

**The United Reformed Church**  
**Minutes of a meeting of Mission Council held 15-17 November 2019**  
**at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick**

**FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER**

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**Session 1**

The meeting of Mission Council began at 1400 with worship led by the Revd Elaine Colechin; Bible study was led by Dr Alison Gray. The Moderator, Mr Derek Estill, was in the chair and declared Mission Council open.

**19/26**

The Moderator welcomed everyone, identifying new members and those attending as alternates.

Apologies had been received as follows:

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| The Revd Dr Alan Spence     | <i>Convenor of Faith and Order Committee</i> |
| Ms Katie Henderson          | <i>Youth Representative</i>                  |
| Mr AJ Mills                 | <i>Youth Representative</i>                  |
| The Revd Dr David Pickering | <i>Moderator, Synod of Scotland</i>          |
| The Revd Dr Marion Tugwood  | <i>North Western Synod Representative</i>    |
| The Revd Sally Martin       | <i>East Midlands Synod Representative</i>    |
| Mr Simeon Mitchell          | <i>Secretary for Church and Society</i>      |
| Mr Steve Summers            | <i>CRCW Development Worker</i>               |
| The Revd Elizabeth Clark    | <i>National Rural Officer</i>                |
| Mr Philip French            | <i>Ecumenical Observer</i>                   |
| Ms Chuka Agbasiere          | <i>Retired Ministers Housing Society</i>     |

Those attending for the first time or attending in a new capacity were:

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Mr Paul Franklin       | <i>Mersey Synod Representative</i>   |
| The Revd Dr Nick Jones | <i>Mersey Synod Representative</i>   |
| The Revd Lythan Nevard | <i>South Western Synod Representative</i>  |
| Mr Tom Howells         | <i>Thames North Synod Representative</i>   |
| Mrs Bridget Akinyombo  | <i>Thames North Synod Representative</i>   |
| The Revd Ken Howcroft  | <i>Ecumenical Observer</i>   |
| Dr Alison Gray         | <i>Bible Study Leader</i>  |
| The Revd Helen Everard | <i>Moderator-Elect's Chaplain</i>  |
| The Revd Sarah Moore   | <i>Assistant Assembly Clerk designate and North Western Synod representative</i> |
| Ms Elinor Davies       | <i>Youth Representative</i>  |

**19/27 Minutes of the Meeting of Mission Council held 16-18 November**

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

### **19/28 Matters arising**

Paper D2 from the May 2019 meeting, describing the “marks of ministry” had unfortunately used some terminology which may have inadvertently clashed with the Ministerial Disciplinary Process. As such the General Secretary proposed a revised opening to the document, which made no changes of substance but resolved the clash of wording:

“Meeting in May 2019, the Mission Council of the United Reformed Church adopted the following concise and comprehensive description of what the Church can reasonably hope to see evidenced in people who are called to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments. It was acknowledged that what this will look like in each minister will vary depending on the context, the individual, and the specific ministry to which they are called. This description replaces the ‘Seven fundamental qualifications for ministry’ adopted by General Assembly in 1982. In adopting this paper Mission Council also resolved to encourage the Ministries Committee, Education and Learning Committee, Resource Centres for Learning, and relevant committees in all the Synods to use this description as the basis for consistency in guidance and reporting in relation to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments.”

This was agreed by consensus.

### **19/29 Facilitation Group**

The General Secretary, the Revd John Proctor, proposed and Mission Council appointed Mrs Mel Campbell, the Revd Dr Phil Wall, Mr Reuben Watt, and the Revd Ruth Whitehead to be a Facilitation Group.

### **19/30 Paper B1**

#### **Children’s and Youth Work**

The Revd Jenny Mills and Dr Sam Richards presented the report of the Children’s and Youth Work Committee, and moved the Resolution:

**Mission Council approves the revised remit for a Pilots subcommittee (replacing the previous constitution) to come into effect from January 2020).**

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

### **19/31 Paper G1**

#### **Finance committee – Budget 2020**

The Treasurer, Mr Ian Hardie, presented the 2020 budget and moved the Resolution:

**Mission Council adopts the 2020 budget as set out in the appendix to the Paper G1 addendum for November 2019 Mission Council.**

Following brief discussion, Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

Mission Council adjourned at 1530

## Session Two

Mission Council resumed at 1630; The Revd Nigel Uden was in the Chair.

### 19/32 Paper G3

#### Finance Committee - Ethical Investment Guidelines

The Deputy Treasurer, the Revd John Piper, presented paper G3 and responded to a number of questions.

### 19/33 Paper D1

#### Education and Learning

The Education and Learning Convenor, Mr Alan Yates, sought Mission Council's approval to withdraw Paper D1 pending further consultation.

Mission Council *agreed*.

The Moderator, Mr Derek Estill, and the Revd Philip Brooks reported on a visit of URC representatives to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and responded to questions.

Mr Derek Estill took the Chair.

### 19/34 Paper I4

#### Mission Committee – Fall of the wall conference declaration

The Revd Nigel Uden presented paper I4, and moved the Resolution, which was formally seconded by the General Secretary.

The Revd James Breslin proposed, and Mission Council *agreed*, that the Resolution be received on behalf of General Assembly. The Resolution was amended accordingly:

**Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council welcomes the declaration drawn up at the November 2019 Fall of the Wall Conference between representatives of the United Reformed Church and the Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz, and affirms this joint commitment to work to overcome new 'walls' of division and mistrust.**

The Resolution was *agreed* by consensus. Consideration would be given later in the meeting to the sharing of this declaration with partner churches (see 19/43).

Mr Alan Yates took the Chair, and the Revd Dr John Bradbury left the room.

### 19/35 Paper M4

#### Appointments to the General Secretariat

The Moderators presented the paper and moved the Resolution:

**Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appoints the Revd Dr John Bradbury to serve as General Secretary of the Church from 1 June 2020 to the end of General Assembly 2027.**

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus, Dr Bradbury was welcomed with warm applause, and made suitable reply.

The General Secretary, the Revd John Proctor, sought clarification on the work of the General Secretary during the months when he and Dr Bradbury would overlap. He suggested that any duties assigned to the General Secretary by our Structure or Rules might legitimately be fulfilled by either post-holder. Mission Council accepted this view without question or dissent.

Mr Estill reported on the process of appointing a Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship).

Mission Council adjourned.

### **Session Three**

Mission Council resumed at 2000; Mr Derek Estill was in the Chair.

#### **19/36 Paper M1**

#### **General Secretariat – Resourcing Worship**

The General Secretary and the Revd Richard Church presented Paper M1 and proposed the Resolution:

**Mission Council resolves that a worship reference group be set up:**

- **to respond to requests from churches**
- **to curate existing resources**
- **to maintain a regular worship mailing with updates, news, and links to good worship practice.**

After brief discussion, Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

#### **19/37 Paper M2**

#### **Changes to the Rules of Procedure facilitating an annual Assembly with one Moderator**

The Revd Ruth Whitehead suggested that the text of the Changes to the Rules of Procedure be further changed to require the consent of a nominee for election as Moderator of General Assembly before the nomination is made.

The General Secretary advised that such a change could be made after careful consideration at a future meeting as no appointment is due to be made until 2021.

The Resolution was put:

**Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves to make the changes to the Rules of Procedure contained within paper M2 of Mission Council November 2019, pursuant to the implementation of decisions of principle made by the General Assembly of 2018, with immediate effect.**

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

#### **19/38 Paper M3**

#### **Membership of Mission Council/Assembly Executive**

The Revd Jacky Embrey noted a potential unintended consequence of Resolution M3. Mission Council *agreed* by more than the required three quarters majority to suspend Standing Orders in order to amend the Resolution.

The Clerk proposed insertion of the word 'normally' after 'Synod' in point 9.

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

The amended Resolution was put:

**Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council confirms that the membership of Mission Council shall be as set out in resolution 19E of General Assembly 2014 until the close of General Assembly 2020, and from that point shall then be:**

- 1. Moderator(s) of Assembly**
- 2. Moderator(s)-elect of Assembly**
- 3. Immediate past Moderator(s)**
- 4. General Secretary**
- 5. Deputy General Secretaries**
- 6. Clerk and Assistant Clerk**
- 7. Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer**
- 8. Conveners of all Assembly standing committees, except the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee**
- 9. Four further representatives of each Synod normally from among that Synod's representatives to the immediately preceding General Assembly.**
- 10. Three representatives of URC Youth**
- 11. Chair of the United Reformed Church Trust**

**With the exception of those in categories 5 (the Deputy General Secretaries) and 12 (youth representatives) all the above shall be members of the United Reformed Church.**

**Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council further resolves that:  
The Legal Adviser and the Convenor of the Law and Polity Advisory Group shall be in attendance with the right to speak at all times, but not to use consensus cards or to vote.**

**The three Deputy General Secretaries, who are members of Mission Council, are expected to attend, and they may direct other staff members to attend, with the right to speak (except during the decision stage of the consensus process) but not to use consensus cards or to vote, when the business so requires. These other staff members should therefore only expect to be at Mission Council where this has been negotiated and agreed in advance.**

**Up to two ecumenical representatives may attend with the right to speak (except during the decision stage of the consensus process) but not to use consensus cards or to vote.**

**Also present shall be the Moderators'/Moderator's Chaplain(s), the Secretary of the Nominations Committee, and the Minute Secretary. These may participate in group sessions, and may speak during plenary sessions with the consent of the Moderator.**

**From time to time there may be visitors and/or observers present by prior arrangement with the General Secretary. They shall not have the right to speak or participate in any way during plenary or group sessions, unless with the explicit consent of the Moderator.**

**All references to the Mission Council shall be taken as referring to the Assembly Executive or another successor body unless and until the General Assembly decides otherwise.**

**Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.**

### **19/39 Paper I1**

### **Mission Committee: Healing: hope in action**

Mr Alan Yates presented paper I1 and responded to a number of questions.

The Revd David Coaker led Mission Council in evening prayer. Mission Council adjourned at 2135

## **SATURDAY 16 NOVEMBER**

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### **Session Four**

Mission Council resumed at 0915 with worship led by the Revd David Coaker and Bible study led by Dr Alison Gray. The Revd Nigel Uden was in the Chair.

### **19/40 Paper I1**

### **Legacies of Slavery**

Mission Council divided into groups to reflect on Paper I1.

### **Session Five**

The Revd Nigel Uden was in the Chair.

### **19/41 Papers R1 and R2**

### **Safeguarding**

The Revd Richard Church introduced papers R1 and R2 with their Resolutions. The Moderator called on Mission Council to first address Paper R2 and Resolution R2.

The Revd Richard Church and Mr Ioannis Athanasiou responded to questions.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- financial resources would be required by synods to implement the plan
- there may be potential difficulty in recruiting designated persons locally
- designated persons must be easily contactable

The Revds Simon Walkling and Adrian Bulley (Synod of Wales) expressed concern about the ability of synods and local churches to fund the plan, and asked that their concerns be recorded. A number of members of Mission Council emphasised the importance of this issue and the need for funding to be made available. The matter is to be discussed by the Inter-synod Resource-sharing Group.

Resolution R2:

**Having already accepted the recommendations of the Past Case Review Learning Group Report, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, endorses the URC's safeguarding strategic plan as the next step of the journey. Mission Council directs the safeguarding advisory group:**

- (a) to oversee the development, implementation, review and monitoring of the plan**
- (b) to advise Mission Council/General Assembly on progress at subsequent meetings.**

Resolution R2 was *agreed* by consensus.

Mr Ioannis Athanasiou responded to questions on Paper R1; the Resolution was discussed and a number of textual alterations were made with the agreement of the proposers.

During discussion, it was agreed by Mr Athanasiou and Mr Church that the Safeguarding grid regarding DBS/PVG checks would be revised and reissued.

Resolution R1:

**On behalf of the United Reformed Church, Mission Council thanks survivors for their courage in sharing their thoughts and recommendations.**

**Mission Council, on behalf of General Assembly, instructs SAG:**

- a) to oversee and support the work of the survivors' group**
- b) to integrate their recommendations in the delivery of URC's Safeguarding Strategic Plan (2020-2025), and**
- c) to review and advise the whole Church through Mission Council/General Assembly on how to continue fostering this sensitive area of pastoral care and support for adult survivors of abuse.**

Resolution R1 was *agreed* by consensus.

Mission Council adjourned.

### **Session Six**

Mission Council did not meet in session six.

### **Session Seven**

Mission Council resumed at 1630; the Moderator, Mr Derek Estill, was in the Chair.

### **19/42 Resolutions en bloc**

The Assembly Clerk proposed *en bloc*, Resolutions:

#### **H1 New sub-committee of ministries committee**

- 1. Mission Council dissolves the accreditation and the Church Related Community Work Programme sub-committees, with effect from General Assembly 2020.**
- 2. Mission Council agrees to the formation of the accreditations sub-committee, with effect from General Assembly 2020, as a sub-committee of the ministries committee, this sub-committee to take over the majority of the functions of the former accreditation and Church Related Community Work programme sub-committees, any residual tasks to revert to the ministries committee or be allocated by that committee.**

#### **H2 Ministers on more than one roll**

- 1. Mission Council confirms that a minister of Word and Sacraments, apart from the exceptions listed in paragraphs five and six of paper H2 of Mission Council November 2019, should not remain on the roll of ministers of the United Reformed Church if on the roll of another denomination.**

#### **I2 Mission Committee update – Environmental Task Group**

**1. Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees that the size of the environmental task group be increased from four to six members, and that the Revd David Coleman and Ms Alison Greaves be appointed to the vacancies.**

**2. Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, asks all synods and Assembly committees to report back to the environmental task group about their progress in implementing the Environmental Policy by 29 February 2020 with a view to a full report being made at the 2020 General Assembly and annually thereafter.**

#### **J1 List of nominations**

**1. Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council notes and approves the changes set out in section one of paper J1 of Mission Council November 2019 to the list of nominations agreed by Mission Council in May 2019.**

**2. Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appoints according to the nominations in section two of paper J1 of Mission Council November 2019.**

#### **O2 Human resources advisory group - Tenure of Principal of Westminster College**

**Mission Council confirms that appointments to the role of Principal of Westminster College are for an initial period of seven years with the possibility of that appointment being renewed for successive periods of up to five years.**

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

The Revd Ray Adams, on behalf of the Nominations Committee, sought help in finding nominees particularly for the Equal Opportunities Committee and Church House Management Group.

#### **19/43 Fall of the Wall (from 19/34)**

The Revd James Breslin proposed the resolution, which was formally seconded by the Clerk:

**Mission Council commends the November 2019 declaration agreed between the United Reformed Church and the Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz for consideration by its Confessional and Ecumenical Partners in Europe, and instructs those who represent the United Reformed Church thereon to bring it to their attention.**

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

#### **19/44 Paper H3**

#### **Ministries Committee - Pastoral Supervision**

The Revd Paul Whittle presented Paper H3 for discussion, outlining and updating principles for Pastoral Supervision. Mission Council divided into groups.

Plenary session resumed at 1750, and each group reported briefly on their discussion. Mr Whittle requested written notes from each of the groups, and individual contributions to the discussion.

Mission Council Adjourned at 1820.



## Session Eight

Mission Council re-convened at 2000. The Revd Elaine Colechin led Mission Council in evening prayers.

Mission Council adjourned at 2015

## **SUNDAY 17 NOVEMBER**

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### Session Nine

Worship, including the Sacrament of Holy Communion, was led by the Revd David Coaker. During the service, the Moderator, Mr Derek Estill, led the induction of the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith as Secretary for Ministries. Bible study was led by Dr Alison Gray.

### Session Ten

#### 19/45 Paper J2

#### Nominations Committee

Mr Alan Yates was in the Chair.

The General Secretary presented paper J2 and the Resolutions:

**1. Mission Council notes and approves the changes set out in part one of paper J2 of Mission Council November 2019 to the Nominations list agreed at the May 2019 meeting of Mission Council.**

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

**2. Mission Council appoints according to the nominations in part two of paper J2 of Mission Council November 2019.**

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

**3. Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints the Revd Jamie Kissack to be Moderator of Yorkshire Synod from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2027.**

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

Mr Brian Jolly left the room, and in moving resolution 4, Mr Proctor stated that the regular process for seeking a nomination had been followed. Since Mr Jolly's nomination had been announced, twelve people in North Western Synod (in some cases writing on behalf of an elders' meeting) had written to the General Secretary questioning or opposing Mr Jolly's suitability for the role. Mr Proctor informed Mission Council that a mitigating strategy had been agreed with Mr Jolly, and on that basis presented the nomination to Mission Council for decision:

**4. Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints the Revd Brian Jolly to be Moderator of North Western Synod from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2024.**

After discussion, Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

**5. Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints the Revd Sarah Moore to be Assistant Clerk of General Assembly from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2022.**

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

The Revd Nigel Uden took the Chair.

**19/46 (from 19/40)**

**Legacies of Slavery**

Mr Alan Yates reported on feedback from group discussion on the Legacies of Slavery paper.

The Moderator thanked those who had arranged this meeting of Mission Council, Church House and Communications staff, conveners and committee members, the Chaplains, the Bible study leader, the Minute Secretary, and the staff of The Hayes.

The General Secretary thanked the Moderators.

Mission Council adjourned at 1205, expecting to meet on 17 March 2020 at High Leigh, Hoddesdon.