

**The United Reformed Church**  
**Minutes of a meeting of Mission Council held 19-21 March 2018 at High Leigh,**  
**Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire**

**MONDAY 19 MARCH**

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**Session 1**

The meeting of Mission Council began at 1400 with worship led by the Moderators and their chaplains. The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, was in the chair and declared Mission Council open.

**18/01**

The General Secretary, the Revd John Proctor, proposed and Mission Council appointed, the Revd Richard Church, Mr Peter Knowles, Ms Rosie Martin and the Revd Ruth Whitehead to be a Facilitation Group.

**18/02**

The Moderator welcomed everyone, identifying new members and anyone attending as an alternate.

Apologies were received and accepted by the Moderator as follows:

Mrs Wilma Frew	<i>Convenor of Pastoral Reference and Welfare</i>
Mrs Barbara Jones	<i>Synod of Wales</i>
Dr Jim Merrilees	<i>Synod of Scotland</i>
Mrs Maria Mills	<i>South Western Synod</i>
The Revd John Piper	<i>Deputy Treasurer</i>
Mrs Marilyn Piper	<i>North Western Synod</i>
Mr Bill Robson	<i>Synod of Scotland Clerk</i>
The Revd George Watt	<i>Southern Synod</i>
Mr Jake Convery	<i>Youth Rep</i>
Mrs Gwen Jennings	<i>South Western Synod</i>
Ms Kay Parris	<i>Due to be in attendance – Communications</i>
The Revd Brian Jolly	<i>North Western Synod</i>

People attending for the first time were:

Mrs Tina Ashitey	<i>Thames North Synod</i>
The Revd Mitchell Bunting	<i>Synod of Scotland</i>
Mr Chris Byrne	<i>Synod of Wales</i>
The Revd David Coaker	<i>In attendance – Moderator’s Chaplain</i>
The Revd Elaine Colechin	<i>In attendance – Moderator’s Chaplain</i>
Ms Natalie Gibbs	<i>Co-Moderator Elect – Youth [voting]</i>
Ms Katie Henderson	<i>Co-Moderator Elect – Youth [in attendance]</i>
The Revd Fran Kissack	<i>Yorkshire Synod</i>
Mr Simeon Mitchell	<i>In attendance – Secretary for Church and Society</i>
Ms Pam Tolhurst	<i>Southern Synod</i>

The Revd Marion Tugwood *North Western Synod*  
The Revd Dr Phil Wall *Synod of Wales*

## **18/03 Minutes of the meeting of Mission Council held 7-9 November 2017**

These were accepted as an accurate record, and signed by the Moderator.

Revd Bernie Collins reported that the Mission Committee would feature the work of Christian Aid and Commitment for Life at the 2018 General Assembly.

The Revd David Grosch-Miller reported on his visit to the National Council of Churches in Korea. He invited Mission Council to send a message of support to the URC's partner churches in Korea, the PCK and the PROK, as well as the NCKK:

***Mission Council, meeting on March 19<sup>th</sup> 2018, was pleased to receive a report from the Revd David Grosch-Miller following his participation in the International Conference in Celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 88 Declaration of the NCKK. At this critical moment in the search for a lasting and just peace for the people of Korea, Mission Council affirms the continued commitment of the United Reformed Church to support ecumenical engagement towards peace and reconciliation of the Korean peninsula.***

***We send warmest greetings and heartfelt prayers to our partner churches in the PCK and PROK and to the NCKK. We look forward to further engagement through the participation of the URC in the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Forum for Korea.***

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

## **18/04 Paper H2 – Ministries Committee**

The Revd Paul Whittle, on behalf of the Ministries Committee presented paper H2, Guidelines for Conduct and Behaviour for Authorised Elders, and the Resolution:

### **Resolution H2**

**Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, adopts the guidelines on conduct and behaviour for authorised elders contained in appendix 1 of this paper.**

After discussion, Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

Mission Council adjourned at 1525.

## **Session 2**

Mission Council resumed at 1620. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair.

## **18/05 Paper G1 – Update on 2019 Financial Projections**

The Treasurer, Mr Ian Hardie, presented paper G1.

## **18/06 Paper Z1 – Synod Moderators**

The Revd Simon Walkling presented Paper Z1: *Where is God calling the URC? A growing conversation: criteria for doing things well*, and moved the resolution, seconded by the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith:

*Mission Council receives Paper Z1 regarding criteria for doing things well and resolves that*  
*(i) All councils of the Church are encouraged to examine their existing work to discern whether resources of time, effort, and money are currently being expended on work that should now be brought to a conclusion, thus releasing them to do fewer things and to do them well.*

*(ii) Synods be asked to consider the paper in relation to their work.*

*(iii) All papers coming to future meetings of Mission Council and General Assembly shall address the purpose, relevance and necessity of any new work to the local church in furtherance of our part in God's mission and to grow the kingdom of God.*

After much discussion, Mission Council *agreed* to remit the resolution to the Facilitation Group for re-drafting of para (iii).

## **18/07 Paper T1 – Ministerial Disciplinary Process**

There being no officer of the MIND advisory group present, the Clerk responded to a number of questions and comments, and agreed to report these to MIND.

The Revd Paul Whittle proposed, and the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith seconded, the resolution: *Mission Council expresses its appreciation for the committed and careful work undertaken over a number of years by those engaged with writing, monitoring and amending the Ministerial Disciplinary Process (MIND), but expresses concern over the difficulties experienced in engaging with the process, in particular the complexity and slowness of the process and the resulting extensive, and expanding, documentation, and wishes MIND to take full account of these as it further considers reviewing the process.*

After discussion, the resolution was withdrawn.

The Revd Clare Downing proposed, and the Revd Paul Whittle seconded, the resolution: *Mission Council instructs MIND to report to each meeting of Mission Council about progress in reviewing the Ministerial Disciplinary process, until further notice.*

After discussion, the resolution was withdrawn.

The Clerk confirmed that he would report the matters raised in this item to the MIND Advisory Group.

## **18/08 Paper N1 – Task Group on the Future of General Assembly**

Mission Council reflected on the Task Group's recommendations for the future of General Assembly. Mission Council considered the report and draft resolutions and offered opinions and advice which were noted by representatives of the Task Group.

Mission Council adjourned at 1835.

### **Session 3**

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

#### **18/09 Paper M1 – Supporting the Church’s worship**

The Revd Richard Church, on behalf of the General Secretariat, introduced paper M1. He invited Mission Council to approve one of the Resolutions:

##### **Resolution M1**

*Mission Council is invited to approve one of the following:*

*EITHER a) Mission Council directs the General Secretariat to consult and to make proposals to General Assembly (or Mission Council acting on its behalf) for a Worship Reference Group that would report to Faith and Order;*

*OR b) Mission Council does not wish to make new provision for resourcing the Church’s worship at present.*

Mission Council discussed the matter thoroughly and decided to reject resolution b).

Mission Council was unable to reach consensus on resolution a). The General Secretary assured Mission Council that the General Secretariat would continue to explore the matter.

#### **18/10 Paper M2 – The Church’s Hymnody**

The General Secretary presented, and proposed an informal survey among Mission Council members.

#### **18/11**

During evening prayers, Mr Simeon Mitchell was commissioned as Secretary for Church and Society.

Mission Council adjourned at 2114.

### **TUESDAY 20 MARCH**

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### **Session 4**

Mission Council was reconvened at 0915 with morning prayers led by the Chaplain. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair.

#### **18/12 Paper D2 – Education and Learning**

The Convenor of the Education and Learning Committee, the Revd Professor Neil Messer, presented paper D2 and the associated resolution:

*Mission Council*

- a. commends the work done by the education and learning committee towards producing a viable, costed strategy for lay training and congregational development as requested in May 2017*

- b. *endorses the plans for further financial work by the education and learning committee and resource-sharing task group in conjunction with the synods*
- c. *and anticipates receiving and adopting the criteria and scoping for a Discipleship Development Fund at its meeting in May 2019.*

Professor Messer and the Secretary for Education and Learning, the Revd Fiona Thomas, responded to a number of questions and comments.

The Revd Andrew Mills proposed an additional resolution, to extend the plans noted in (b) above - *Mission Council resolves that:*

*When a net capital sum from the disposal of the Windermere building is clearly in view and firmly in hand, the Education and Learning Committee be invited to make proposals for the use of this money on discipleship development throughout the church over a period of five years.*

This was seconded by the Revd Jenny Mills.

Mission Council adjourned at 1045.

## **Session 5**

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

### **18/13 (from 18/08) Paper N1 Task Group on the Future of General Assembly**

Mission Council continued to address the report and draft resolutions.

The Revd Dick Gray and the Revd Michael Hopkins, on behalf of the Task Group, responded to questions and comments and noted suggestions and guidance offered by members of Mission Council.

### **18/14 (from 18/06)**

The Revd Ruth Whitehead, on behalf of the Facilitation Group, presented the following alternative to Z1(3):

*iii) Those bringing papers about new work to Mission Council and General Assembly will help the Church discern how their proposals will seek to grow God's Kingdom by addressing the purpose, relevance and necessity of those proposals for the local church and the wider community.*

No decision being possible, the Facilitation Group was asked to redraft the resolution in the light of discussion.

### **18/15 Paper F1 – Faith and Order Committee**

The Revd Dr Alan Spence presented the paper *Scripture and the Church*. Dr Spence responded to a number of comments and questions.

Mission Council adjourned at 1255.

## **Session 6**

Mission Council did not meet in this session.

## **Session 7**

Mission Council reconvened at 1630. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair.

### **18/16 En bloc business**

The Moderator invited the General Secretary to move the various items which the Moderators had placed *en bloc*, which were *agreed* by consensus.

### **Paper B1 – Children’s and Youth Work**

No resolution.

### **Paper D1 – Governors of Westminster College**

No resolution.

### **Paper H1 – Ministries Committee**

No resolution.

### **Paper H3 – Ministries Committee: Plan for Partnership**

Mission Council agrees the amendments to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration set out in this paper.

### **Paper I1 – Mission Committee: Partnership Re-Commitment**

- a) Mission Council welcomes and affirms the Partnership Recommitment between the UK congregations of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana, and the United Reformed Church.
- b) Mission Council recommends as good practice, and requests Church Meetings to consider seriously, the principle that an individual should not serve as an elder in both of these churches simultaneously. This would not prevent an individual serving as an elder in one denomination, and at a later time serving as an elder in the other.

### **Paper I3 – Mission and Discipleship**

No resolution.

### **Paper J1 – Nominations Committee**

- 1) Mission Council notes and approves the changes set out in Section A of the report to the list of Nominations agreed in May 2017 and as amended in November 2017.
- 2) Mission Council appoints according to the list of nominations in section B and C of the report.
- 3) Mission Council agrees the changes to the governance of Westminster College in section D of the report.

### **Paper K1 – Pastoral reference and welfare committee**

Mission Council assigns the responsibilities in paras 2.1 to 2.3 below to the safeguarding advisory group.

### **Paper R1 – Safeguarding advisory group**

No resolution.

### **Paper R2 – Safeguarding advisory group: Past case review**

No resolution

### **Paper V1 – Resource sharing task group.**

No resolution.

## **18/17 – Paper J2 Nominations Committee**

The Revd Ray Adams presented the report of the Nominations Committee, and proposed the resolutions:

- 1) **Mission Council notes and approves the changes set out in section A of the report.**
- 2) **Mission Council approves the correction to a previous decision as detailed in section B of the report.**
- 3) **Mission Council appoints according to the list of nominations in section C of the report.**
- 4) **Mission Council resolves to recommend to General Assembly the reappointments listed in section E.**

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

## **18/18 (from 17/57) Paper Y1 – Rules of Procedure for Electing Assembly**

### **Moderators**

Mr Dan Morrell, although no longer a member of Mission Council, had been invited by the Moderators to present business he had introduced in November 2017. He moved the resolution:

**Mission Council resolves to propose to General Assembly the changes proposed to the rules of procedure in:**

- a) 3.5 and 3.8
- b) 3.7, 3.9 and 3.15

Mr Morrell responded to questions and comments and after careful debate, Mission Council *accepted* part a) and *rejected* part b)

## **18/19 Paper D4 Governors of Westminster College**

The Revd Nigel Uden presented paper D4. Mr Uden commended the Revd Neil Thorogood for his contribution to the work of the College and the Cambridge Theological Federation.

### **18/20 (from 18/10) Paper M2 General Secretariat – The Church’s Hymnody**

Mr John Ellis presented the results of a survey conducted among members of Mission Council on the previous day. The General Secretary thanked Mr Ellis and noted that the survey results would be taken into account in the General Secretariat’s reflections on the matter.

### **18/21 Paper P2 Law and Polity Advisory Group**

The Revd Professor David Thompson presented paper P2, which suggests that a new promise for elders be considered as an addition to those presently made. While no resolution was attached, Professor Thompson sought Mission Council’s opinion. Discussion was broadly supportive. An informal poll suggested strong support. Professor Thompson responded, and thanked Mission Council for its advice.

### **18/22 Paper D3 Education and Learning – Training of Authorised Elders**

The Revd Professor Neil Messer reported on material that is available in response to the decision of General Assembly 2016.

Mission Council adjourned at 1827.

### **Session 8**

The Moderators and Chaplains led worship with Holy Communion.

## **WEDNESDAY 21 MARCH**

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### **Session 9**

Mission Council was reconvened at 0930 with morning prayers led by the Chaplain. The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, was in the chair.

### **18/23 Paper L1 URC Trust – Report on Properties**

The General Secretary presented the report.

### **18/24 Paper L2 URC Trust – Risk Assessment**

Mrs Jane Baird presented the report and resolution. Mr Alan Yates responded to a number of questions and comments, noting that the risk review process, and its associated training, would be available for the use of synods.

**Mission Council accepts the report of the risk assessment and management review panel and endorses and supports the intentions and plans outlined in paper L2 of March 2018.**

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus

### **18/25 Paper D2 (from 18/12)**

A revised resolution was presented replacing the Mills/Mills resolution:

- b) Endorses the plans for further financial work, to consider the use of both the capital and income from the sale of the Windermere Centre, by the education and learning**



**committee, finance committee and resource-sharing task group in conjunction with synods.**

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus

The substantive resolution was addressed:

**Mission Council**

- a. **commends the work done by the education and learning committee towards producing a viable, costed strategy for lay training and congregational development as requested in May 2017**
- b. **Endorses the plans for further financial work, to consider the use of both the capital and income from the sale of the Windermere Centre, by the, education and learning committee, finance committee and resource-sharing task group in conjunction with the synods.**
- c. **and anticipates receiving and adopting the criteria and scoping for a Discipleship Development Fund at its meeting in May 2019.**

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

**18/26 Paper P1 Law and Polity advisory group – Complaints policy**

The Assembly Clerk presented the paper, as amended on the Order Paper and moved the resolution:

**Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council adopts the Complaints Policy for the United Reformed Church, as set out in Paper P1 of Mission Council March 2018, direct that it be published in the Manual, and encourages all Trust bodies to consider a complaints policy using the principles set out in this policy.**

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

**18/27 Paper Z1 (from 18/06 and 18/14)**

Ms Rosie Martin, on behalf of the Facilitation Group, presented a revised resolution:

*iii) Those bringing papers (on new work) to Mission Council and General Assembly will help the Church discern how their proposals seeks to grow God's Kingdom by addressing the impact of these proposals on the mission of the local church and the life of the wider community*

The Revd Ray Adams proposed an amendment – the removal of iii) and a rewording of ii) to read:

**(ii) Synods, Mission Council and General Assembly be asked to consider the paper in relation to their work**

Mission Council *accepted* the amendment with disagreement. The amended resolution was put before Mission Council:

**Mission Council receives Paper Z1 regarding criteria for doing things well and resolves that:**

**(i) All councils of the Church are encouraged to examine their existing work to discern whether resources of time, effort, and money are currently being expended on work that should now be brought to a conclusion, thus releasing them to do fewer things and to do them well.**

**(ii) Synods, Mission Council and General Assembly be asked to consider the paper in relation to their work**

Mission Council *accepted* the resolution with disagreement.

### **18/28 (from 18/21) Paper P2 Law and Polity advisory group – Eldership**

The Revd Professor David Thompson outlined his wish, in the light of earlier discussion at Mission Council, to present to General Assembly the proposal in the paper to extend Schedule B. Mission Council offered advice and agreed that the proposal should go forward in its name.

Mission Council adjourned at 1035.

### **Session 10**

Mission Council reconvened at 1105. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair.

The Moderator thanked the staff of High Leigh for their hospitality, those who had arranged this meeting of Mission Council, the Communications team, the musicians, and the Minute Secretary. He also thanked those who had been attending Mission Council for the last time: immediate past Moderators Mr John Ellis and the Revd David Grosch-Miller; Moderators' Chaplains the Revd Dr Gwen Collins and the Revd Mark Robinson; and the Revd Dick Gray, Ms Morag McLintock, Ms Rachel Lampard and the Revd Helen Mee.

The General Secretary, on behalf of Mission Council, thanked the Moderators for their leadership during their term of service.

Closing worship was led by the Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, and the Chaplains.

Mission Council adjourned at 1140, expecting to meet next at Swanwick on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2018.