

Saturday 1 July

Assembly was led in worship by the Chaplain, and Bible study by Dr Nicola Brady, General Secretary, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

Session three

General Assembly Moderator 2024-25

The Revd Nigel Uden took the Chair. Two candidates for Moderator 2024/5, the Revd Martha McInnes and the Revd Tim Meadows made presentations in turn to Assembly and responded to a question put by the Chair. The Chaplain led in prayer, and votes were cast.

The Moderator, the Revd Fiona Bennett, took the Chair.

URC Treasure Faith Adventures for Children Together

Dr Sam Richards introduced the 'Faith Adventures for Children Together'.

Ministries Committee: Withdrawal of Call Paper H5

The Convener of the Ministries Committee, the Revd Mary Thomas, presented paper H5 and moved Resolution 30:

Following discussion, the proposers withdrew paragraphs 4.10 and 4.11 of the policy.

The Committee agreed to an amendment proposed by the Revd Nigel Uden, and seconded by a number of members of Assembly:

Add the words: '*and instructs the Ministries Committee to bring a revised policy to General Assembly 2024.*' The amended Resolution was put:

Resolution 30

General Assembly adopts the URC Withdrawal of Call Policy and Procedure, and instructs the ministries Committee to bring a revised policy to General Assembly 2024.

Agreed

Session four

General Assembly Moderator 2024-25

It was announced that the Revd Timothy Meadows had been duly elected as Moderator of General Assembly 2024/25.

Communications Strategy Paper C1

The Revd Dr Peter Stevenson, Convenor of the Communications Committee, presented papers C1 - C5, and invited Assembly to discuss the paper in informal groups.

Mr Stevenson moved resolutions 14-19:

Resolution 14

General Assembly adopts the Communications Strategy, and instructs the Communications Committee and Communications Team to:

- undertake a research project to build a communications profile of each local church and Synod
- to produce a series of easy-to-use, time saving toolkits to help churches to communicate more effectively
- to create a network of Communications Advocates in each Synod who can be an informal link between the Communications Team, resources available, and local churches and the Synods
- share the new Design and Digital Visual Identity Guide.

Agreed

Resolution 15

General Assembly requests that the URC website, www.urc.org.uk, be the website on which all Assembly-approved work is hosted, making searching for URC resources and information easier. General Assembly tasks the Communications Committee and the Communications Team to work with those hosting URC websites outside of the URC's domain to consolidate those websites into the URC's website by General Assembly 2025.

Agreed

Resolution 16

General Assembly urges all churches without a website, or with a website that has been inactive for more than six months, to use iChurch to engage digitally with all those who are interested in attending worship or activities taking place in church buildings.

Agreed

Resolution 17

General Assembly strongly encourages the United Reformed Church at all levels and in all teams to use the revised Design and Digital Visual Identity to ensure quality and consistency across the work of the denomination.

Agreed

Resolution 18

General Assembly urges everyone connected to the Church to read *Reform*, the magazine of the URC, either in print or digitally.

Agreed

Resolution 19

The United Reformed Church thanks all who helped with the Church's 50th anniversary.

Agreed

Community Awards

Assembly viewed a short film celebrating 25 years of the Community Project Awards.

The Moderator invited Mr Martin Cox, CEO of Integra Insurance Solutions, to confer the awards on representatives of:

The Causeway Community Garden, St John's URC, Warrington
Wooler Warm Welcome, Wooler URC
DARE (Darwen Asylum Refugee Enterprise), Central URC, Darwen

Assembly congratulated the recipients.

Assembly adjourned for lunch at 12.55

Session five

The Revd Clare Downing took the Chair.

The Assembly Clerk moved adoption of the minutes of Friday's sessions.

Agreed

The Revd Nigel Uden, on behalf of the Nominating Group, moved resolutions 82 and 83:

Resolution 82 - Assembly Clerk

General Assembly appoints the Revd Sarah Moore as Clerk of the General Assembly from the close of General Assembly 2024 to the close of General Assembly 2030.

Agreed

Resolution 83 – Assistant Clerk

General Assembly extends the term of office of the Revd Sarah Moore as Assistant Clerk of the General Assembly to the end of General Assembly 2024, and instructs the Business Committee to review the role description and terms of office for this role, to report to Assembly Executive in February 2024 and General Assembly 2024.

Agreed

Church Life Review

Paper N1

Ms Victoria Turner moved resolution 43:

Resolution 43

General Assembly commends the five reflections on the theology of money to the whole United Reformed Church and its associated Charities and Trust Companies for prayer, reflection, and study.

Agreed

Ms Turner moved Resolution 44:

Resolution 44

General Assembly Commends the Theos report: *The United Reformed Church: A Paradoxical Church at a Crossroads* to local churches and Synods for prayer, study, and reflection.

Agreed

The Revd Steve Faber moved resolution 45:

Resolution 45

General Assembly commends to Synods and local churches the resource *Flourishing Churches* for prayer, study, reflection and action.

Agreed

The General Secretary moved resolution 46:

Resolution 46

General Assembly affirms the vital role of Synods in connecting, affirming, and resourcing local churches.

Agreed

The Revd Stave Faber moved resolution 47:

Resolution 47

General Assembly adopts the following Values and Principles as the basis for future decision making concerning the use and sharing of financial resources across Synods and the General Assembly:

Values:

a) As the United Reformed Church, we value conciliar decision making where we:

- listen to each other, and the urgings of the Holy Spirit**
- act with humility**
- act with grace and generosity**
- seek to consider the good of all God's people, fostering obedience to the Gospel and furthering justice and climate care, rather than narrow self interest.**

b) We believe that transparency about our decision making helps us be accountable to each other, and to God, whose mission we seek to serve.

c) We will use the charitable funds at our disposal lawfully and ensure the activity carried out with them is compliant.

Principles:

a) We seek to use our resources *effectively*, and not just where some of us might shout loudly or on sustaining existing ways of being.

b) We look to be *efficient*, as part of our commitment to good stewardship.

c) We will take *considered risks* for the Kingdom.

d) We prioritise *partnership* within and beyond the United Reformed Church.

e) We value local *diversity* within the family of the United Reformed Church, rather than constraining uniformity.

The Revd Craig Muir proposed an amendment that Principles a) be deleted after '*effectively*'. A number of members indicated their willingness to second.

The amendment was *Agreed*.

The amended resolution was put.

Agreed

The Revd Steve Faber moved Resolution 48:

Resolution 48

General Assembly believes God is calling us to financial resource sharing across the United Reformed Church in accordance with the values and principles it has adopted. It empowers the Business Committee, in consultation with the Nominations Committee, to appoint a task group to:

a) Develop a range of different models of resource sharing.

b) To carry out detailed feasibility work for each model.

c) To determine what structural or legal changes might be necessary to enable each model to function.

d) To evaluate each model against the Values and Principles General Assembly has adopted.

e) To report back to General Assembly 2024.

Agreed

The General Secretary moved Resolution 49:

Mr George Farris proposed an amendment to add the word '*ideally*' to the final paragraph before 'to General Assembly 2024'. The amendment was accepted by the proposer, and put to the vote, the amendment was *carried*.

Resolution 49

General Assembly empowers the Business Committee, in consultation with the Nominations Committee, to set up a task group to explore ways in which, in accordance with the values and principles adopted, the wider Councils of the United Reformed Church might offer consistent, locally accessible, support functions for local churches in areas including (but not exclusively):

- **finance**
- **property**
- **health and safety**
- **human resources**
- **safeguarding.**

It asks the task group to bring a model, or models, ideally to General Assembly 2024 with feasibility studies and costings.

Agreed

The General Secretary moved Resolution 50:

Resolution 50

General Assembly invites the General Secretariat and PLATO to re-establish the PLATO handbook (or equivalent), providing a central online resource of advice and pro-formas for trust, property, financial and related matters for local congregations, to be available on-line at the latest by General Assembly 2025.

Agreed

Miss Victoria Turner moved Resolution 51:

Resolution 51

General Assembly empowers the Business Committee, in consultation with the Nominations Committee, to set up a working group to examine:

- a) What models of employed lay work can be effective within local churches.
- b) What infrastructure is necessary to be provided by the wider church to support employed lay ministry in local churches.
- c) How mission and ministry which would lead to the emergence of new United Reformed Church communities of discipleship and worship might be encouraged and resourced.

In response to a question, the General Secretary offered a commitment to seeking to enable the flourishing of local churches and not merely providing that which is strictly necessary.

Because of pressure of time, a decision on resolution 51 was deferred until later in the meeting.

Session six

The Moderator, the Revd Fiona Bennett, was in the Chair.

Joint Public Issues Team

Mr Simeon Mitchell introduced the work of the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT).

Greetings from ecumenical and international guests

Assembly welcomed the ecumenical guests, both those present in person, and those joining the Assembly online. The Revd Dr Gordon Cowans (The United Church in Jamaica & Cayman Islands) greeted Assembly.

Those guests present were welcomed by Assembly, and Dr Anna Krauss, General Secretary of the Lutheran Church in the UK greeted Assembly on behalf of the ecumenical guests.

Mission Committee

Legacies of Slavery

Paper I3

Ms Sarah Lane Cawte presented Paper I3, and moved Resolutions 32-35:

The Moderator proposed that the resolutions 32-35 be addressed as a group.

Assembly agreed

Resolution 32

General Assembly resolves that anti-racism training should become mandatory for specific groups and individuals who occupy positions of leadership and influence within the URC. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- **Officers of the General Assembly**
- **The General Secretariat**
- **Staff Secretaries**
- **Assembly Committee Convenors and Secretaries**
- **Synod Moderators**
- **Synod Clerks**
- **Members of the Panel for General Assembly appointments**
- **Members of the Assessment board**
- **The Assembly Standing Panel on Discipline**
- **The Disciplinary Investigation Panel**
- **The Commission Panel**
- **The Disciplinary Appeals Commission List**
- **The CYDO+ Team**
- **Synod Racial Justice Coordinators and Advocates (RJAs)**
- **Active Ministers of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers (Categories 1, 2, 5 and 8 as defined in the Active Ministers Policy, Paper H5 Assembly Executive 2021)**
- **Members of Assembly Committees and Advisory Groups**

- **Training and Development Officers (TD+ Network)**
- **Synod Mission Enablers.**

Resolution 33

General Assembly asks the Legacies of Slavery Task Group to work with the Ministries and Education and Learning Departments to explore how and when anti-racism training can be rolled out more widely in the URC, particularly to include those roles defined as URC Office holders.

Resolution 34

General Assembly endorses the schedule and timetable of mandatory anti-racism training outlined in the Legacies of Slavery Task Group report and agrees an initial budget of up to £20,000 to meet the cost of training sessions and related expenses up to General Assembly 2024.

Resolution 35

General Assembly recognises that further funds will be required as the antiracism training is rolled out more widely, and asks the Legacies of Slavery Task Group to bring updated costings to General Assembly 2024 informed by the actual costs incurred in delivering the early stages of the training.

Following discussion, during which Assembly's agreement was noted that this matter is 'vital, urgent and needs work fast', Resolutions 32-35 were put to the vote together.

Agreed

Resolutions 36 and 37 were put:

Resolution 36

General Assembly endorses the work of the Legacies of Slavery Task Group, the direction of travel outlined in the task group's report, and asks the task group to continue its exploration of regional and global proposals, aiming to bring costed proposals to General Assembly 2024.

Agreed

Resolution 37

General Assembly asks Mission Committee to maintain the existence of a Legacies of Slavery Task Group to steer the future work as outlined in the task group report.

Agreed

Poverty and Inequality in the UK

PAPER I2

The Secretary for Church and Society, Mr Simeon Mitchell, presented Paper I2, and Ms Sarah Lane Cawte moved Resolution 31:

Resolution 31

In response to the gospel call to challenge poverty and structures that cause

marginalisation, General Assembly:

a) expresses its deep concern at the rising levels of poverty in the UK over the last 15 years, recognising that in a wealthy economy such as the UK, poverty is not inevitable but a result of political choices and systemic injustices

b) calls upon political leaders to make a commitment to work towards the eradication of structural poverty in the UK, and encourages churches and church members to raise these issues with candidates in the lead-up to the next General Election

c) asks the Mission and Ministries Committees and the Synods to reflect on how the Church could better demonstrate its commitment to people experiencing poverty and marginalisation in allocating resources for ministry and mission, and bring proposals, if appropriate, to a future General Assembly.

Victoria Turner proposed an amendment: to section b adding the words, *challenges the stigmatisation and discrimination shown towards those in poverty in the UK.*

A number of members seconded the amendment.

The amendment was *carried*.

The amended Resolution 31 was put:

Resolution 31

In response to the gospel call to challenge poverty and structures that cause marginalisation, General Assembly:

a) expresses its deep concern at the rising levels of poverty in the UK over the last 15 years, recognising that in a wealthy economy such as the UK, poverty is not inevitable but a result of political choices and systemic injustices

b) calls upon political leaders to make a commitment to work towards the eradication of structural poverty in the UK, challenges the stigmatisation and discrimination shown towards those in poverty in the UK, and encourages churches and church members to raise these issues with candidates in the lead-up to the next General Election

c) asks the Mission and Ministries Committees and the Synods to reflect on how the Church could better demonstrate its commitment to people experiencing poverty and marginalisation in allocating resources for ministry and mission, and bring proposals, if appropriate, to a future General Assembly.

Agreed

Assembly adjourned for dinner at 18.40

Assembly resumed at 19.45

The Revd Fran Kissack, presented Paper X2, and moved Resolution 72:

Resolution 72

General Assembly receives the online congregation YoURChurch as a local church of the URC, and commits to continuing further work on the issues of Church Membership.

Agreed

Parallel Sessions

General Assembly met in parallel sessions to reflect on Papers I1, G1, H1, K1, E1, and T1

Evening Prayer was led by the Chaplain, and the session closed at 21.25