

# Paper N2

## Church Life Review Structures

### General Secretary

#### Basic information

Contact name and email address	John Bradbury john.bradbury@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<b>Resolution 52</b>  <b>1. Principles</b>  <b>a) General Assembly adopts the following principles in making decisions about its Committee structures:</b>  <b>i. The General Assembly will provide the infrastructure and resources necessary to efficiently support the work of local churches and Synods.</b>  <b>ii. The General Assembly will only exercise the functions of the life of the Church that are not more appropriately carried out at local or Synod level.</b>  <b>iii. The General Assembly will reduce the number of committees and people required to populate the committee structure to make it proportionate to the current size of the United Reformed Church.</b>  <b>iv. The General Assembly will ensure coherence between the Committee Structure and the General Assembly staffing structure to facilitate joined-up strategic thinking and operations.</b>  <b>b) The committees of the General Assembly will:</b>  <b>i. provide integrated decision making and delivery between different areas of General Assembly work as much as is possible to avoid duplication or lack of coherence.</b>  <b>ii. work only at the level of strategy, policy and governance.</b>

- iii. be scalable, allowing work to contract or expand as the needs and overall size and level of activity of the Church changes.
- iv. trust General Assembly staff and Office holders to make operational adopted strategies and policies, ensuring accountability through appropriate governance structures.

### Resolution 53

- 2. General Assembly amends the composition of the Business Committee to be made up of:
  - a) An Independent Convenor (who shall be an officer of the General Assembly).
  - b) The General Secretary who shall serve as Executive Secretary.
  - c) The Moderator of the General Assembly.
  - d) The immediate past Moderator of the General Assembly.
  - e) The incoming Moderator of the General Assembly.
  - f) The Clerk to the General Assembly.
  - g) The Treasurer to the General Assembly.
  - h) The other members of the General Secretariat.
  - i) Two members appointed by the General Assembly to reflect the breadth and diversity of the United Reformed Church, one of whom will normally be under the age of 26.
  - j) The Business Committee may invite others to be in attendance when it will assist the making of Assembly Arrangements or the strategic oversight of the business of the Church.
- b. General Assembly adopts the following Terms of Reference for the Business Committee:
  - a) To oversee the practical arrangements of meetings of the General Assembly and the Assembly Executive.
  - b) To oversee and order the business of the General Assembly and the Assembly Executive.

- c) To keep a strategic overview of the work of the General Assembly, facilitating the coherence of business across the various committees of the church.**
- d) To ensure the coherence of the strategies of the General Assembly, good governance, and the operational work of the Assembly.**
- e) When necessary, instigate new business to ensure the wellbeing of the work of the General Assembly.**
- f) In urgent circumstances to take any necessary decisions on behalf of the General Assembly in between meetings of the Assembly or Assembly Executive and to report them to the next meeting of the Assembly or Assembly Executive.**

### **Resolution 54**

#### **3. General Assembly:**

- a) Determines that all Nominations to serve the ongoing work of the General Assembly will be made in accordance with Safer Recruitment policies.**
- b) Instructs the Business Committee, in consultation with the officers of the current Nominations Committee, to appoint a Nominations Committee of six members, reflecting the diversity of the Church. Its Terms of Reference will be:
  - i. To adopt and keep up to date processes for Nominations, including proformas for application forms, guidance for interviews, and other resources necessary to facilitate the nominations process.**
  - ii. To receive from Committees (on behalf of themselves, or subcommittees, groups, panels, boards or representatives to outside bodies that are accountable to them), and external bodies Role Descriptions and Person Specifications, and to disseminate these widely through a variety of communications approaches and through Nominations Champions, seeking nominations and applications.**
  - iii. To receive from Committees, Groups, Boards and external bodies names of people who have applied, been interviewed, and received appropriate references. To check that appropriate process has been followed, that appointments would recognise appropriate diversity, and when approved, forward****

names to General Assembly or Assembly Executive to confirm appointment. Committees are responsible for interviewing for any subcommittees or boards/panels that are accountable to them, or representatives to bodies that report to them.

- iv. To maintain a list of those available to serve on recruitment processes for General Assembly ministerial or staff appointments and to forward to the General Assembly or the Assembly Executive the names of those appointed or nominated for appointment.
  - v. External bodies requesting representation from the United Reformed Church as set out in their governing documents will be responsible for role descriptions, and (where appropriate and possible) interviewing, the Nominations Committee will collect references.
  - vi. To support and enable Nominations Advocates to effectively disseminate opportunities for service within their networks.
- c) Instructs each Synod, URC Youth and the Racial Justice Advocates Network (working with the Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries) to each appoint a 'Nominations Champion' to be responsible for assisting with the dissemination of opportunities for service within their respective networks.
- d) Instructs the Business Committee, in consultation with the Officers of the current Nominations Committee, to bring this new process into being as soon as possible.
- e) Recognises the need for staff administrative support for the good functioning of this process and instructs the General Secretariat to enable this.

### Resolution 55

4. General Assembly instructs the Business Committee to appoint an independent external consultant to advise on the range of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work, and a small reference group of three to support their work. The remit should include:
- a) Mapping the current work of the General Assembly in the field of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and assessing its effectiveness.

- b) Engaging with the work of ecumenical partners and others in the charity sector to ascertain best practice which might inform our work.**
- c) Advising on a draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.**
- d) Advising on appropriate structures and mechanisms to enable the delivery of an EDI policy and effective accountability mechanisms.**
- e) The Business Committee should report to General Assembly 2024 on the progress of this work bringing any appropriate resolutions.**

### Resolution 56

- 5. General Assembly renames the Faith and Order Committee the 'Worship, Faith and Order Committee' with the following membership:**
- a) A Convenor**
  - b) The Secretary for Ecumenical Relations**
  - c) The Minister for Digital Worship**
  - d) Five members appointed by the General Assembly**
  - e) The Secretary for Ecumenical Relations or the Minister for Digital worship will normally function as the Secretary for the Committee.**
  - f) General Assembly adopts the following remit for the Worship, Faith and Order Committee**
  - g) to address issues of worship, faith and order on behalf of the URC**
  - h) to participate in and respond to ecumenical and inter-faith discussions on faith and order issues**
  - i) to advise the assembly, its officers and committees on questions of worship, faith and order**
  - j) to listen to concerns raised by Local Churches, Synods and individuals and to advise as appropriate**
  - k) to publish and disseminate occasional materials relating to worship, faith and order**

l) to act as a sounding board for the Minister for Digital Worship.

m) to receive reports from the United Reformed Church Spirituality Group

### Resolution 57

6. General Assembly thanks the members of the Worship Reference Group for their service and dissolves the group from the close of General Assembly 2023.

### Resolution 58

7. General Assembly instructs the Business Committee to oversee a consultation process, to be led by the Deputy General Secretary for Discipleship, involving representatives of the Children's and Youth Work Committee, the Education and Learning Committee and the Ministries Committee, leading to proposals for the further integration of their work, including proposals for further structural integration. These should be in line with the principles adopted in Resolution X.

a) If external facilitation is required to achieve a constructive outcome, the Business Committee is empowered, after consultation with those concerned, to appoint an external facilitator to assist the process.

b) Invites the Business Committee to bring back further proposals, emerging from this consultation exercise, to either Assembly Executive or General Assembly 2024.

### Resolution 59

8. General Assembly agrees in principle to the creation of one Resources Committee to bring together responsibility for the areas currently covered by the Church House Management Group, the Communications Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Human Resource Advisory Group.

It agrees the membership of the Committee to be:

a) A Convenor (who may be the Treasurer).

b) The Treasurer (if not the Convenor).

c) The Chief Operating Officer (who will be the Executive Secretary).

	<p><b>d) The Chief Finance Officer.</b></p> <p><b>e) Five further members, reflecting the diversity of the Church, with collective expertise in the areas of: finance, property, human resources and communications.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 60</b></p> <p><b>9. General Assembly invites the Nominations Committee to begin to populate a committee to serve from the close of General Assembly 2024.</b></p> <p><b>Resolution 61</b></p> <p><b>10. General Assembly instructs the Business Committee to bring full terms of reference for the committee to Assembly Executive 2024 for adoption.</b></p>
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## Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To reform aspects of the Committee Structure of the General Assembly.
<b>Main points</b>	To adopt principles for the reform of the Committee Structure; to amend the makeup and remit of the Business Committee; to amend the remit and functioning of the Nominations Committee; to set up independent consultancy work on the URC's EDI structures; to adopt a new name a remit for the Faith and Order Committee, and dissolve the Worship Reference Group; to initiate a consultation process leading to further integration of the work of the Discipleship Department, and to agree in principle the creation of a Resources Committee.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	N2 - AE Paper 2021 N1 - AE paper 2022 N1 - GA paper 2022.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	General Assembly 2022, Assembly Executive 2022, existing committees and various officers of committees.

## Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	Nothing specific, but should lower the costs of committees by reducing their numbers.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	

# Church Life Review Appendix 1

## General Assembly Structures

### Background

1. As part of the Church Life Review, we were asked to examine the structures of the General Assembly. This was in part because of the significant pressures on the nominations committee and difficulties filling all the relevant positions. It is also about a widespread sense that our structures are simply too large for the size of Church we now are.
2. We outlined initial thinking and consulted General Assembly 2022. At the same time, we engaged in a round of consultation with all Committees, who were invited to comment. We fed back the results of this, indicating where we believed changes to the proposals were necessary, to Assembly Executive in November 2022.
3. At that point, there was an unfortunate failure in communications. We believed that a written invitation had been sent to follow up the verbal invitation given at Assembly Executive to all committees to invite a member of the Church Life Review Group to attend a meeting of any committee that wished. That written invitation did not get sent, and the Church Life Review Group was surprised that only one committee invited us.
4. This means that we are not able to bring a complete set of proposals across all the areas of Church Life. Such is the pressure on the Nominations Committee that we have chosen to bring proposals in those areas where we believe we appropriately can, and very significantly, to the work of the Nominations Committee itself.
5. Broadly, the proposal was that there should be three committees that map onto three Church House departments: Mission, Church Life (covering the current Discipleship department) and Administration and Resources (or possibly called 'Finance and General Purposes).
6. There was considerable agreement among the committees of the Administration and Resources department.
7. The Discipleship department have already been enjoying much closer collaboration between the Children's and Youth Work, Education and Learning and Ministries Committees over recent years, and staff and convenors are keen to find ways to embed that structurally. There is concern about the scope of any new committee, and the practicalities of how this would function. It is in this area that consultation most noticeably failed.
8. The Mission Committee already functions as one Committee with one Deputy General Secretary and one staff team. There are no proposals to change this.
9. Proposals floated at General Assembly 2022 to have one Deputy General Secretary and two Department Leads in Mission and Church Life have been dropped over concerns about the capacity of staff to hold a full specialist brief and exercise the function of Deputy General Secretary.



10. There has been a general concern, expressed within the Nominations Committee itself, and at Assembly Executive, about its ways of working. They have served us well over many years, but no longer feel fit for purpose. We bring proposal for the formation of a new Nominations Committee and Nominations process to ensure we are working to the Safer Recruitment policies of the General Assembly.

### Principles

1. It has been helpful to determine some principles by which structural reform should happen, and we invite General Assembly to adopt the following principles by which ongoing work in this area can be determined. We therefore propose the following resolution:
  - a. **General Assembly adopts the following principles in making decisions about its Committee structures:**
    - i. **The General Assembly will provide the infrastructure and resources necessary to efficiently support the work of local churches and Synods.**
    - ii. **The General Assembly will only exercise the functions of the life of the church that are not more appropriately carried out at local or Synod level.**
    - iii. **The General Assembly will reduce the number of committees and people required to populate the committee structure to make it proportionate to the current size of the United Reformed Church.**
    - iv. **The General Assembly will ensure coherence between the Committee Structure and the General Assembly staffing structure to facilitate joined-up strategic thinking and operations.**
  - b. **The committees of the General Assembly will:**
    - i. **provide integrated decision making and delivery between different areas of General Assembly work as much as is possible to avoid duplication or lack of coherence.**
    - ii. **work only at the level of strategy, policy and governance.**
    - iii. **be scalable, allowing work to contract or expand as the needs and overall size and level of activity of the Church changes.**
    - iv. **trust General Assembly staff and Office holders to operationalise adopted strategies and policies, ensuring accountability through appropriate governance structures.**

### Business Committee

1. The Business Committee was formed from the previous Assembly Arrangements Committee and the Mission Council Advisory Group. The functions of the former have dominated over the last three years as we have planned and executed meetings of General Assembly and Assembly Executive both through the pandemic and settled into the new permanent venue for Assembly of The Hayes.

The strategic oversight of the whole business of the General Assembly has suffered as a result.

2. The current Business Committee is made up of the Officers of the General Assembly (The Moderator of the General Assembly, the immediate past Moderator of the General Assembly, The General Secretary, the Clerk, the Treasurer and the Convenor of the Business Committee), the Moderator Elect, and two General Assembly appointed representative to ensure balance within the committee. A range of others involved in aspects of the running of General Assembly are invited to attend when discussing preparations for Assembly or Assembly Executive. Its meetings are currently held exclusively on Zoom.
3. The reflection on consultation to date reported at Assembly Executive suggested that it become a body made up of the Officers of the General Assembly and the Convenors of what would have become the three main committees of the General Assembly. This is now problematic in that the number of committees is not yet reducing significantly enough to make this a viable number of people for a strategic body. Furthermore, consultation and reflection has also shown that a significant current weakness is that the only person who maintains the link between the Officers of the General Assembly, the overall business of the General Assembly and the work of the staff of the General Assembly is the General Secretary. When the General Secretariat was formed, part of the rationale was to ensure that there is a strong conciliar element to the exercise of responsibilities at General Secretariat level. The current arrangement does not fully recognise that desired culture. The General Secretariat as a whole has the responsibility to put into operation the priorities of the General Assembly. The current arrangement does not reflect the conciliar working that our tradition would expect, and places too much responsibility on the General Secretary acting alone to be the 'hinge' keeping the Councils of the Church and the work of Church House tied together. We therefore believe that the Business Committee should seek to bring together the Officers of the General Assembly and the General Secretariat, along with two other Assembly appointed members to reflect the diversity of the Church, one of whom would normally be under the age of 26. This would give an overview of all the committee work of the Assembly, as the Deputy General Secretaries are ex-officio members of all the committees in their departments, and in the case of Mission (and the proposed future Finance and General Purposes Committee) the Executive Secretaries of them. The Officers of the Assembly have the wide view of the Business and Governance of the Church.
4. An additional issue is that custom and practice have dictated that from time to time the Officers of the General Assembly make decisions on its behalf when urgent business, or business which it is legally necessary to be restricted to a small circle of confidentiality is required. General Assembly has not (as far as we are aware) ever formally delegated that responsibility to its Officers. Good governance requires that such authority be delegated, and also that any decision taken on behalf of the General Assembly be reported to it, or to Assembly Executive. We believe that the most appropriate body to take such decisions would be the Business Committee, rather than the Officers alone. This is for two primary reasons. Firstly, the composition of the Business Committee makes it more likely to be better representative of the Church as a whole. Secondly, (if these proposals are adopted) it will be a body that has a full overview of the governance of the General Assembly, its strategy, and the operationalisation of

its work, and will be better placed to take such decision than the Officers acting alone.

5. We therefore bring the following resolutions:

**General Assembly amends the composition of the Business Committee to be made up of:**

- a) **An Independent Convenor (who shall be an officer of the General Assembly).**
- b) **The General Secretary who shall serve as Executive Secretary.**
- c) **The Moderator of the General Assembly.**
- d) **The immediate past Moderator of the General Assembly.**
- e) **The incoming Moderator of the General Assembly.**
- f) **The Clerk to the General Assembly.**
- g) **The Treasurer to the General Assembly.**
- h) **The other members of the General Secretariat.**
- i) **Two members appointed by the General Assembly to reflect the breadth and diversity of the United Reformed Church, one of whom will normally be under the age of 26.**
- j) **The Business Committee may invite others to be in attendance when it will assist the making of Assembly Arrangements or the strategic oversight of the business of the Church.**

**General Assembly adopts the following Terms of Reference for the Business Committee:**

- a) **To oversee the practical arrangements of meetings of the General Assembly and the Assembly Executive.**
- b) **To oversee and order the business of the General Assembly and the Assembly Executive.**
- c) **To keep a strategic overview of the work of the General Assembly, facilitating the coherence of business across the various committees of the church.**
- d) **To ensure the coherence of the strategies of the General Assembly, good governance, and the operational work of the Assembly.**
- e) **When necessary, instigate new business to ensure the wellbeing of the work of the General Assembly.**
- f) **In urgent circumstances to take any necessary decisions on behalf of the General Assembly in between meetings of the Assembly or Assembly Executive and to report them to the next meeting of the Assembly or Assembly Executive.**

## Nominations

1. The current Nominations Committee is formed of one representative from each Synod, often the Synod Clerk (but not exclusively). There are a vast number of roles to fill (across our committees and representative to external bodies, some 500). It is often difficult for members of the committee to know exactly what each role entails. Names are often brought of people who are known only to one or a small number of the committee, or who may not directly be known by any of them but are a third-hand recommendation. Invitations are then extended by the Secretary to the Committee. The burden of the work falls on the Officers of the Committee, particularly the volunteer Secretary, who give an extraordinary amount of time to the role, and often feel swamped by it. The General Assembly has placed an unreasonable burden of expectation upon the officers of the committee.
2. It is important that all our appointments are made in accordance with our safer recruitment policies. Good Practice 5 defines Safer Recruitment as involving:
  - **providing a job description and a person specification**
  - **completing an application form**
  - **completing a self-declaration of criminal history**
  - **a face-to-face interview**
  - **checking references**
  - **completing a DBS/PVG check (where necessary)**
  - **a trial period.**
3. To achieve this, it will be necessary for the Committees, Groups, Trustee boards and external bodies that we work with to play a much more central role within the Nominations process. They must proactively be preparing role descriptions and person specifications, be willing to engage in meeting with perspective volunteers for conversations and provide training when required.
4. We also believe it will be much more necessary to advertise opportunities to volunteer more widely. Where this has been done in trying to fill roles within the new Disciplinary process, it has thrown up a wide range of people well beyond the “usual suspects”, of greater diversity, and highly qualified and experienced individuals willing to give of their time and expertise.
5. We therefore bring proposals to significantly reduce the size of the Nominations Committee. It will become the responsibility of Committees, Groups, Trustee boards and external bodies to produce role descriptions and person specifications, to meet with perspective volunteers, and to make recommendations to the Nominations Committee for appointments. The Committee itself will be responsible for widely disseminating opportunities to serve (with the assistance of the Communications Team), determining the process, providing pro-forma application forms, receiving recommendations from Committees, Groups, and outside bodies, ensuring appropriate diversity within committees, and bringing slates of names for appointment to General Assembly or Assembly Executive.
6. Alongside advertising, we recognise that there is a vital role for disseminating opportunities through networks. We therefore will ask each Synod, URC Youth and the Racial Justice Advocates each to appoint a Nominations Champion. They will be informed of all opportunities for service and be invited to seek out appropriate nominations from within their networks.

7. In the light of the above we bring the following resolution:

**General Assembly:**

- a) **Determines that all Nominations to serve the ongoing work of the General Assembly will be made in accordance with Safer Recruitment policies.**
- b) **Instructs the Business Committee, in consultation with the officers of the current Nominations Committee, to appoint a Nominations Committee of six members, reflecting the diversity of the Church. Its Terms of Reference will be:**
  - i. **To adopt and keep up to date processes for Nominations, including proformas for application forms, guidance for interviews, and other resources necessary to facilitate the nominations process.**
  - ii. **To receive from Committees (on behalf of themselves, or subcommittees, groups, panels, boards or representatives to outside bodies that are accountable to them), and external bodies Role Descriptions and Person Specifications, and to disseminate these widely through a variety of communications approaches and through Nominations Champions, seeking nominations and applications.**
  - iii. **To receive from Committees, Groups, Boards and external bodies names of people who have applied, been interviewed, and received appropriate references. To check that appropriate process has been followed, that appointment would recognise appropriate diversity, and when approved, forward names to General Assembly or Assembly Executive to confirm appointment. Committees are responsible for interviewing for any subcommittees or boards/panels that are accountable to them, or representatives to bodies that report to them.**
  - iv. **To maintain a list of those available to serve on recruitment processes for General Assembly ministerial or staff appointments and to forward to the General Assembly or the Assembly Executive the names of those appointed or nominated for appointment.**
  - v. **External bodies requesting representation from the United Reformed Church as set out in their governing documents will be responsible for role descriptions, and (where appropriate and possible) interviewing, the Nominations Committee will collect references.**
  - vi. **To support and enable Nominations Advocates to effectively disseminate opportunities for service within their networks.**
- c) **Instructs each Synod, URC Youth and the Racial Justice Advocates Network (working with the Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries) to each appoint a 'Nominations Champion' to be responsible for assisting with the dissemination of opportunities for service within their respective networks.**

- d) **Instructs the Business Committee, in consultation with the Officers of the current Nominations Committee, to bring this new process into being as soon as possible.**
- e) **Recognises the need for staff administrative support for the good functioning of this process and instructs the General Secretariat to enable this.**

### **Equalities Committee**

1. There was considerable concern raised about the proposal to abolish the Equalities Committee and make Equalities part of the remit of every Committee. The point is well made that what is everyone's responsibility quickly becomes no one's responsibility – and that was not the aim of the suggestion at all.
2. Consultation has revealed that there is a general sense that the Equalities Committee has struggled to achieve its purposes. This is perceived as being partly about the lack of authority, and partly about the lack of resources.
3. Consultation has also revealed the fragmentary nature of where the General Assembly addresses Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) issues. They are currently split between a number of key places (recognising others exercise an interest in EDI beyond this core list):
  - a) The Equalities Committee (for overall monitoring)
  - b) The Mission Committee (where the work of the Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries is located – meaning work on the Legacies of Slavery, anti-racist church and affirmative action have originated).
  - c) The Human Resources Advisory Group and Human Resources Department at Church House (for EDI in employment matters)
  - d) The Compliance Officers (where EDI issues touch compliance issues)
4. Consultation also revealed a sense that what might be lacking was a central staff post to co-ordinate all EDI work. This we are unconvinced by for two reasons: firstly, there is already extensive staff time dedicated to EDI work, it remains un-coordinated, however. Introducing one further role might well increase the confusion, rather than bring order. Secondly, the experience is that frequently it is thought a staff post is the solution to an issue, but rarely does that prove to be the case. Effective cultural and structural change is nearly always the long-term solution, and that is rarely achieved by one individual working alone with a remit, or even a single committee. What we do believe we would benefit from, however, is advice from an EDI expert, with experience of enabling organisations to be effective in this area. We therefore believe that expenditure on some external consultancy would be more effective than simply creating a staff-post without addressing the structural issues that have been identified.
5. An Equal Opportunities policy was last adopted on behalf of the General Assembly in 2006, and now feels dated in relationship to contemporary thinking in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
6. There seems to be a need to think about our strategy towards Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the round. We commit significant time and staff resource to this

area of work, but there is a lack of co-ordination, and the current Equalities Committee is not currently acting as the organ for co-ordination.

7. We bring the following resolution:

**General Assembly instructs the Business Committee to appoint an independent external consultant to advise on the range of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work, and a small reference group of three to support their work. The remit should include:**

- a) **Mapping the current work of the General Assembly in the field of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and assessing its effectiveness.**
- b) **Engaging with the work of ecumenical partners and others in the charity sector to ascertain best practice which might inform our work.**
- c) **Advising on a draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.**
- d) **Advising on appropriate structures and mechanisms to enable the delivery of an EDI policy and effective accountability mechanisms.**
- e) **The Business Committee should report to General Assembly 2024 on the progress of this work bringing any appropriate resolutions.**

### **The Faith and Order Committee**

1. Proposals to bring worship under the remit of the current Faith and Order committee have been generally welcomed and we bring resolutions to achieve this.
2. There was some concern expressed about the proposal that the new Worship, Faith and Order Committee would no longer be a full committee of the General Assembly, but a reference group. Upon reflection, it becomes clear that now we no longer have Mission Council, and reference groups that only report to Mission Council, the distinction is almost meaningless. Therefore, the Worship, Faith and Order Committee will be a full Committee of the General Assembly.
3. The Worship Reference Group was set up with a hope it would encourage the creation and distribution of worship resources but with a rather limited remit from Mission Council. Assembly then created the post of Minister for Digital Worship with a specific remit to create, curate, and commission worship resources. The range of worship material that is now being produced and shared through Worship Notes and on the Prayers for Church Seasons page of the website is diverse and useful. Some years ago the Faith and Order Committee was established but without any remit to include worship (previously there had been a Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee). Our faith is grounded in our worship and reflects good order. Our worship is informed by and stimulated by our faith. It is proposed, therefore, to thank the members of the Worship Resource Group and disband this group and to redefine the Faith and Order Committee as the Worship, Faith and Order Committee which will respond to the Church's requests to reflect on and commission worship resources as necessary.
4. We bring the following resolutions:

**General Assembly renames the Faith and Order Committee the 'Worship, Faith and Order Committee' with the following membership:**

- a) A Convenor**
- b) The Secretary for Ecumenical Relations**
- c) The Minister for Digital Worship**
- d) Five members appointed by the General Assembly**
- e) The Secretary for Ecumenical Relations or the Minister for Digital worship will normally function as the Secretary for the Committee.**

**General Assembly adopts the following remit for the Worship, Faith and Order Committee:**

- a) to address issues of worship, faith and order on behalf of the URC**
- b) to participate in and respond to ecumenical and inter-faith discussions on faith and order issues**
- c) to advise the assembly, its officers and committees on questions of worship, faith and order**
- d) to listen to concerns raised by Local Churches, Synods and individuals and to advise as appropriate**
- e) to publish and disseminate occasional materials relating to worship, faith and order**
- f) To act as a sounding board for the Minister for Digital Worship.**
- g) To receive reports from the United Reformed Church Spirituality Group.**

**General Assembly thanks the members of the Worship Reference Group for their service and dissolves the group from the close of General Assembly 2023.**

## **The Future of the Discipleship Committees**

1. The draft proposals indicated that we were in favour of the development of one Committee which would incorporate the work of the Children's and Youth Work Committee, the Education and Learning Committee and the Ministries Committee. This remained the case in our update to Assembly Executive in 2022, recognising that some unease had been encountered during initial consultation. That is the direction of travel that the Church Life Review Group favours in principle.
2. It is in the Discipleship area that the failures of the consultation process were most keenly felt, for which we apologise. This proposal was the most radical and complex. These committees have busy agendas, and whilst their work does overlap and interrelate, integrating this work into one committee would be a complex task. There is genuine concern at the extent of the possible agendas, and how this might effectively work.



3. There has been significantly more integration of the work of this department in recent years, partly because of excellent working relationships between staff members. For integration to be secure in the long term, it does need embedding structurally, and not be reliant on personalities. The staff members and convenors have been at pains to stress they support further integration and working together but were very concerned that rushing to create one committee would lead to important details being overlooked, and potentially damage the good work of the department.
4. We need to heed these concerns. Integration of work structurally will only be effective if those with detailed knowledge of the areas concerned have brought that knowledge and expertise to the process of determining new structural arrangements. Thus far we've failed to enable that process properly.
5. It should be noted that whilst the Church Life Review Group does continue to favour the creation of one committee, in bringing the resolution below it recognises other solutions may emerge which would more helpfully embed the Principles Assembly has been invited to adopt, and the needs of our Discipleship work. Such consultation that has taken place does suggest that simply remaining exactly as things are now is widely anticipated to be undesirable.
6. It should be noted that there is no proposal to integrate the work of the Safeguarding Committee with any other committee, its work being highly specialist, and the General Assembly being required to have such a committee to oversee its safeguarding responsibilities.
7. In the light of this, we bring the following resolution:

**General Assembly instructs the Business Committee to oversee a consultation process, to be led by the Deputy General Secretary for Discipleship, involving representatives of the Children's and Youth Work Committee, the Education and Learning Committee and the Ministries Committee, leading to proposals for the further integration of their work, including proposals for structural integration. These should be in line with the principles adopted in Resolution X.**

- a) **If external facilitation is required to achieve a constructive outcome, the Business Committee is empowered, after consultation with those concerned, to appoint an external facilitator to assist the process.**
- b) **Invites the Business Committee to bring back further proposals, emerging from this consultation exercise, to either Assembly Executive or General Assembly 2024.**

### **The future of the Administration and Resources Committees and the creation of a Resources Committee**

1. There is seemingly general agreement that bringing together the Church House Management Group, the Communications Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Human Resource Advisory Group, would be a helpful development. However, this intersects with a separate piece of work which has arisen out of a lack of clarity around the relationship between the Church and the United Reformed Trust (See Report A3). This means that some functions carried out currently by the Church would become the responsibility primarily of the Trust.

2. Currently, the Human Resources Advisory Group oversees employment policies and staffing structures. If the Trust becomes the Employer of lay staff, it will need to be the Trust that takes responsibility for Human Resources policies.
3. Currently the Church House Management Group has responsibility for the purchase and maintenance of central properties (Church House and General Assembly Ministers' manses). These are purchased with Trust resources and the freehold is owned by the Trust, and again it should be the responsibility of the Trust to oversee and authorise their purchase and upkeep. The CHMG has also provided expertise in the area of IT in recent years.
4. It is going to be necessary for there to be a primary point of contact regarding finance, staffing and property between the General Assembly and the URC Trust. We would envisage a new Finance and General Purposes Committee being responsible for budget setting, financial management and the working relationship with the URC Trust company on matters pertaining to finance, property, staffing and contracting.
5. We are asking Assembly to agree in principle to there being one committee that will take on this range of functions and be in a key relationship with the URC Trust. We believe this direction of travel to be sufficiently secure to invite the Nominations Committee to begin forming a committee, but that the precise details of its terms of reference be determined following further detailed work on governance matters pertaining to the relationship between the Church and the URC Trust.
6. Feedback from those involved with the Communications Committee have indicated that its purpose has at times not been clear. As one of the services provided within Church House to support the work of the whole Church, it is appropriate that it come under the oversight of a Finance and General Purposes Committee. However, it is recognised that such a Committee is not going to bring either a wide range of specialisms in Communications, or necessarily a representative spread of opinion from around the Church regarding the work of the communications department. To a significant extent the purpose of the Communications staff team is to give us the specialism that we require. It has been suggested that bringing together a representative sample of people from across the church on a standing or occasional basis to act as a sounding board or focus group for the work of the communications team might be helpful. This is something it would entirely be in order for the new committee to make happen and we do not believe requires General Assembly Resolution.
7. We bring the following resolution:

**General Assembly agrees in principle to the creation of one Resources Committee to bring together responsibility for the areas currently covered by the Church House Management Group, the Communications Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Human Resource Advisory Group.**

**It agrees the membership of the Committee to be:**

- a) **A Convenor (who may be the Treasurer)**
- b) **The Treasurer (if not the Convenor)**

- c) The Chief Operating Officer (who will be the Executive Secretary)**
- d) The Chief Finance Officer**
- e) Five further members, reflecting the diversity of the Church, with collective expertise in the areas of: finance, property, human resources and communications.**

**General Assembly invites the Nominations Committee to begin to populate a committee to serve from the close of General Assembly 2024.**

**General Assembly instructs the Business Committee to bring full terms of reference for the committee to Assembly Executive 2024 for adoption.**