbers, it was agreed in October 2018 that the building would close. The final service was held on Sunday 9 December.

Synod of Wales

Carmarthen Road United Reformed Church, Swansea

Carmarthen Road English Congregational Church opened in 1875, when members from the nearby Ebenezer Welsh Congregational Church sought to establish an English-speaking church in the Waun Wen area. At the time, the church was close to the industrial heart of Swansea. The church grew rapidly, and by the time of the revival in 1904-5, it recorded a membership of 483. Over the years, it played a significant role in the civic and spiritual life of Swansea. Unusually, as a congregation it sustained significant civilian losses during the Three Night Blitz in 1941.

After the war, the Waun Wen area changed dramatically, and a major road-widening scheme left the church isolated; membership declined. In time, the large chapel was sold and the congregation moved into bright, refurbished rooms at the back – rooms which also acted as a base for important work with refugees and asylum seekers. Eventually, the gathered congregation (which included young families) decided that it was sensible to support churches closer to where they lived; it was mission accomplished on the Carmarthen Road site. A final service of thanksgiving, on 20 January 2019, was attended by over 150 people. A substantial cohort of the membership transferred to Christ Well United Reformed Church in Manselton.

Christchurch with Caebach United Reformed Church, Powys

On 23 June 2019, Caebach Chapel closed after over 300 years of worship and witness. There had been a large Dissenting congregation under the pastoral care of men like the Revd John Weaver, a Puritan preacher ejected from the living of Old Radnor in 1660. Several of these folk, and others from the Nantmel area, must have formed the nucleus of the first congregation at Caebach Chapel. A look round the tombstones in the graveyard will give some idea of the distances people were prepared to travel to worship according to their beliefs. A feature from the past is the stable across the road from the entrance gate, where the Minister and members from the remoter hill farms were able to shelter their ponies.

Caebach Chapel was erected in 1715 on part of the land of the small farm of that name, by the private efforts of Thomas Jones of Trefonnen, a farm half a mile to the east. Several members of this family were buried inside the chapel and are commemorated on a marble wall tablet near the north western corner of the church.

The chapel was considerably rebuilt in 1804, when ogee windows were inserted and a gallery was erected. Second-hand timber was used for the framing of the gallery and its staircase. Originally, the floor area was flat and paved with flagstones.

In 1840, box pews were installed, and those under the gallery were raised in tiers. Matching wall panelling was fitted, covering up an open fire grate at the back of the chapel. Caebach then took on much of its present appearance.

It is not now easy to visualise Caebach's situation, as it must have appeared. Where the town of Llandrindod now stands was an area of poor, marshy common land, ringed by the fields of scattered homesteads. The mineral waters had been known for almost two centuries before the town was developed just over a century ago, following the Local Enclosure Act, helped by the arrival of the railway in 1865. Early visitors to take the waters had stayed at various farmhouses in the vicinity.

At the time of the 1851 census, the population of Llandrindod was 217 and that of the neighbouring larger parish of Cefnlllys (containing Caebach) was 386. The religious census for Sunday 30 March 1851 (a cold, wintry day) lists attendance at Caebach Chapel as 37 in the morning and 52 in the afternoon, but adds a note “Being the nearest Dissenting place of worship to Llandrindod Wells, the summer attendances are often 70-80 in the mornings and 100-150 in the afternoons.”

In August 1871, a new and much larger Congregational Chapel – “Christchurch” – opened in the heart of the new town of Llandrindod by the Revd JR (Kilsby) Jones, who then tried to close Caebach. Although largely disused for some 40 years, it remained high in the affections of many local people. Christchurch was demolished in the 1970s and a sheltered housing complex now occupies the site. A room was set aside in the new building, and this became Christchurch Chapel.

During the First World War, Sunday afternoon services restarted at Caebach and continued at least during the summer months, supplemented by special events such as anniversaries, harvest festivals and candle-lit carol services. Since 1974, weekly services were held throughout the year, except during the winter months when all services were held in Christchurch Chapel.

Christchurch, Fairwater, Cardiff

Christchurch was established in 1958 as a Congregational Church in Fairwater Village, a suburb to the north-west of Cardiff. A single-storey building on a large site opened in September 1959, in a prominent position close to village centre.

In 1967, the congregation united with the Methodist church on the Congregational site; one of the first local ecumenical partnerships in Wales. For many years the church flourished, and provided valuable service to the community, including Boys’ and Girls’ Brigades, with Fairwater’s young people contributing to district and synod youth work. A number of those young people went on to serve the wider Church. The church was traumatised in the 1980s when their Minister, Daphne Jones, was killed in a car crash, with her daughter Bethan. A fund was set up in their memory, and continues to fund young people attending events.

Church life included cabaret evenings and musicals, house groups, and Tiny Tots for two decades. More recently, the church hosted the Rainbow Community Cafe providing a meeting place for the community.

Dwindling numbers, an ageing congregation and a shortage of people willing to take on key roles precipitated the difficult decision to close. When the decision was taken, the fellowship were helped to express their memories and hopes in a piece of art. Among their hopes for the future were “to continue to grow in Christ”, “to remain as a family” and “to still see each other”. After the closing service, on 29 December 2019, most members decided to join Radyr Methodist Church.

St David’s, Bettws, Newport

St David’s local ecumenical partnership was created in 1996 as an amalgamation of St David’s Church in Wales and Bettws United Reformed Church. Bettws is a large 1960s housing estate to the north of Newport.

The URC’s contribution to the ministry of St David’s LEP has been two Church-Related Community Workers: Rosie Buxton (serving from 2006 to 2011) and Kirsty Mabbott (from

2015 to 2018). With Ms Mabbott's departure, it became apparent that the LEP had no real expression locally. Following consultation with the Archdeacon of Newport, the Vicar of the Ministry Area in which St David's is located, and St David's Parochial Church Council, there being no one at the church identifying as a member of the URC, the Wales District Council resolved that the church should be closed. This decision was ratified by the synod meeting in March 2019.

St David's Uniting Church, Pentwyn

St David's Uniting Church was established as a shared ministry congregation, meeting at St David's Church in Wales primary school in 1978, as part of the wider ecumenical commitment through the then (CPL) Cyncoed, Pentwyn and Llanedeyrn Council of Churches. The CPL later became part of the 11 church Cardiff East Ecumenical Mission Partnership (CEEMP).

Over the years, the church was served by ministers from the Presbyterian Church of Wales, as well as Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Church ministers.

However, for some considerable time now, only the Church in Wales have had the capacity to offer regular ministry. The school comes within the Cyncoed Ministry Area, so it was agreed that St David's should be a congregation of the Church in Wales, within the wider ecumenical partnership of CEEMP. Worship leaders and ministers from other denominations will be invited to lead worship from time to time.

Each denomination of the sponsoring body has confirmed this through their own processes. The URC National Synod of Wales brought a resolution to a district council meeting on 8 May 2019, and then to synod meeting on 19 October.

Synod of Scotland

Beith United Reformed Church, North Ayrshire

This church closed on 24 March 2019. We thank God for its life.

Mosspark United Reformed Church, Glasgow

The first housing estate in the UK, created under the 1919 Housing Act, was built by Glasgow Corporation in Mosspark, Craigton and South Cardonald. Just under half of these houses were built in Mosspark, covering an area of 173 acres. It was the testing ground of Scotland's biggest social experiment after the Second World War, and had a pioneering effect on religious and community endeavours. Building began in February 1921 and continued until June 1924. The housing density and extensive green space was inspired by the garden city movement. The neighbourhood has tree-lined streets and a boulevard stretching the length of the area at its most northern point.

Many families with Congregational Church connections moved into the area, and the Congregational Union of Scotland secured a small, wooded hut off Paisley Road West for worship, pending the building of a hall church on land granted to them by Glasgow Corporation. The hall church opened on 6 October 1929 at a cost of £4,000, and was the first extension church of the Congregational Union of Scotland. The Revd Thomas S London was the Minister, and the following organisations were formed: Sunday school, the young worshippers' league, women's union, the 206th Company Boy's Brigade, Band of Hope, literary society, and Girls' Auxiliary. During the first seven years, 570 people were accepted into membership.

Early in 1937 – with the aid of a grant from the Congregational Union, grants from the Bellahouston and Ferguson Bequests and loans from the Chapel Building and Manse Fund – work on a new building began on adjacent land at 67 Ladybank Drive, on the corner of Mossbank Boulevard. The original hall and the new church were designed by Balfour and Stewart. The new building opened on 18 March 1938, and was provided with an organ by Nelson Street Congregational Church, Greenock.

In 1995, Mossbank Congregational Church and Ibrox Methodist Church (formerly Admiral Street Methodist Church, established 1869) united to form Mossbank United Church. The congregations had shared the Mossbank premises since June 1991.

The Congregational Union of Scotland united with the United Reformed Church in 2000; thereafter, Mossbank United Church continued as a Methodist and United Reformed Church. Mossbank United Church closed on 23 June 2019 with a service of thanksgiving attended by many who have played a part in the church's rich history.

Salem Chapel United Reformed Church, Dundee

The Dundee church was first formed on 13 November 1839. For many years, the congregation was known as the “United Christian Church”, meeting in various halls in the city.

Due to the generosity of a Mrs Tener, Salem chapel was built and opened for worship on 6 October 1872 as a part of Churches of Christ (UK and Northern Ireland). Weekly Communion services by lay people and visiting ministers were held until our closing service on 24 November 2019.

Salem still has a full adult baptistery and, up to unification, this was the expected way to join the church, with baby dedications being conducted at birth. Since unification, all methods of joining were offered to communicants.

Dundee linked with Coaltown of Balgonie and Kirkcaldy for many years but latterly we were linked with Coaltown, Dunfermline, Dunning and Newburgh for pastoral care and district ministry. Locally, we were linked with a Congregational church, Meadowside St Paul's (Church of Scotland) and a Methodist church, sharing Easter and Christmas fellowship with those congregations.

Our closing service on 24 November 2019, was led by our District Minister, the Revd Alan McGougan. The sermon was given by our Synod Moderator, the Revd Dr David Pickering.

Church members and families were joined by friends from local churches. Members of our district churches also shared in our last Communion service. It was a lovely service, although very moving for all concerned.

Jubilee Ministers, 2019 and 2020

| Years of service | Name | Synod | Date of ordination |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| 71 | Peter Brewer | Eastern | 24 September 1949 |
| 71 | Leslie Newton | Scotland | 18 April 1949 |
| 70 | Ernest Walters | Northern | 1 July 1950 |
| 61 | Sidney Bindemann | East Midlands | 17 July 1959 |
| 61 | John Brunskill | Wessex | 1 November 1959 |
| 61 | Thomas Cheesbrough | West Midlands | 1 July 1959 |
| 61 | Michael Davies | Southern | 1 July 1959 |
| 61 | William Kennerley | Mersey | 1 July 1959 |
| 61 | Ronald Lewis | North Western | 1 July 1959 |
| 61 | John Martin | Mersey | 5 September 1959 |
| 61 | Jack McKelvey | North Western | 1 July 1959 |
| 61 | Colin Richards | Wales | 19 September 1959 |
| 61 | William Sewell | Eastern | 4 July 1959 |
| 61 | Noel Shepherd | Thames North | 25 September 1959 |
| 61 | John Stanyon | Wessex | 17 September 1959 |
| 61 | David Viles | Eastern | 25 June 1959 |
| 60 | Alan Burroughs | Yorkshire | 2 October 1960 |
| 60 | William Campbell | Wales | 30 November 1960 |
| 60 | Donald Finnan | Southern | 1 July 1960 |
| 60 | Mary Frost | West Midlands | 25 June 1960 |
| 60 | Derek Gill | Thames North | 28 July 1960 |
| 60 | John Key | Thames North | 1 July 1960 |
| 60 | Peter MacKenzie | Scotland | 24 June 1960 |
| 60 | Denis Newman | South Western | 5 July 1960 |
| 60 | David Owen | Wales | 1 October 1960 |
| 60 | Antony Ritchie | Northern | 9 December 1960 |
| 60 | Lionel Thomas | Wales | 27 September 1960 |
| 51 | Francis Ackroyd | Thames North | 8 February 1969 |
| 51 | Herbert Baker | Thames North | 10 July 1969 |
| 51 | John Edwards | Thames North | 12 July 1969 |
| 51 | Richard Edwards | Eastern | 29 June 1969 |
| 51 | Alan Evans | Yorkshire | 1 July 1969 |
| 51 | Ralph Eveleigh | East Midlands | 1 July 1969 |
| 51 | Keith Flawn | West Midlands | 26 July 1969 |
| 51 | Alan Griffith | Yorkshire | 4 September 1969 |
| 51 | Irfon James | Wales | 13 November 1969 |
| 51 | Derek Lindfield | Thames North | 17 September 1969 |
| 51 | John MacKenzie | North Western | 19 September 1969 |
| 51 | John Parker | Yorkshire | 5 July 1969 |
| 51 | Peter Peirce | Eastern | 19 September 1969 |
| 51 | John Stewart | Wessex | 7 September 1969 |
| 51 | Mark Westerman | Southern | 1 July 1969 |
| 51 | John Westhead | North Western | 1 July 1969 |
| 51 | John Wylie | Scotland | 13 June 1969 |
| 50 | Nigel Appleton | Wessex | 3 July 1970 |
| 50 | George Courtney | Yorkshire | 10 September 1970 |
| 50 | William Drummond | Scotland | 26 June 1970 |
| 50 | Peter Jupp | East Midlands | 31 October 1970 |
| 50 | David Megson | Yorkshire | 1 July 1970 |
| 50 | Elizabeth Nash | Wessex | 28 July 1970 |
| 50 | Alan Paterson | Scotland | 17 October 1970 |
| 50 | Anthony Spring | Eastern | 4 July 1970 |
| 50 | Dean Tapley | Southern | 1 July 1970 |
| 50 | Eric Waugh | Scotland | 1 July 1970 |

Nominations

Assembly committees and other appointments

Notes:

1. General Assembly Moderators, Assembly Moderators-elect, the Immediate-past Assembly Moderators and the General Secretary are members ex officio of every standing committee. Deputy General Secretaries are members ex officio of every standing committee within their department. Any ex officio member may arrange for an appropriate deputy, such as any Deputy General Secretary or an officer of Assembly, to attend on their behalf. Any committee may invite other Assembly officers (or their deputies) or staff members to attend in a non-voting capacity where the business so requires.
2. Symbols have been used as follows: ** denotes those whom General Assembly is invited to appoint for the first time; † denotes those who have been invited to extend their periods of service;
3. Numbers in round brackets following names indicate the member's synod: (1) Northern, (2) North Western, (3) Mersey, (4) Yorkshire, (5) East Midlands, (6) West Midlands, (7) Eastern, (8) South Western, (9) Wessex, (10) Thames North, (11) Southern, (12) Wales, (13) Scotland. This numbering is not shown where it is not relevant.
4. When a member of a committee is there as a representative of another body or a particular category, this is indicated in round brackets following the name.
5. Committee membership is normally for a period of four years, though this may sometimes exceptionally be renewable. Committee convenors serve an additional preliminary year as Convenor-Elect. In sections one to four of the report, appointments with a different term are noted.
6. Dates in square brackets following names indicate the date of retirement, assuming a full term.
7. In accordance with the decision of General Assembly 2000, some nominations are made directly by the National Synods of Wales and Scotland.
8. In years when General Assembly meets, new committee members normally take up their roles at the conclusion of Assembly.
9. Nominations to Assembly committees and their sub-committees, and to advisory and task groups serving Assembly and Mission Council/Assembly Executive, should be of members of the United Reformed Church, or youth representatives who meet the criteria for membership of Assembly. A term of service may normally be completed if someone ceases to be a member of the URC during their term.
10. Nominations of URC representatives to external bodies should either be URC members, or youth representatives who meet the criteria for membership of Assembly, or URC staff who have relevant expertise. The nomination of a staff member would automatically lapse if the person concerned ceased to hold a URC post.

1. Assembly Executive

Assembly Executive is the new name for Mission Council. Its membership is listed in the report of Mission Council to General Assembly 2020, paragraph nine (beginning on page six of the *Book of Reports*).

1.1 Human resources advisory group

Convenor: Mr Geoff Shaw [2023]
General Secretary
Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources)
Nominated members: Mr Alastair Forsyth [2021]
Mrs Bridget Fosten [2022]
Mrs Barbara Ellis [2024]**

1.2 Law and polity advisory group

Convenor: Ms Morag McLintock [2024]
Secretary: Mr Neil Mackenzie [2022]†
General Secretary
Clerk of General Assembly
Synod Clerk representative: Mr Keir Hounsome [2022]
Property, legal and trust officers' representative: Mr Raoul Hewitt
Nominated members: Ms Denise FitzPatrick [2022]
Vacancy
In attendance: Legal Adviser

1.3 Listed buildings advisory group

Convenor: The Revd Dr James Mather [2022] (nominated by the group)
Secretary: Mr Geoff Milnes [2022] (nominated by the group)
General Secretary
The Revd Ray Anglesea (1)
Mr Michael Williams (2)
Ms Alison Lee (3)
Mr David Figures (4)
Mrs Judith Booth (5)
Mrs Rachel Wakeman (6)
Mr Peter West (7)
Mr Roger James (8)
Mr Gerry Prosser (9)
Mr Christopher Buckwell (10)
Mr Guy Morfett (11)

1.4 Resource sharing task group

Convenor: The Revd Jacky Embrey [2022] (Synod Moderator)
Secretary: Mr Chris Atherton
Treasurer: The Revd Dick Gray
Miss Margaret Atkinson
Mr Mike Gould
URC Treasurer

1.5 Environmental task group

Convenor: The Revd Rob Weston

The Revd David Coleman
 Ms Alison Greaves
 The Revd Trevor Jamison
 Mr Tom Veitch
 Vacancy: Ms Charis Ollerenshaw resigned from the group in October 2019.

2. General Secretariat

2.1 Faith and Order Committee

The convenor and nominated members normally serve for six years.

Convenor: The Revd Dr Robert Pope [2026]**

Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

General Secretary

Nominated members: The Revd Samuel Silungwe [2023]

The Revd Sue McCoan [2026]**

Ms Diana Paulding [2026]**

The Revd Kristin Ofstad [2026]**

Vacancy

2.2 Nominations Committee

Synods appoint and decide terms for their representation.

Convenor: The Revd Ray Adams [2021]

Convenor-Elect: Mrs Helen Lidgett [2021] [to serve as convenor 2021-25]**

Secretary: Mr George Faris [2022]

Mrs Melanie Campbell (1)

The Revd Brian Jolly (2)

Mrs Rita Griffiths (3)

Mr Tim Crossley (4)

Mrs Helen Lidgett (5)

Mr Richard Lockley (6)

The Revd Paul Whittle (7)

The Revd Dougie Burnett (8)

Mrs Sue Brown (9)

Mr Simon Fairnington (10)

The Revd Adrian Bulley (12)

The Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor (11)

Miss Morag Donaldson (13)

A past Moderator of General Assembly

General Secretary

In attendance:

Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries

Equalities Committee representative

2.2.1 Panel for General Assembly appointments

Members usually serve for five years as training is required.

Retiring in 2021:

The Revd David Sebley (7)

Mrs Val Morrison (4)

Mrs Kate Yates (10)

The Revd Sohail Ejaz (7)
The Revd Raymond Singh (11)

Retiring in 2022:

Mr John Ellis (11)
The Revd Mary Irish (7)

Retiring in 2023:

Mrs Barbara Ellis (3)
The Revd Hugh Graham (10)
The Revd Alison Hall (3)
Mrs Helen Lidgett (5)
Dr Jim Merrilees (13)
Ms Helen Stenson (12)
The Revd Ruth Whitehead (8)

Mrs Sheila Davies (3)

Retiring in 2024:

The Revd Jan Adamson (13)
The Revd Tessa Henry-Robinson (9)
Dr Paul Ashitey (10)
Ms Victoria Paulding (5)
Mr Matthew Barkley (9)
Mr Reuben Watt (11)
The Revd Lucy Brierley (9)
The Revd Sal Bateman (10)
Mr David Gartside (3)
The Revd Peter Henderson (8)
Ms Pippa Hodgson (5)
The Revd George Mwaura (5)
The Revd Paul Robinson (12)
Mr Patrick Sheard (1)
Mr Alex Walker (4)

2.3 Ministerial incapacity and discipline (Mind) advisory group

Convenor: Ms Michelle Howard [2024]
Secretary: The Revd Chris Copley [2022]
Synod Moderator: The Revd Clare Downing [2021]
Convenor of the Assembly commission
Secretary of the Assembly commission
Convenor of the review commission of the incapacity procedure
Secretary of the review commission of the incapacity procedure
Consultant for ministers and CRCWs: The Revd Ken Chippindale
Consultant for mandated groups: The Revd Ian Kirby [2023]
Training coordinator: The Revd Andy Braunston [2024]**
General Secretary; Clerk of General Assembly; Secretary for Ministries; legal adviser

2.4 Disciplinary process – commission panel

Members serve for five years as regular training is required. They may be invited to continue serving beyond this as experience is especially valuable on this panel.
Convenor: The Revd Dr Janet Tollington (7) [2025]
Deputy convenor: Vacancy
Secretary: Mr Philip Laws [2022]
Members:

Retiring in 2021

The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe (2)
 The Revd David M Miller (6)
 Mrs Diane Moverley (12)
 Mrs Janet Virr (4)
 Dr David Jones (5)
 Mr Ian Corless (9)
 The Revd Nigel Adkinson (2)

Retiring in 2022

Mr Alan Kirby (11)
 The Revd Ian Kirby (12)
 Mrs Cathy Glazier (11)
 Mrs Mary Kelly (1)
 Mr Alastair Forsyth (4)
 The Revd Craig Muir (6)
 The Revd Jane Campbell (13)

Retiring in 2023

Mrs Wendy Dunnett (9)
 Ms Mary Slater (11)
 The Revd Alan McGougan (13)
 The Revd Bill Bowman (11)

Retiring in 2024

The Revd Debbie Brown (3)
 The Revd Peter Flint (11)
 Mrs Barbara Goom (8)
 The Revd Naison Hove (11)
 The Revd Sue McCoan (6)
 The Revd Deborah McVey (7)
 The Revd Sarah Moore (2)
 Mrs Pat Poinen (1)
 The Revd Wendy Swan (11)

Retiring in 2025

The Revd Martha McInnes (12)†
 The Revd Rachel Poolman (1)†
 The Revd Wilbert Sayimani (9)**
 The Revd Dr Peter Stevenson (5)†
 The Revd Dr Janet Tollington (7)
 Mrs Vivien Andrew (10)**
 The Revd Andy Braunston (13)†

2.5 Standing panel for the incapacity procedure

This panel is normally convened by the member with legal experience.

Members serve one or two five-year terms.

Secretary: Dr Augur Pearce [2022]

Synod Moderator: The Revd Simon Walkling [2023]

Past Moderator of General Assembly: The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe [2022]

Commission officer for the incapacity procedure: The Revd Roy Lowes [2023]

Mr David Nash (legal experience) [2023]

Dr Ewen Harley (GP) [2023]

2.6 Pastoral reference and welfare committee

Convenor: The Revd David Grosch-Miller [2023]
Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)
Synod Moderator: The Revd Dr David Pickering [2022]
The Revd Dr Irene John [2024]**
Professor Malcolm Johnson [2022]
The Revd Bridget Powell [2023]
URC Deputy Treasurer General Secretary

2.7 Safeguarding advisory group

Convenor: Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)
Secretary: URC Safeguarding Adviser
Head of Children's and Youth Work
Secretary for Ministries
Nominated Members: maximum of three, serving one or two three-year terms:
The Revd Zaidie Orr [2021]
Mr Paul Smillie [2022]
Mrs Jane Dowdell [2023]**
Co-opted members: maximum of two, co-opted for appropriate terms of service:
Education and Learning Programme Officer

3. Mission department

3.1 Mission Committee

Convenor: Sarah Lane Cawte [2024]
Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Mission)
The Revd Sue Fender [2023] (1)
Mrs Angela Bogg (2) [2022]
Vacancy (3)
Vacancy (4)
The Revd Robert Bushby (5) [2023]
Mr John Davey (6) [2022]
Ms Lindsey Brown (7) [2022]
The Revd Robert Jordan (8) [2022]
The Revd Ray Stanyon (9) [2021]
Mr Simon Fairnington (10) [2023]
The Revd Alex Mabbs (11) [2023]
The Revd Branwen Rees (12) [2022]
Mr John Collings (13) [2021]

3.1.1 International exchange reference group

Convenor: The Revd Dr Ana Gobledale [2024]
Synod Moderator: The Revd Paul Whittle [2022]
Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries
Nominated member: The Revd Ros Lyle [2023]

3.1.2 Commitment for Life (CfL) reference group

Convenor: Mr Richard Lewney [2024]
At least two CfL advocates
Representative of mission team

Representative of mission committee
 Representative from Christian Aid
 Representative of Global Justice Now
 Programme Officer for Global Justice and Partnerships

3.1.3 Interfaith enabling group

Convenor: The Revd Tracey Lewis [2023]
 Secretary: The Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
 Nominated members: The Revd Ann Jack [2021]
 Mr Andy Lie [2023]
 Co-opted member: The Revd Dr Graham Adams [2024]**
 The Revd Dr Mark Godin [2024]**
 The Revd Dr John Parry

3.1.4 Joint Public Issues Team strategy and policy group

Deputy General Secretary (Mission)
 The Revd Steve Faber

3.1.5 Rural strategy group (United Reformed Church/Methodist)

Co-chair: The Revd Steve Faber (Synod Moderator) [2022]
 Mr Charles Jolly [2021]
 The Revd Elizabeth Kemp [2021]

4. Discipleship department

4.1 Ministries Committee

Convenor: The Revd Paul Whittle [2021]
 Convenor-Elect: The Revd Dr Marion Tugwood [2021] [to serve as convenor 2021-2025]
 Secretary: Secretary for Ministries
 Leadership in worship advocate: Mrs Jenny Sheehan [2021]
 Synod Moderator: The Revd Jacky Embrey [2023]
 Convenor of the Assessment Board
 Nominated members: Mrs Gill Bates [2024]**
 The Revd Dr Martin Camroux [2021]
 Mr Sam Elliot [2021]
 The Revd Stuart Scott [2023]
 The Revd Sally Willett [2023]

4.1.1 Accreditations (CRCW and SCM) sub-committee

Co-Convenor: The Revd Russell Furley-Smith [2021]
 Co-Convenor: Mr Simon Loveitt [2021]†
 Convenor-Elect: The Revd Dr Paul Dean [2021] [to serve as convenor 2021-2025]**
 Joint Secretaries:
 Secretary for Ministries [2022]
 CRCW Development Worker [2022]**
 Synod moderator: The Revd David Herbert [2024]**
 Convenor of the Assessment Board
 SCM postholder: The Revd Tim Clarke [2024]**
 CRCW postholder: Ms Ann Honey [2022]
 Nominated Members: The Revd Dr Susan Durber [2021]

Mr Rob Moverley [2022]
The Revd Leonora Jagessar Visser t’Hooft [2021]
Co-opted CRCW: Ms Marie Trubic [2022] (not to be replaced)

4.1.2 Ministries – maintenance of ministry sub-committee

Convenor: The Revd David Coote [2022]
Mr David Black [2021]
Mrs Margaret Brock [2021]
Mr David Gartside [2022]
Mrs Jean Wyber [2022]
Pensions committee convenor

4.1.3 Ministries – retired ministers’ housing sub-committee – under review

Members normally serve four years, but appointments may be extended for two more years.

Convenor: The Revd Anne Bedford
Secretary: Secretary of Retired Ministers’ Housing Society Ltd
Mr Peter West
Mr Malcolm Lindo
The Revd Ken Summers
The Revd Simon Walkling (Synod Moderator)
ex-officio: URC Treasurer
Properties are managed by a company, Retired Ministers’ Housing Society Ltd.
Details of the members of its board etc may be obtained from the Company Secretary at Church House.

4.1.4 Assessment board

Members usually serve for five years as training is required.
Convenor: Professor Bill Gould [2024]

Retiring in 2021:

The Revd Sue McCoan (10)

Retiring in 2022:

Mrs Bridget Akinyombo (10)

The Revd Jamie Kissack (4)

Mrs Faith Paulding (7)

The Revd Lis Mullen (2)

Mr Keith Reading (3)

Retiring in 2023:

The Revd John Danso (10)

Mr Dan Morrell (4)

Retiring in 2024:

The Revd Jan Adamson (13)

The Revd Gerald England (8)

Mr Mark Tubby (7)

Retiring in 2025:

Ms Mercy Nimako† Ms Liz Sharples**

The Revd Samuel Silungwe**

4.2 Education and Learning Committee

Convenor: Mr Alan Yates [2023]
Secretary: Secretary for Education and Learning

Resource centre representative: The Revd Dr Rosalind Selby [2022]
 Synod development officer: The Revd Mary Thomas
 Nominated Members:
 Mr Rudolph Wontumi [2021]
 Ms Adella Pritchard [2022]
 The Revd Martin Truscott [2022]
 Mrs Margaret Marshall [2024]**
 The Revd Tim Meachin [2024]**
 Vacancy

4.2.1 Education and learning finance sub-committee

Chair: Mr Alan Yates
 Minutes Secretary: Secretary for Education and Learning
 Member: The Revd Edward Sanniez
 Ex-officio: URC Treasurer, Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship), Convenor of the Education and Learning Committee
 Staff in attendance: Chief Finance Officer
 Members of the sub-committee are appointed by the Education and Learning Committee.

4.2.2 Stepwise task and finish group

Convenor: Professor Graham Handscomb
 Administrator: Stepwise Programme Assistant
 Secretary for Education and Learning
 Stepwise Programme Manager
 Education and Learning Instructional Designer Project Manager for Walking the Way
 Education and Learning Programme Officer (by invitation)
 Representatives – serving appropriate terms of service:
 Children’s and Youth Work Committee: Mr Leo Roberts
 Mission committee: The Revd Stuart Nixon
 Synod Training and Development Officers: The Revd Peter Henderson
 Resource Centres for Learning: a tutor
 Together Ethnic and Minority URC: The Revd Zaidie Orr
 Co-opted Members – by the Education and Learning Committee for appropriate terms of service:
 Mr Pete Atkins (Fresh Expressions)
 The Revd David Downing
 Mr Iain Johnston (Faith in Community Scotland)

4.3 Children’s and Youth Work Committee

Convenor: The Revd Paul Robinson [2024]**
 Secretary: Head of Children’s and Youth Work
 URC Youth Moderator
 URC Youth Moderator-elect
 Convenor of the pilots sub-committee
 Pilots representative
 Nominated members: Ms Camilla Quartey [2021]
 Ms Charmaine Mutare [2022]
 Mr Matthew Barkley [2023]
 Mr Reuben Watt [2023]

The Revd Janine Atkinson [2024]**
The Revd Samantha Sheehan [2024]**

4.3.1 Pilots sub-committee

Convenor: Mrs Margaret Smith [2022]

Members:

Resources: Vacancy

Mr Derek Goodyear [2021] (Pilots rep on Children's and Youth Work Committee)

Regional Pilots officers: two vacancies

Representatives:

Children and Youth Development Officer and team: Vacancy

URC Youth Pilots: Vacancy

Pilots company/Friends On Faith Adventures group: two to four vacancies

Members are nominated by the Children's and Youth Work Committee and serve one or two two-year terms.

4.4 Walking the Way steering group

Co-Chairs: Deputy General Secretaries (Mission) and (Discipleship)

Secretary: Project Manager for Walking the Way

Stepwise Programme Manager

Communications Officer

Representatives:

Children's and Youth Work: Ms Ruth White

Global and Intercultural Ministries: the Revd Bachelard Kaze Yemtsa [2023]

Education and Learning Committee: Mr Alan Yates

Resource Centres for Learning: The Revd Peter Ball

Training and Development Officers: The Revd Dr Jim Coleman

Mission Committee: Mr John Collings

Mission Enablers: Mr Martin Hayward

General Members: The Revd Colin Bones [2023]

The Revd Caroline Andrews [2024]**

4.5 Worship reference group

Convenor: The Revd Sam Silungwe [2024]**

Secretary: The Revd Elizabeth Gray-King [2024]

Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)

Nominated Members:

The Revd Dr Anna Gobledale [2024]

The Revd Dr Matthew Prevett [2024]

5. Administration and resources department

5.1 Business Committee

Convenor: The Revd Adrian Bulley [2024]

General Secretary

Clerk of General Assembly

Moderators of General Assembly

URC Treasurer

Moderator-elect and Immediate-past Moderators of General Assembly

Nominated members: Ms Ella Lemon [2022]**

Vacancy

5.2 Communications

Convenor: The Revd Dr Peter Stevenson [2023]
 Secretary: Head of Communications
 Mr Stan Hazell [2022]
 The Revd Ian Fosten [2022]
 The Revd Tim Lowe [2023]
 Mr Dan Morell [2023]
 The Revd Heather Whyte [2023]
 Ms Jo Aldred [2024]**

5.3 Equalities Committee

Convenor: The Revd Anne Lewitt [2022]
 Secretary: The Revd David Salsbury [2021]
 URC Youth representative: URC Youth Equalities and Diversity Representative
 Nominated members: The Revd Naison Hove [2023]
 The Revd Jayne Taylor [2023]
 The Revd Jo Clare-Young [2024]**
 Mrs Rosie Martin [2024]†
 The Revd Mhari McLintock [2024]**
 Ms Judy Rogers [2024]**
 Dr Ruth Shepherd [2024]**

5.4 Finance Committee

Convenor: URC Treasurer
 Chief Finance Officer
 Deputy Treasurer
 Chair of the URC Trust
 Nominated members: Mr William Potter [2021]
 Mr Bob Christie [2021]
 Mr David Greatorex [2021]
 Mr Frank Liddell [2022]
 Mrs Jane Humphreys [2023]
 Ms Joana Marfoh [2023]
 The Revd Wilbert Sayimani [2023]
 Ms Denise Harman [2024]**

5.4.1 Pensions Committee

Convenor: Mr Richard Nunn [2022]**
 Secretary: Pensions Manager
 Nominated Members:
 Ms Joana Marfoh [2024]**
 Vacancy
 Co-opted members, maximum of three:
 Mr David Martin
 Treasurer or Deputy Treasurer
 Convenor of the Investment Committee
 Convenor of the Maintenance of ministry sub-committee
 Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources)
 In attendance:
 Chief Finance Officer
 Secretary for Ministries (for Ministers' Pension Fund matters)

5.5 United Reformed Church Trust

Members normally serve for four years and may only serve a maximum of two terms (eight years). Directors of the Trust appoint new directors from those appointed as members. Members of the Trust elect the chair from among their own number and appoint a secretary and deputy secretary.

Chair: Mrs Val Morrison

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Deputy Secretary: Mr John Samson

Members:

Group one (synods 1, 2, 3,13):

The Revd Nick Mark [2024]**

Group two (synods 6, 8, 9, 12):

Dr Ian Harrison (8) [2021]†

Mr David Lathbury (6) [2022]

Group three (synods 4, 5, 7, 10, 11):

Mrs Margaret Thompson (7) [2022]†

Ms Catriona Wheeler (5) [2022]

Mrs Val Morrison (4) [2022]†

Mr Clifford Patten (7) [2024]**

Mr David Greatorex (5) [2024]**

URC Youth appointee: Mr Andrew Weston [2021]

Moderators of General Assembly

Clerk of General Assembly

URC Treasurer

General Secretary

In attendance:

Convenor of the investment committee

Minute secretary

Chief Finance Officer

5.5.1 Church House management group

Convenor: Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources)

Mr Derek Jones [2021]

Mr Robert Buss [2022]

Mr Adam Lester [2024]**

Dr Ian Harrison [2024]**

General Secretary

Chief Finance Officer

5.5.2 Remuneration Committee

Convenor: Mr William McVey

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources)

Ms Sushila Jetha (Methodist HR)

URC Treasurer

In attendance: Chief Finance Officer

5.6 The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd

Terms run until the AGM in September. The directors of the Trust appoint new directors from those appointed as members. Board members elect the chair from among their own number and appoint the company secretary.

Chair: Mrs Bridget Micklem [2023]
 Deputy chair: Mr Richard Nunn [2022]
 Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones
 URC Deputy Treasurer
 Convenor of the maintenance of ministry sub-committee
 Convenor of the investment committee
 Members of the URC: Mr Lyndon Thomas [2022]
 Mr Colin MacBean [2024]**
 Members of fund appointed by members of fund:
 The Revd Dr Janet Tollington [2023]
 The Revd Paul Bedford [2022]
 The Revd Caroline Vodden [2022]
 The Revd Daniel Cheyne [2022]

5.7 Investment Committee

Convenor: The Revd Dick Gray [2022]
 Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones
 Members: Mrs Jean Hudson [2023]
 Mr Lyndon Thomas [2024]**
 Mr David Martin [2022]
 Dame Katharine Barker [2023]
 URC Treasurer convenor, pensions committee
 Chair of URC Trust, or another director
 Chair of URC Ministers' Pension Trust, or another director
 Treasurer, Westminster College
 In attendance: Chief Finance Officer

6. Representatives to meetings of sister Churches

- 6.1 **General Synod of Church of England:** The Revd Tim Meadows
- 6.2 **Methodist Conference:** The Revd Roy Fowler
- 6.3 **Congregational Federation:** Mission Committee Nomination
- 6.4 **Church of Scotland:** Assembly Moderator and synod representative
- 6.5 **United Free Church of Scotland:** Synod nomination
- 6.6 **Scottish Assembly of the Congregational Federation:** Synod nomination
- 6.7 **Scottish Episcopal Church:** Synod nomination
- 6.8 **Methodist Church in Scotland:** Synod nomination
- 6.9 **Baptist Union of Scotland:** Synod nomination
- 6.10 **Presbyterian Church of Wales:** Assembly Moderator
- 6.11 **Union of Welsh Independents:** Synod nomination

6.12 Covenanted Baptists: Synod nomination

6.13 Church in Wales Governing Board: Synod nomination

6.14 Provincial Synod of the Moravian Church: Mission Committee Nomination

7. Representatives on ecumenical Church bodies

The following have been nominated as United Reformed Church representatives at the major gatherings of the ecumenical bodies listed.

7.1 World Council of Churches 2021 Assembly

Delegate: The Revd Sarah Moore

7.2 Council for World Mission 2021 Assembly

Representatives: Ms Lindsey Brown

Mr John Ellis

Ms Alison Greaves

Ms Maria Lee

7.3 World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) General Council

Representatives are appointed for each meeting of the Council.

7.4 Conference of European Churches Assembly

Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, and one other.

7.5 The Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council

The Revd Rowena Francis

The Revd Professor David Thompson

Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries

7.6 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)

7.6.1 CTBI Church leaders' meeting

General Secretary

7.6.2 CTBI senior representatives' forum

General Secretary

Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

7.6.3 CTBI environmental issues network

The Revd Mike Shrubsole

7.6.4 CTBI stewardship network

Mrs Faith Paulding

7.6.5 CTBI consultative group on ministry amongst children (CGMC)

Head of Children's and Youth Work, and one other.

7.6.6 CTBI interreligious network

Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

7.6.7 CTBI China forum

The Revd John Scott

7.6.8 CTBI Korea group

The Revd David Grosch-Miller

7.6.9 CTBI Middle East contact group

Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

7.6.10 CTBI Churches' refugee network

The Revd Fleur Houston

7.7 Churches Together in England (CTE)

7.7.1 CTE enabling group

Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

7.7.2 CTE group for evangelisation

Deputy General Secretary (Mission)

7.8 Action of Churches Together in Scotland (Acts) members meeting

Appointed by the National Synod of Scotland

7.9 National Sponsoring Body for Scotland

Appointed by the National Synod of Scotland

7.10 Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN)

Appointed by the National Synod of Wales

7.11 Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales

Appointed by the National Synod of Wales

7.12 Free Church education committee

Professor Graham Handscomb

Mrs Gillian Kingston

7.13 European Churches' environmental network

The Revd David Coleman – nominated by the Mission Committee in June 2019 to replace Mr Charles Jolly. Assembly Executive will be asked to approve this change in November 2020.

7.14 Churches' committee on funerals and crematoria

The Revd Sally Thomas

7.15 Churches' forum for safeguarding

URC Safeguarding Adviser

7.16 Churches' network for nonviolence

Head of Children's and Youth Work

7.17 Fresh Expressions Board (under review)

Deputy General Secretary (Mission)

7.18 Churches Visitor and Tourism Association

Mrs Valerie Jenkins

7.19 Joint liturgical group

The Revd Dr Ana Gobledale

8. Representatives on formal bilateral and multilateral committees

8.1 Methodist/United Reformed Church liaison group

Co-convenor: The Revd Paul Whittle (Synod Moderator) [2021]†

Co-secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for the National Synod of Scotland

Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for the National Synod of Wales

Nominated Members – serving renewable five-year terms:

The Revd Roy Fowler [2021]

The Revd Tim Richards [2024]

8.1.1 Methodist/United Reformed Church strategic oversight group

General Secretary

A General Assembly Moderator

Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

8.2 Church of England – United Reformed Church contact group

Co-Chair: The Revd Ruth Whitehead [2024]

Co-Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

The Revd Dr Susan Durber [2024]

Mr John Ellis [2024]

The Revd Tim Meadows [2024]

8.3 EMU Partnership (Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church in Scotland and the United Reformed Church National Synod of Scotland)

Appointed by the National Synod of Scotland

8.4 Conversations between the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe and the Anglican Communion

The Revd Julian Templeton

8.5 Roman Catholic/United Reformed Church dialogue group

Co-chair: The Revd Dr John Bradbury

Co-secretary: The Revd Philip Brooks

Members: Mr John Cornell

The Revd Dr Sarah Hall

The Revd Jason McCullagh

The Revd Lindsey Sanderson

9. Representatives on governing bodies of theological colleges, etc

9.1 Northern College

The Revd Raymond Singh [2023]

Mrs Sheila Davies [2021]
 Mr Willie Duncan [2021]
 The Revd Mark Bates [2022]
 Mrs Rosie Buxton [2022]
 Mr Bill Potter [2022]
 In attendance: Secretary for Education and Learning

9.2 Westminster College: board of governors

Governors serve six-year terms, which may be renewed.

Convenor: The Revd Nigel Uden [2026]

Clerk to the governors: Mr Chris Wright [2022]

Honorary treasurer (Westminster College): Mr Andrew Grimwade [2022]

Principal: The Revd Neil Thorogood

Mr Mark Hayes [2022]

The Revd Dr Rick Mearkle to 31 Aug 2020

Mr John Ellis [2023]

The Revd Jan Adamson [2024]

Mrs Darnette Whitby-Reid [2025]

The Revd Stuart Scott from 1 Sep 2020 to 31 Aug 2021

Note 1: A further six governors are appointed by the Cambridge Theological Federation, the University of Cambridge, Anglia Ruskin University, the college's teaching staff, its students and the Cheshunt Foundation.

Note 2: The Secretary for Education and Learning and the URC Treasurer are normally in attendance.

9.2.1 The Cheshunt Foundation

Mr Guy Morfett

9.2.2 Cambridge Theological Federation

Convenor, Westminster College governors

10. Governors of colleges and schools with which the United Reformed Church is associated

10.1 Caterham School Southern: Synod Moderator

10.2 Eltham College: Mr Martin Fosten

10.3 Walthamstow Hall: Mrs Isabel Heald

10.4 Milton Mount Foundation

Mr Ray Dunnett [2024]

The Revd Kevin Swaine [2024]

The Revd June Colley [2022]

The Revd Carole Elphick [2022]

The Revd Derek Lindfield [2022]

Mrs Daphne Bembridge [2023]

Governors serve four-year terms, which may be renewed.

10.5 Silcoates School

The Revd Jason McCullagh [2023]**
Vacancy
Governors serve three-year terms.

10.6 Taunton School: Baptist governor at present

10.7 Bishops Stortford College: Mr Richard Harrison

11. Miscellaneous

The United Reformed Church is represented on a variety of other national organisations and committees as follows:

11.1 Arthur Rank Centre

The Revd Elizabeth Caswell

11.2 Churches Legislation Advisory Service

Ms Memuna Levan Harris [2023]
General Secretary

11.3 Congregational Fund Board

Mr Anthony Bayley [2023]
The Revd Geoffrey Roper [2023]
The Revd Janine Atkinson [2023]
Mrs Mary Steele [2023]
Mr Mike Hart [2024]**

11.4 Congregational Memorial Hall Trust

The Revd Derek Wales [2021]
Mrs Margaret Thompson [2024]†
Mr Simon Fairnington [2023]
Mr John Ellis [2023]
Mr Philip Bonnier [2021]
The Revd Melanie Smith [2023]
Representatives serve four-year terms which may be renewed.

11.5 Historic England Places of Worship Forum

Convenor of the listed buildings advisory group

11.6 Lord Wharton's Charity

The Revd Derek Lindfield

11.7 Retired ministers' and widows' fund

The Revd Julian Macro
Mr Anthony Bayley
Ms Liz Sharples

11.8 Roots for Churches Ltd

The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith [2024]**

11.9 Samuel Robinson's Charities

Mr Tony Alderman

11.10 Scout Association – URC faith adviser

The Revd David Marshall-Jones

11.11 United Reformed Church History Society

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar [2024]

Mrs Jean Wyber [2022]

The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe [2023]

Council Members serve five-year terms which may be renewed.

11.12 World Day of Prayer

England, Wales and Northern Ireland: The Revd Dr Ana Gobledale [2022]

Scotland: Synod appointment.

11.13 Westhill Endowment Trust

Mrs Julie Grove MBE [2022]

The Revd Leonora Jagessar-Visser 't Hooft [2023]

Updated on 13 July 2020 by the secretary of the nominations committee (nominations.secretary@urc.org.uk) to incorporate:

- changes approved by Mission Council on 10 July 2020 – see Resolution 28 , and
- corrections received subsequent to Mission Council approval – see 1.5 and 7.13.

Address to the Throne

URC Mission Council, July 2020

To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty:

The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church, acting on behalf of its General Assembly, sends loyal greetings to Your Majesty. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are meeting by video conference on the day when our General Assembly should have convened at the University of Aston. As with so many events this year, the coronavirus pandemic has forced a change of plan. We are finding new ways to gather, worship, confer and serve together, while staying safely apart – just as our church congregations have done while our buildings have been in lockdown. The doors may have been shut, but the church has been far from closed.

Your Majesty's broadcast address at the height of the crisis was hugely appreciated. In it, you noted that coronavirus was "a disruption that has brought grief to some, financial difficulties to many, and enormous changes to the daily lives of us all." Like you, we mourn the lost lives and the missed opportunities. Like you, we applaud the selfless devotion shown by health service staff, carers and key workers – and rejoice in the many acts of compassion and creativity that the crisis has prompted.

The pandemic has also drawn attention to some significant inequalities in British society. Mortality rates have been much higher in deprived areas and among people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, who are more likely to live in overcrowded housing and work in frontline roles with higher risks of exposure. Asylum seekers and other migrants have missed out on much of the available government support. The lockdown increased pressure on families living in poverty, with foodbanks telling us that more children are going hungry, and parents of young children experiencing the biggest impact on their mental health. Debt and unemployment levels look set to rise. In this new reality, our churches will continue to serve and stand alongside their local communities: sharing God's love, calling out injustice, and providing practical support.

We know from our partner Churches around the globe that there are many places where the virus has had an even more severe impact. An additional 60 million people risk falling into extreme poverty this year. As a Church, we urge continued support for agencies such as Christian Aid and for initiatives to release poorer nations from their debt burden. The growing challenges in this country should not diminish our commitment to the world's poorest communities.

As we begin to emerge from lockdown, our society finds itself at a critical moment, when we as a Church pray that the choices made will be guided by values of justice and love. As the rainbows fade, we shall call upon our communities to hold onto the way that they pulled together to help each other. As we rebuild, we shall press for our economy and institutions to be redesigned so they address inequalities and work better for everyone. As the climate crisis remains urgent, we shall join with many others to emphasise the imperative of taking bold collective action for the wellbeing of people and planet.

We hope and pray that through this, the vision Jesus holds out of 'life in all its fullness' for all will be brought closer.

We pray too that God will strengthen, sustain and guide Your Majesty as you continue to lead and serve.

Assembly commissions

Four Assembly commissions were convened between the General Assemblies of 2018 and 2020 to consider matters of appeal or constitutional review. Full reports of these meetings and their decisions are held on file. The summaries here record work done on Assembly's behalf, without drawing attention to the particulars of the individual people and circumstances involved.

1. The Assembly's Ministries Committee had removed from the United Reformed Church's Roll of Ministers a minister who had been ordained in retirement as an Anglican priest. The minister appealed against the Committee's decision, and a commission met on 5 September 2018, convened by Mr John Ellis, former Moderator of General Assembly. The commission declined the appeal, as a matter of Church polity rather than on any personal grounds.
2. The Church Meeting of a local church called a constitutional review to consider some processes relating to finance and property decision-making within the Synod to which that church belongs. A commission met on 14 December 2018, convened by the Revd Nigel Uden, Moderator of General Assembly. The commission reaffirmed the centrality of a carefully balanced partnership of local church, Synod, and synod trust company as the covenant which forms the URC; recognised that there are variations of practice caused by difficulties in interpreting the schedules of the URC Acts; instructed the Law and Polity Advisory Group to consult widely and to propose clear and accessible guidelines for the whole of the URC; and addressed some matters regarding the relationship between the particular local church and Synod concerned.
3. A minister serving in an LEP was approaching the end of a fixed term of service, and the Synod Pastoral Committee, acting on behalf of the Synod, declined to support a further term. Without the Synod's support, a further term would not have been possible. The Minister and the Church Meeting both appealed against the Synod, and a commission met on 16 January 2019, convened by the Revd Dr David Peel, former Moderator of General Assembly. The commission declined the appeal, and also made recommendations to all parties, in order that its decision, which would inevitably cause some hurt, should not be unnecessarily damaging.
4. The Church Meeting of a local church voted to cease using the church building for congregational purposes. Two members of the congregation appealed this decision to the Synod, and when a synod commission declined their appeal, they appealed against the Synod to General Assembly. A commission met on 28 January 2019, convened by the Revd Dr Stephen Orchard, former Moderator of General Assembly. The commission declined the appeal, while also directing the Synod to explore whether the building could be used for other URC purposes.

John Proctor, General Secretary, July 2020

Disciplinary and incapacity cases

1. Five disciplinary cases that have been before the Assembly Commission have concluded since the last meeting of Assembly. Three of these cases also went before an Appeal Commission. In four of these five cases, the Church decided to remove the minister from the Roll – Elizabeth Blair, Jonathan Morgan, Brian Norris and Roger Whitehead.
2. The total cost of these five cases to the central budget of the Church was £78,065.
3. No cases have been dealt with under the incapacity procedure.

John Proctor, General Secretary, July 2020



Resolutions index

| Resolution number | Description | Report page/s | Record page/s |
|-------------------|---|---------------|---------------|
| 10 | Church changes | 45 | 4 |
| 11 | Church changes | 46 | 4 |
| 12 | Church changes | 47 | 4 |
| 13 | Church changes | 47 | 4 |
| 14 | Children's and Youth Work Committee | 58 | 4 |
| 15 | Children's and Youth Work Committee | 58 | 4 |
| 16 | Communications Committee | 65 | 4 |
| 17 | Communications Committee | 65 | 4 |
| 18 | Communications Committee | 65 | 4 |
| 19 | Education and Learning Committee | 91 | 5 |
| 20 | Pension Funds | 114 | 8 |
| 21 | Finance Committee and Pensions Committee | 114 | 5 |
| 22 | Pension Funds | 114 | 8 |
| 23 | Ministries Committee | 156 | 5 |
| 25 | Pastoral Supervision | 162 | 6 |
| 26 | Environmental Task Group | 188 | 5 |
| 27 | Walking the Way | 195 | 7 |
| 28 | Nominations Committee | 203 | 5 |
| 29 | Safeguarding | 227 | 6 |
| 30 | Defibrillators | 255 | 8 |
| 31 | Ministerial Disciplinary Process | | 5 |
| 32 | Virtual Meetings | | 3 |
| 33 | Standing Orders for Virtual Meetings | | 3 |
| 34 | Children's and Youth Work | | 5 |
| 35 | Communications | | 5 |
| 37 | Mission Committee | | 6 |
| 38 | Walking the Way | | 6 |
| 39 | Nominations | | 6 |
| 40 | Safeguarding Advisory Group | | 6 |
| 41 | Mission Council Advisory Group | | 6 |
| 42 | Contingency plans for next meeting of Mission Council | | 6 |



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