

# Record of Assembly 2024



*The*  
United  
Reformed  
Church





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

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# Matters for consideration and action from General Assembly 2024

The list of General Assembly resolutions below are of particular relevance to local churches, Synods and ministers, and should be taken note of and acted upon as appropriate.

## For local churches:

- 6 and 9 Conflicts of Interest Policy
- 21 Changes to Plan for Partnership
- 22 Increase in the Fixed Car Allowance
- 24 Clarification of Ministerial Holiday Entitlement
- 25 Revised Local Mission and Ministry Review
- 27 Guidelines on Elders in Local Leadership
- 29 Additions to Policy on Withdrawal of Call
- 35 Guidelines for those who lead worship in our Churches
- 36 Request to report process towards net zero carbon emissions
- 43 Encouragement for interfaith dialogue in light of Middle East conflicts
- 52-53 A Church with People at the Margins: A Strategy for Mission and Ministry

## For Synods:

- 6 and 9 Conflicts of Interest Policy
- 18 Encouraging Synod Contributions to the Legacies of Slavery Fund
- 20 Process for Reconfiguring Pastorates and Scopings
- 21 Change to the Plan for Partnership
- 22 Increase in the Fixed Car Allowance
- 24 Clarification of Ministerial Holiday Entitlement
- 25 Revised Local Mission and Ministry Review
- 26 Changes to Basis of Union (response required by 31 March 2025)
- 27 Guidelines on Elders in Local Leadership
- 28 Change to the Basis of Union (response required by 31 March 2025)
- 29 Additions to Policy on Withdrawal of Call
- 35 Guidelines for those who lead worship in our Churches
- 36 Request to report process towards net zero carbon emissions
- 43 Encouragement for interfaith dialogue in light of Middle East conflicts
- 52-53 A Church with People at the Margins: A Strategy for Mission and Ministry

## For ministers:

- 20 Process for Reconfiguring Pastorates and Scopings
- 21 Change to the Plan for Partnership
- 22 Increase in the Fixed Car Allowance
- 24 Clarification of Ministerial Holiday Entitlement
- 25 Revised Local Mission and Ministry Review
- 29 Additions to Policy on Withdrawal of Call

# Roll of Assembly 2024

## Moderator

1. The Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson

## Clerk

2. The Revd Dr Michael Hopkins

## Assistant Clerk

3. The Revd Sarah Moore

## General Secretary

4. The Revd Dr John Bradbury

## Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)

5. The Revd Adrian Bulley

## Deputy General Secretary (Mission)

6. The Revd Philip Brooks

## Chief Operating Officer

7. Mrs Victoria James

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

8. Business Committee – The Revd Mark Robinson
9. Children and Youth Work – The Revd Paul Robinson
10. Communications – The Revd Lucy Brierley
11. Education and Learning – Ms Pippa Hodgson
12. Equalities – The Revd Jo Clare-Young
13. Worship, Faith and Order – The Revd Dr Robert Pope
14. Finance – Mr Alan Yates (Treasurer)
15. The Deputy Treasurer – Mr Vaughan Griffiths
16. Ministries – The Revd Mary Thomas
17. Mission – Mrs Sarah Lane Cawte
18. Nominations – Mrs Helen Lidgett
19. Safeguarding – The Revd Roger Jones

## Convenor of the United Reformed Church Trust

20. Ms Catriona Wheeler

## Immediate Past Moderator

21. The Revd Fiona Bennett

## Former Moderators (four places)

22. The Revd David Grosch-Miller
23. The Revd John Marsh
24. The Revd Professor David Thompson
25. The Revd Dr Elizabeth Welch

**Resource Centres for Learning**

26. Northern College Staff – The Revd Dr Adam Scott
27. Northern College Student – Mr Ed Lyne
28. Scottish College Staff – The Revd Dr John McNeil Scott
29. Scottish College Student – Mrs Margaret Higton
30. Westminster College Staff – The Revd Dr Robert Pope
31. Westminster College Student – Ms Tina Wilson

**United Reformed Church Youth (three places)**

32. Youth Assembly Moderator – Miss Heather Moore
33. Immediate Past Youth Assembly Moderator – Miss Philippa Osei
34. Youth Assembly GA/AE Rep – Miss Jadan Turner

**United Reformed Church Chaplain to HM Forces (one place)**

35. The Revd Kevin Jones

**Northern Synod**

*(16 places – at least five of which shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Workers, and at least five of which shall be Elders or ‘lay’. Any two within the 16 places are reserved for representatives aged under 26 at the time of appointment).*

36. The Synod Moderator – The Revd Kim Plumpton
37. The Synod Clerk – The Revd Dr Trevor Jamison
38. The Revd Sally Bateman
39. The Revd Louise Sanders
40. Mrs Lucy Cooke
41. Mrs Sheila Duncan
42. Mr Willie Duncan
43. Ms Lisa McAvoy
44. Mrs Elizabeth Morrell
45. Mrs Catherine Ramsay
46. Mrs Susan Rand
47. Dr Elizabeth Ann Sinclair
48. Mrs Yvonne Hamilton+
49. Vacant
50. Vacant
51. Vacant

**North Western Synod**

*(16 places – at least five of which shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Workers, and at least five of which shall be Elders or ‘lay’. Any two within the 16 places are reserved for representatives aged under 26 at the time of appointment).*

52. The Synod Moderator – The Revd Clare Downing
53. The Synod Clerk – Mr Tim Hopley
54. The Revd Gilbert Esambe
55. The Revd Daniel Harris
56. The Revd Dr Robert Hoch (Yidokodiltona)
57. The Revd Katherine Hunt
58. The Revd Kurauone Mutimwii

59. The Revd Michael Walsh
60. The Revd Ruth Watson
61. Ms Gina Gibson
62. Mrs Hilary Grierson
63. Ms Elizabeth Hall
64. Mr Lawrence Heath-Moore
65. Ms Blessed Mutimwii\*
66. Mr John Skipworth
67. Vacant

### **Mersey Synod**

*(16 places – at least five of which shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Workers, and at least five of which shall be Elders or ‘lay’. Any two within the 16 places are reserved for representatives aged under 26 at the time of appointment).*

68. The Revd Murray George
69. The Synod Clerk – Ms Rita Griffiths
70. The Revd Louise Franklin
71. The Revd Malcolm Garforth-Fife
72. The Revd Kathleen Gartside
73. The Revd Dr Nicholas Jones
74. The Revd Catherine McFie
75. The Revd Dr Ronald John Reid
76. The Revd Hilary Smith
77. The Revd Ruth Wilson
78. Mrs Patricia Cansfield
79. Mr Christopher Garforth-Fife
80. Mr David Gartside
81. Mrs Pauline Green
82. Ms Emma Jackson\*
83. Ms Charlotte Samson\*

### **Yorkshire Synod**

*(16 places – at least five of which shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Workers, and at least five of which shall be Elders or ‘lay’. Any two within the 16 places are reserved for representatives aged under 26 at the time of appointment).*

84. The Synod Moderator – The Revd Jamie Kissack
85. The Synod Clerk – Mr Tim Crossley
86. The Revd Simon Copley
87. The Revd Sarah Fitton
88. The Revd Frances Kissack
89. The Revd Samantha Sheehan
90. The Revd Christopher Wood
91. Miss Katherine Buckland
92. Mr John Eveleigh
93. Miss Kacie Hodgson\*
94. Mrs Claire Nutt
95. Mr Daniel Raddings\*
96. Mr Hedley Siddall

97. Mrs Claire Westgarth
98. Miss Megan Westgarth\*
99. Vacant

**East Midlands Synod**

*(16 places – at least five of which shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Workers, and at least five of which shall be Elders or ‘lay’. Any two within the 16 places are reserved for representatives aged under 26 at the time of appointment).*

100. The Synod Moderator – The Revd Geoffrey Clarke
101. The Synod Clerk – Dr Graham Jennings
102. The Synod Treasurer – David John Greatorex
103. The Revd Carole Marsden
104. The Revd Andrew Mudharara
105. The Revd Craig Muir
106. The Revd Jane Wade
107. The Revd Dr Bachelard Yemtsa
108. Mr Sam Goodman
109. Mr Billy Logan\*
110. Mrs Victoria Longbone
111. Mrs Ann Lockett
112. Mrs Isabel Plaatjies
113. Mr Marcelle Plaatjies
114. Mrs Eileen Williams
115. Vacant

**West Midlands Synod**

*(16 places – at least five of which shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Workers, and at least five of which shall be Elders or ‘lay’. Any two within the 16 places are reserved for representatives aged under 26 at the time of appointment).*

116. The Synod Moderator – The Revd Steve Faber
117. The Synod Clerk – Mrs Rachel Wakeman
118. The Synod Treasurer – Mr Steve Powell
119. The Revd Debbie Brown
120. The Revd Elaine Hutchinson
121. The Revd Karen Jones
122. The Revd Mark Rodgers
123. The Revd Graham Sweeney
124. The Revd Christine Watson
125. Mr Celvon Binns
126. Miss Claire Kerrigan\*
127. Ms Kirsty Mabbott
128. Mr Nathanael Paul
129. Mrs Michelle Richardson
130. Vacant
131. Vacant



**Eastern Synod**

*(16 places – at least five of which shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Workers, and at least five of which shall be Elders or ‘lay’. Any two within the 16 places are reserved for representatives aged under 26 at the time of appointment).*

- 132. The Synod Moderator – The Revd Lythan Nevard
- 133. The Synod Clerk – The Revd David Coaker
- 134. The Revd Sohail Ejaz
- 135. The Revd Anne Sardeson
- 136. The Revd Susan Fender
- 137. The Revd Kathryn Taylor
- 138. The Revd Nigel Uden
- 139. Mrs Claire Coster
- 140. Mrs Machrina Ejaz
- 141. Ms Chloe Elmer
- 142. Mr William McVey
- 143. Mr Richard Lewney
- 144. Mr Charles Palin\*
- 145. Mrs Faith Paulding
- 146. Mr John White
- 147. Vacant

**South Western Synod**

*(16 places – at least five of which shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Workers, and at least five of which shall be Elders or ‘lay’. Any two within the 16 places are reserved for representatives aged under 26 at the time of appointment).*

- 148. The Synod Clerk – Mrs Rachel Leach
- 149. The Synod Treasurer – The Revd Richard Gray
- 150. The Revd Tracey Lewis
- 151. The Revd Robert Jennings
- 152. The Revd Iain McDonald
- 153. The Revd Stephen Newell
- 154. The Revd Jayne Taylor
- 155. The Revd Neil Thorogood
- 156. Miss Jessica Gough\*
- 157. Mrs Janet Gray
- 158. Mr Alex Mabbott
- 159. Mrs Jeannie MacMeekin
- 160. Ms Ann Marie Trubic
- 161. Vacant
- 162. Vacant
- 163. Vacant

**Wessex Synod**

*(16 places – at least five of which shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Workers, and at least five of which shall be Elders or ‘lay’. Any two within the 16 places are reserved for representatives aged under 26 at the time of appointment).*

- 164. The Synod Moderator – The Revd Dr Michael Hopkins
- 165. The Synod Clerk – Miss Karen Bell
- 166. The Revd Helen Everard
- 167. The Revd Dr Sarah Hall
- 168. The Revd Dr Romilly Micklem
- 169. The Revd Wendy White
- 170. Ms Chrissie Chevasutt
- 171. Ms Sheilagh Courtnage
- 172. Miss Laura Everard\*
- 173. Mx Sorrel Eyres\*
- 174. Mr George Faris
- 175. Mrs Maggie Larkin
- 176. Dr Phebe Mann
- 177. Ms Patricia Oliver
- 178. Mr Clive Snashall
- 179. Dr David Wong

**Thames North Synod**

*(16 places – at least five of which shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Workers, and at least five of which shall be Elders or ‘lay’. Any two within the 16 places are reserved for representatives aged under 26 at the time of appointment).*

- 180. The Synod Clerk – Ms Nneoma Chima
- 181. The Revd Margaret Ali
- 182. The Revd Alison Davis
- 183. The Revd Ruth Dewis
- 184. The Revd Shahbaz Javed
- 185. The Revd Sujeeth Kumar
- 186. The Revd Noble Samuel
- 187. The Revd Sally Thomas
- 188. Ms Lorraine Downer
- 189. Mrs Jane Fredjohn
- 190. Mr Malon John\*
- 191. Mrs Muna Levan-Harris
- 192. Miss Christine Ntim\*
- 193. Mr Jake Penny\*
- 194. Mrs Darnette Whitby-Reid
- 195. Mrs Jean Wyber

**Southern Synod**

*(16 places – at least five of which shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Workers, and at least five of which shall be Elders or ‘lay’. Any two within the 16 places are reserved for representatives aged under 26 at the time of appointment).*

- 196. The Synod Moderator – The Revd Bridget Banks
- 197. The Synod Treasurer – John Denison
- 198. The Revd David George Cumbers
- 199. The Revd Bernard Fidler
- 200. The Revd Russell Furley-Smith
- 201. The Revd John Grundy
- 202. The Revd Martin Knight
- 203. The Revd Angela Rigby
- 204. Mrs Rita Brown
- 205. Mr Alan Kirby
- 206. Ms Mercy Nimako
- 207. Mrs Joanne Patterson
- 208. Miss Zara Shahbaz\*
- 209. Mr Zeerak Shahbaz\*
- 210. Miss Pamela Tolhurst
- 211. Mr Reuben Watt

**National Synod of Wales**

*(16 places – at least five of which shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament or Church Related Community Workers, and at least five of which shall be Elders or “lay”. Any two within the 16 places are reserved for representatives aged under 26 at the time of appointment.)*

- 212. The Synod Moderator – The Revd David Salsbury
- 213. The Synod Clerk – Ms Megan Price
- 214. The Synod Treasurer – Mr Chris Atherton
- 215. The Revd Ian Kirby
- 216. The Revd Julie Kirby
- 217. The Revd Martha McInnes
- 218. The Revd John O’Hanlon
- 219. Miss Joanna Harris\*
- 220. Ms Maggie Kirkbride
- 221. Mrs Wendy Marston-Phipps
- 222. Mrs Adella Pritchard
- 223. Mrs Bethan Trott
- 224. Mrs Kate Wolsey
- 225. Vacant
- 226. Vacant
- 227. Vacant

**National Synod of Scotland**

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

- 228. The Synod Moderator – The Revd Lindsey Sanderson
- 229. The Synod Clerk – The Revd Jan Adamson
- 230. The Revd Susan Henderson
- 231. The Revd Nicholas Mark
- 232. The Revd Derek McDonald
- 233. The Revd Lesley Thomson
- 234. Mrs Yvonne Coulter
- 235. Ms Morag McLintock
- 236. Miss Alice Gilbert
- 237. Dr Ewen Harley
- 238. Mrs Linda Harrison
- 239. Mr Douglas Maxwell
- 240. Mrs Lorna McDonald
- 241. Miss Myra Rose
- 242. Vacant
- 243. Vacant

**British and Irish Ecumenical representatives (five places)**

- 244. Mrs Yvonne Campbell (Congregational Federation)
- 245. The Revd Chantal Noppen (Church of England)
- 246. The Rt Revd Dr Shaw Paterson (Church of Scotland)
- 247. The Revd Gale Richards (Baptist Union of Great Britain)
- 248. The Revd Tom Osborne (Methodist Church of Great Britain)

**International Ecumenical representatives (five places)**

- 249. The Revd Dr Gordon Cowans (The United Church in Jamaica and Cayman Islands)
- 250. Pfarrer Markus Jäckle (Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz)
- 251. Vacant
- 252. Vacant
- 253. Vacant

**Council for World Mission (one place)**

- 254. The Revd Dr Graham McGeoch

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

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

# Business of General Assembly

The Assembly Clerk moved resolutions 1-4 en bloc:

## **A3 – Business Committee: Terms of Reference for Children’s and Youth Work Committee**

### **Resolution 1**

General Assembly adopts the revised terms of reference for Children’s and Youth Work Committee as contained in Paper A3 General Assembly 2024.

*Agreed.*

## **A5 – Business Committee: Terms of Reference for Ministries Committee**

### **Resolution 2**

General Assembly adopts the Terms of Reference for the Ministries Committee as contained in Paper A5 of General Assembly 2024.

*Agreed.*

## **A6 – Business Committee: Revised Terms of Reference for the Pastoral, Reference and Welfare Committee**

### **Resolution 3**

General Assembly adopts the revised terms of reference for the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee as contained in Paper K1 of General Assembly 2024.

*Agreed.*

## **A7 – Business Committee: Terms of Reference for the Education and Learning Committee**

### **Resolution 4**

General Assembly adopts the revised terms of reference for the Education and Learning Committee as contained in Paper D2 of General Assembly 2024.

*Agreed.*

## **A8 – Business Committee: Creating a Retired Ministers’ Benevolent Fund (RMBF)**

### **Resolution 5**

General Assembly accepts the recommendations in points 4 (a) to (f) of the Reflections and Proposals section of this paper and agrees to establish a Retired Ministers’ Benevolent Fund with an initial budget of £39,000 per annum.

*Agreed.*

## **A9 – Business Committee: Conflicts of Interest statement and policy**

### **Resolution 6**

**General Assembly adopts the Conflicts of Interests Statement.**

*Agreed.*

### **Resolution 7**

**General Assembly approves the policy for General Assembly Committees.**

*Agreed.*

### **Resolution 8**

**General Assembly instructs the committees of General Assembly to work within this policy.**

*Agreed.*

### **Resolution 9**

The Revd Dick Gray moved to add the words 'Local Churches' after 'encourages' and 'Synods'. Many members of Assembly indicated they would second this amendment. Ms James indicated she was happy to accept this. Assembly agreed.

### **Resolution 9**

**General Assembly encourages Local Churches, Synods, Synod Trust companies and the URC Trust to review, amend or adopt where necessary their own conflicts of interest policy.**

*Agreed.*

The Assembly Clerk moved resolutions 10-12 en bloc:

## **A10 – Business Committee: New Nominations Committee and safer recruitment**

### **Resolution 10**

**General Assembly offers profound thanks to Helen Lidgett and Margaret Marshall for their work as Convenor and Secretary of the Nominations Committee as they step down from these roles at this General Assembly 2024.**

*Agreed.*

### **Resolution 11**

**General Assembly appoints Victoria Paulding to serve as the Convenor of the new Nominations Committee from General Assembly 2024 to General Assembly 2028.**

*Agreed.*

## **Resolution 12**

**General Assembly appoints the representatives reflecting the diversity of the Church to the new Nominations Committee as named in supplementary reports to Assembly.**

*Agreed.*

### **A11 – Business Committee: Future of Reform**

## **Resolution 13**

**General Assembly instructs the Chief Operating Officer and the Resources Committee to manage the future of Reform from August 2024 onwards by making changes to Reform such that the magazine is cost neutral before the end of 2025.**

*Assembly unanimously agreed.*

### **G3 – Finance Committee: URC Trust accounts 2023**

## **Resolution 14**

**General Assembly notes the Trustees' Report and Financial Statement for the year ending 31 December 2023.**

*Noted.*

### **G4 – Finance Committee: Energy Crisis Fund**

## **Resolution 15**

**General Assembly approves the recommendation of the Finance Committee to close the Energy Crisis Fund and return the unused balance to the URC's General Funds.**

Mr Yates informed Assembly that Resolution 16 had been withdrawn as it duplicated Resolution 15.

*Agreed.*

### **G5 – Finance Committee: Funding our Legacy of Slavery Task Group**

## **Resolution 16**

**General Assembly will reallocate the energy crisis fund back into general funds.**

*Withdrawn.*

## **Resolution 17**

**General Assembly will transfer £250k into the Legacies of Slavery Fund.**

*Agreed.*

## Resolution 18

General Assembly will seek contributions from Synods to reach a minimum target of £1m for the Legacies of Slavery Fund.

*Agreed.*

### **H2 – Ministries Committee: Accreditations (CRCW & SCM) sub-committee – Change of name to the Accreditations sub-committee**

## Resolution 19

General Assembly agrees to the change of name of the Accreditations (CRCW & SCM) sub-committee to the Accreditations sub-committee.

*Agreed.*

### **H3 – Ministries Committee: Process for Reconfiguring Pastorates and Scopings**

## Resolution 20

Ms Furley-Smith assured Assembly that the Ministries Committee would consider, and bring further proposals, to Assembly Executive addressing part-time posts in this process. Ms Furley-Smith explained the Ministries Committee had changed the wording of Section 9 of the policy to read:

9. Stipend Support
- 9.1. Where the minister is actively engaging in the Call process, their stipend should continue for six months whilst looking for a new Call.
- 9.2 This support may be continued up to a further six months where the minister continues to actively engage with the process.
- 9.3. After 12 months, and where there is a concern for welfare, the Synod Moderator shall make an application to the GA Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee for further stipend support.

*Assembly agreed to these amended words.*

## Resolution 20

General Assembly adopts the process for Reconfiguring Pastorates and Scopings.

*Agreed.*



## H4 – Ministries Committee: Amendments to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration

The Moderator invited the Revd Mary Thomas, Convenor, Ministries Committee, and the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith, Secretary for Ministries, to introduce Paper H4 Amendments to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration.

Ms Thomas indicated that further consultation on the Plan for Partnership would be undertaken.

Questions, comments, and discussion on Resolution 21 resulted in assurances from the General Secretary ... [insert words eg 'that consultation'] over the issue of dependents would take place bearing in mind the complexity of ownership of manses.

Mr John Skipworth moved that Resolution 21 be referred back to the Committee for further work under Standing Order 12.2. Many members of Assembly indicated they were willing to second this. After further discussion Assembly voted against this procedural motion.

After further discussion Ms Jo Harris moved that question be now put under Standing Order 12.13. The Revd Professor David Thompson seconded. Assembly Agreed.

### Resolution 21

**General Assembly agrees to a change of wording in 6.3.2 from spouse and children to spouse/partner and dependent children in 6.3.2.**

*Agreed.*

### Resolution 22

**General Assembly recommends that the Fixed Car allowance be increased from £1,200 to £2,400 for cars and £300 to £600 for motorcycles, and urges local churches to implement this from September 2024.**

The Revd Steve Faber and Steve Powell moved that the words 'September 2024' be changed to 'January 2025'. The Ministries Committee has indicated that they are content to accept the amendment and Assembly also agreed this change.

Following discussion, the Clerk moved an amendment to change the resolution to:

### Resolution 22

**General Assembly changes the rate of the Fixed Car Allowance from £1,200 to £2,400 and the Fixed Motorcycle Allowance from £300 to £600 in the Plan for Partnership from 1st January 2025.**

Many members of Assembly agreed to second this. Assembly accepted the amendment.

Mr John Everleigh moved to add the words 'and the rate of RPI annually.'

The Moderator ruled the amendment out of order as the financial impact of this resolution had not been considered. Ms Furley-Smith, however, assured Assembly that more regular reviews of rates in the Plan for Partnership would take place.

The Revd Dr Trevor Jamison urged the Ministries Committee to consider changing the system so that the financial burden is eased for those poorer pastorates. Ms Furley-Smith agreed that the Ministries Committee will look at this.

*Assembly agreed Resolution 22.*

### Resolution 23

After some discussion the Revd Dr Romilly Micklem moved that the matter be now put under Standing Order 12.13. A number of members of Assembly agreed and the resolution was put.

### Resolution 23

**General Assembly agrees a change of wording from Ministerial Working Week to Ministerial Hours in paragraph 7 of the Plan for Partnership.**

The new paragraph will read:

Ministerial hours

The 2010 General Assembly resolved that there should be more clarity in defining hours of service and recommended that, translated into hours in a four-week period, a minister should be serving no less than 160 hours and not more than 192 hours.

*Agreed.*

### Resolution 24

**General Assembly agrees the changes to holiday entitlement in paragraph 8 of the Plan for Partnership to include when to carry over holiday to the following year for sick leave, parental leave or Jury Service; expectations for sabbatical and holiday leave; Bank Holidays and days in lieu for Christmas Day and Good Friday.**

*Agreed.*

## **H5 – Ministries Committee: Local Mission and Ministry Review (LMMR) revised**

### Resolution 25

**General Assembly adopts the revised Local Mission and Ministry Review (LMMR) and commends it for use in local churches/pastorates.**

*Agreed.*

## **H6 – Ministries Committee: Basis of Union paragraphs 19-24: Ministry in the United Reformed Church**

### Resolution 26

**General Assembly adopts the changes to Schedule A of The Manual with regards to Ministry in the United Reformed Church (paragraphs 19-24). (changes in blue)**

## Ministry in the United Reformed Church

19. The Lord Jesus Christ continues his ministry in and through the Church, the whole people of God called and committed to his service and equipped by him for it. This service is given by worship, prayer, proclamation of the Gospel, and Christian witness; by mutual and outgoing care and responsibility; and by obedient discipleship in the whole of daily life, according to the gifts and opportunities given to each one. The preparation and strengthening of its members for such ministry and discipleship shall always be a major concern of the United Reformed Church.
20. For the equipment of his people for this total ministry the Lord Jesus Christ gives particular gifts for particular ministries and calls some of his servants to exercise them in offices duly recognised within his Church. The United Reformed Church recognises that Christ gives himself to his Church through Word and Sacrament and through the total caring oversight by which his people grow in faith and love, the exercise of which oversight is the special concern of elders and Ministers. Those who enter on such ministries commit themselves to them for so long as God wills: the United Reformed Church having solemnly acknowledged their vocation and accepted their commitment shall appoint them **as committed disciples** to their particular ministry and give them authority to exercise it within the church, setting them apart with prayer that they shall be given all needful gifts and graces for its fulfilment, which solemn setting apart shall in the case of Ministers and elders be termed ordination and in the case of Church Related Community Workers be termed commissioning. In the United Reformed Church all ministries within the life of the Church shall be open to both men and women. Appropriate affirmations of faith shall be made by those entering upon all ministries within the life of the Church.
21. Some are called to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments. After approved preparation and training, they may be called to be Ministers of local churches, or missionaries overseas, or to some special and approved ministry, and are then ordained and inducted to their office. The ordination and induction of Ministers shall be in accordance with Schedules C and D. They are commissioned to conduct public worship, to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, and to give leadership to the church in its mission to the world.
- Their service may be stipendiary or non-stipendiary, and in the latter case the service is given within an area of a Synod, and in the context it has approved.
22. Some are called to the ministry of Church Related Community Work. After approval, preparation and training, they may be called to be Church Related Community Workers in a post approved by the United Reformed church, event, commission to the office of Church Related Community Worker, and inducted to serve in a particular post for a designated period. This commissioning and induction shall be in accord with schedules D&F. Church Related Community Workers are commissioned to care for, to challenge, and to pray for the community, to discern with others, God's will, for the well-being of the community, and to endeavour to enable the church to live out its calling to proclaim with love

and mercy through the working with others in both church and community for peace and justice in the world. Their service may be stipendiary or non stipendiary, and in the latter case their service is given within the area of a Synod and in a context it has approved.

- 23** Ministers of the Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers are called to serve by God and, as members of the church, live out their committed discipleship as office-holders, in which their membership, service to, support and relationship with the Church and community has never created, has never been intended to create, and does not create any contractual relations.
- 24** The church cares for and supports these office-holders, whether stipendiary or non-stipendiary, through careful training, loving nurture, and prayerful oversight. As office-holding members of the church, ministers of the Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Workers are accountable through the church's various Councils for the satisfactory performance of their ministries. Through the Councils of the Church, discernment through the Holy Spirit is found regarding: accepting candidates for ministry, the nurture and support necessary for flourishing of church and office-holder, their deployment to particular ministries, the oversight necessary for healthy discipleship and for the circumstances when it is necessary to lay down the responsibilities of being an office-holder.

*Agreed.*

In accordance with paragraph 3(1) of the Structure, the General Secretary proposed that Resolution 26 be referred to Synods, with a final date for responses to him by 31 March 2025.

*Agreed.*

## **H7 – Ministries Committee: Guidelines on Elders in Local Leadership**

The Moderator invited the Revd Mary Thomas, Convenor of the Ministries Committee, and the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith, Secretary for Ministries, to introduce Paper H7 Guidelines on Elders in Local Leadership.

Ms Thomas noted the paper had been amended to reflect that point 2 on the front page had been changed to indicate the 'election', not 'recruitment', of Elders in local leadership.

Assembly accepted this amendment.

### **Resolution 27**

**General Assembly adopts the guidelines on Elders in Local Leadership and commends the document for use in Synods.**

*Agreed.*

## H8 – Worship, Faith, and Order and Ministries Committees: Amending the Basis of Union Paragraph 24

### Resolution 28

General Assembly amends the Basis of Union paragraph 24 to read (new words in blue):

24. All other ministries recognised by the uniting churches at the date of unification (as defined by the United Reformed Church Act 1981) shall continue to be exercised in the United Reformed Church without further commissioning, subject always to the decisions of the General Assembly. The URC shall determine from time to time what other ministries may be required and which of them should be recognised as ministries in the whole Church. It shall decide how those who are to exercise them shall be set apart. **The affirmations in Schedule B (adapted for the particular ministry) shall be made by those entering upon all such ministries within the life of the Church.**

In accordance with paragraph 3(1) of the Structure, the General Secretary proposed that Resolution 28 be referred to Synods, with a final date for responses to him by 31 March 2025.

*Agreed.*

## H9 – Ministries Committee: Withdrawal of Call

The Moderator invited the Revd Mary Thomas, Convenor, Ministries Committee, and the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith to introduce paper H9 Withdrawal of Call.

Ms Furley-Smith asked Assembly to agree to amend the words in Section 6 of Paper H9 to reflect the changed wording in Section 9 in Paper H3, which had just been adopted. Assembly did so.

### Resolution 29

General Assembly agrees the additions to the URC Policy on Withdrawal of Call.

*Agreed.*

## H10 – Ministries Committee: Process for the Nomination and Appointment of Synod Moderators and other General Assembly roles reserved for Ministers of Word and Sacraments

The Moderator invited the Revd Mary Thomas, Convenor of the Ministries Committee, the Revd Adrian Bulley, Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship), and the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith, Secretary for Ministries, to introduce Paper H10 Process for the Nomination and Appointment of Synod Moderators and other General Assembly roles reserved for Ministers of Word and Sacraments.

Ms Thomas indicated that in Annexe 2, 4.3 'four' members should read 'three' members, and in 3.2 'two' people should read 'three' people.

In response to a wide-ranging discussion the Ministries Committee agreed to:

## General Assembly

- incorporate neurodiversity, inclusion and disability along with anti-racism and unconscious bias training into the compulsory training required of panel members
- further consult to alleviate concerns raised about the reduced number of panel members having a negative impact on diversity and inclusion
- the Synod Executive – not the Support Group – to initiate the review

In response to comments suggesting that ageism in the Church was the greater issue, not age discrimination, in the appointment of Synod Moderators, Dr Bradbury responded that while ageism is an issue the particular concern of these resolutions is to ensure that the Church does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of age.

### Resolution 30

Ms Thomas indicated that in Annexe 2, 4.3 'four' members should read 'three' members, and in 3.2 'two' people should read 'three' people.

In response to a wide-ranging discussion the Ministries Committee agreed to:

- incorporate neurodiversity, inclusion and disability along with anti-racism and unconscious bias training into the compulsory training required of panel members
- further consult to alleviate concerns raised about the reduced number of panel members having a negative impact on diversity and inclusion
- the Synod Executive – not the Support Group – to initiate the review.

In response to comments suggesting that ageism in the Church was the greater issue, not age discrimination, in the appointment of Synod Moderators, Dr Bradbury responded that while ageism is an issue the particular concern of these resolutions is to ensure that the Church does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of age.

### Resolution 30

**General Assembly adopts the process for the appointment of Synod Moderators as contained in annexe two of paper H10 of General Assembly 2024, effective for processes commenced after 1 January 2025.**

*Agreed.*

### Resolution 31

**General Assembly adopts the process for the appointment of other General Assembly roles reserved for ministers of Word and Sacraments as contained in annexe three of Paper H10 of General Assembly 2024, effective for processes commenced after 1 January 2025.**

*Agreed.*

### Resolution 32

**General Assembly requires that the notes for nominating groups for other Assembly-appointed posts as contained in annexe four of Paper H10 of General Assembly 2024 be noted and disseminated as appropriate.**

*Agreed.*

## Resolution 33

General Assembly resolves that:

- i. fixed terms be removed from all current Assembly-appointed minister posts, from the close of General Assembly 2024;
- ii. all future such appointments be untermed;
- iii. requires that the terms of settlement of all ministers currently serving in such posts be revised to reflect this change.

*This resolution was not sustained by a two thirds majority and so failed.*

## Resolution 34

General Assembly instructs the Clerk to update the Rules of Procedure as soon as possible to reflect the decisions taken by General Assembly, and that the Business Committee is authorised to approve these changes reflecting the will of General Assembly, and the updated Rules of Procedure be published as soon as possible.

*Agreed.*

## H11 – Ministries and Safeguarding Committees: Guidelines on the safer recruitment of those who lead worship in our churches

## Resolution 35

General Assembly adopts the Guidelines for those who Lead Worship in our Churches.

*Agreed.*

## I2 – Mission Committee – Net Zero Task Group: Environmental Policy progress review

The Revd Steve Faber proposed an amendment, adding the words ‘Local Churches’ to the resolution. This was seconded by Chris Atherton and agreed by General Assembly.

## Resolution 36

General Assembly requests that Local Churches, Synods and related Trust companies should report by 31 March each year on an assessment of progress made during the previous calendar year in reducing carbon emissions across the Synod, including Synod Offices, manses and church buildings held in trust by Synod Trust companies and Synod activities and that this report be shared with the Net Zero Task Group so that overall progress across all the Synods can be recorded and reported to General Assembly annually by the Mission Committee.

*Agreed.*

## I3 – Mission Committee: The Gaza Crisis

The Mission Committee offered new wording on Resolutions 37 and 38 having discussed the matters with the Legal Advisor. Assembly agreed to allow this new wording.

## General Assembly

The Revd Clare Downing and the Revd Dr Romilly Micklem proposed adding the words 'and all those responsible' after 'Hamas' in Resolution 37. This was accepted by both the proposers and General Assembly.

Ms Muna Levan-Harris proposed changing 'should' to 'may' in Resolution 37 but this fell due to a lack of a seconder.

The Revd Russell Furley-Smith proposed adding 'by Hamas' to the start of Resolution 37 after 'deadly attacks'. Many members of Assembly indicated they were willing to second this. After discussion Mr Furley-Smith withdrew this amendment.

Mr Celvon Binns proposed a further amendment removing the word 'all' from the amended Resolution 37. A number of members of Assembly indicated they would second this. This amendment, however, did not find favour with Assembly.

The Revd Craig Muir proposed a further amendment to replace the words 'Israeli citizens' with 'on Israel'.

The Revd David Grosch-Miller proposed, under Standing Order 12.13, that the resolutions be now put. A number of members of General Assembly indicated their willingness to second. The procedure that Resolutions 37, 38, and 39 be now put was carried overwhelmingly, easily exceeding the required two-thirds majority.

The chaplain offered a prayer before Assembly moved to a vote.

### Resolution 37

**General Assembly denounces the deadly attacks on Israeli citizens, which took place on 7 October 2023, including the holding of hostages, for which Hamas and all those responsible should be held accountable in accordance with international law.**

*Agreed.*

### Resolution 38

**General Assembly denounces the deadly attacks on Palestinian civilians in Gaza by the Israeli Defence Force, and its devastating destruction of civilian infrastructure along with essential services, for which those responsible should be held accountable in accordance with international law.**

*Agreed.*

### Resolution 39

**General Assembly calls for an immediate, permanent ceasefire between Hamas and the Israeli Defence Force, and for the immediate de-escalation of hostilities regionally.**

*Agreed.*



## Resolution 40

General Assembly calls on the UK Government to observe its obligations under the international Arms Trade Treaty, to cease arms sales to Israel, and to monitor existing embargoes on arms sales to nations that might be supporting Hamas militarily.

*Agreed.*

## Resolution 41

General Assembly denounces all acts of antisemitism in the UK, expresses deep concern over its unacceptable rise in our communities, and wishes to extend a hand of solidarity to our highly valued Jewish neighbours.

*Agreed.*

## Resolution 42

General Assembly denounces all acts of Islamophobia in the UK, expresses deep concern over its unacceptable rise in our communities, and wishes to extend a hand of solidarity to our highly valued Muslim neighbours.

*Agreed.*

## Resolution 43

Given the unacceptable rise in religious hate crime, General Assembly encourages every local church and Synod to reach out in friendship and welcome to their local faith communities using interfaith dialogue and/or other resources available to them for this purpose.

*Agreed.*

## Resolution 44

In order to encourage learning and deeper awareness, without taking a view itself on these terms, General Assembly instructs Mission Committee in collaboration with the Education and Learning Committee and Youth Assembly, to consider how best to resource the URC with a better understanding of the theologies and history that help to shape and feed the crisis in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory as these relate to:

- i. Christian Zionism and Supersessionism;
- ii. The Balfour Declaration;
- iii. Antisemitism and Islamophobia;
- iv. Peace, Violence, Security, and related, relevant topics so that Synods, local churches, and members can grow in their awareness of these issues and respond in loving prayer, gracious advocacy, and Jesus-shaped solidarity.

*Agreed.*

## Resolution 45

Mr Brooks commented that Resolution 45 was offered to test the mind of Assembly about whether it wishes to request the URC Trusts to consider increasing the screening of investments

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to include Israeli registered companies, not just ones which benefit from the occupation. He reminded Assembly that this can only be a request as the Trusts are independent. If the Trusts were willing to consider the request in Resolution 45, a practical route to screen out such investments would have to be explored, as has been done over the past three years with the 2021 resolutions. The passing of Resolution 45, though, would be an indicator of our collective desire to hold the Israeli Government to account. By this we mean their actions in the occupied Palestinian territory and the contravention of international law in terms of settlements, forced house demolitions and the acquisition of land by coercion as described in Resolution 30 of 2021 General Assembly.

After lengthy discussion the matter was remaindered to consider alternative wording.

The Moderator invited the Revd Philip Brooks, Deputy General Secretary (Mission), to continue conversation on Resolution 45, which was reintroduced in amended form.

Assembly accepted the amended form.

Laura Everard moved that the resolution be now put in line with Standing Order 12.13. Several members of Assembly indicated they were willing to second.

The procedural resolution failed and discussion continued.

### Resolution 45

**In the light of the continuing and worsening breaches of international law in relation to the settlements, forced house demolitions and the acquisition of land by coercion in the occupied Palestinian territory, General Assembly requests that URC Synod Trusts and the URC Trusts and Pensions Funds avoid knowingly investing in Israeli registered companies until such time as Israel once again abides by international law in respect of its obligations towards the Palestinian territory.**

*Agreed.*

## J1 – Nominations Committee: Report to General Assembly 2024

### Resolution 46

**General Assembly appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out in paragraphs 7 and 8 of this Report, subject to the adoptions and corrections contained in supplementary Reports to Assembly.**

*Agreed.*

### Resolution 47

**General Assembly accepts the resignations set out in paragraph 6 of this report and discharges them with thanks for their service.**

*Agreed.*

## Resolution 48

General Assembly dissolves the Nominations Committee from the close of General Assembly 2024. General Assembly discharges the officers and members and thanks them for their service. General Assembly transfers its functions and responsibilities to the new Nominations Committee set up by the 2024 General Assembly.

*Agreed.*

## Resolution 49

General Assembly dissolves the following committees from the close of General Assembly 2024: Finance Committee, Communications Committee, Human Resources Committee and the Church House Management Group. General Assembly discharges the members and thanks them for their service. For the avoidance of doubt, General Assembly transfers any functions and responsibilities not explicitly mentioned to the Resources Committee with effect from the close of General Assembly.

*Agreed.*

## Resolution 50

Assembly thanks the Revd Dr Michael Hopkins for his ten years' service as Clerk of General Assembly and offers him its good wishes for his future ministry.

*Agreed.*

## X1 – Eastern Synod: Northstowe Church Network (LEP) becoming a local United Reformed Church

### Resolution 51

General Assembly receives Northstowe Church Network (LEP) as a local church of the United Reformed Church.

*Agreed.*

## X2 – North Western Synod: A Church with People at the Margins: A Strategy for Mission and Ministry

### Resolution 52

The North Western Synod slightly amended its resolutions (the text had been disseminated in the Order Paper).

The Revd Dr Romilly Micklem moved to remove 'instructs...to task groups' and replace with 'and asks the Church Life Steering Group to review'; delete 'bringing a proposal' and replace with 'and report to the extraordinary General Assembly in 2025.' in Resolution 53. Many members of Assembly indicated they would second this.

*Assembly agreed.*

## Resolution 52

In response to General Assembly 2023 Resolution 31 (c), General Assembly commends the North Western Synod's strategy document 'A Church with People at the Margins: A Strategy for Mission and Ministry' to the wider church. General Assembly encourages all parts of the United Reformed Church to reflect on its implications for their own areas of responsibility.

*Agreed.*

## Resolution 53

General Assembly requests that Synods, Assembly Committees and Task Groups consider the implications of the North Western Synod report, 'A Church with people at the margins', particularly in respect of the priority given to the allocation of resources (people, finance and other) for ministry and mission to churches working with those experiencing poverty and marginalisation, and asks the Church Life Steering Group to review the feasibility of establishing a Community Enabling Fund that any church within the United Reformed Church can apply to, in order to support and develop their presence and engagement with people experiencing poverty and marginalisation, and report to the extraordinary General Assembly in November 2025.

*Agreed.*

## Resolution 55

General Assembly appoints Morag M McLintock as convener of Tellers for General Assembly 2024.

*Agreed.*

## Resolution 56

General Assembly appoints the following as members of a Facilitation Group:

Fiona Bennet  
Nneoma Chima  
Clare Downing  
Muna Levan-Harris  
Derek McDonald  
Craig Muir  
Adam Scott  
John McNeil Scott  
Darnette Whitby-Reid

General Assembly also resolves that if there are not enough facilitators available at any point, the Moderator may appoint anyone they deem appropriate, on the advice of the Clerk or General Secretary, in an emergency.

*Agreed.*

## **Resolution 57**

**General Assembly appoints the Revd Margaret Ali, the Revd Dr Trevor Jamison, and Mx Sorrel Eyres as Tellers for the Election of the Moderator of General Assembly 2025-26, with the Revd Margaret Ali to act as Convener.**

*Agreed.*

## **G2 – Finance Committee and Ministries: Linking Stipendiary Ministry Costs to M&M Receipts**

### **Resolution 58**

**General Assembly adopts the process for linking stipendiary ministry costs to M&M receipts as defined in the main body of the paper.**

*Agreed.*

## **A4 – Business Committee: WFO Terms of Reference**

### **Resolution 59**

**General Assembly adopts the revised terms of reference for the Worship, Faith, and Order Committee as contained in Paper A4 of General Assembly 2024.**

*Agreed.*

## **Election of Moderator of the General Assembly 2025-26**

**Mrs Catriona Wheeler was duly elected as Moderator of the General Assembly 2025-26.**

## Deceased ministers and Church Related Community Workers

Brian Baker  
Phyllis Ball  
John Bassett  
John Belderson  
John Braund  
Charles Brock  
John Clark  
Valerie Davies  
Laurence Dixon  
Douglas Farquhar  
Kenneth Fear  
Grenville Fisher  
Alan Gaunt  
Peter Grimshaw  
Geoffrey Harmer  
John Hopkins  
John Johnahsen-Berg  
Nigel Lemon  
Anne Lindsay  
Cecil Macaulay  
Ted Marley OBE  
Barbara Meachin  
Chris Mellor  
John Mitchell  
Lesley Newton  
Brian Rawling  
Ivor Rees  
Basil Rogers  
Paul Smith  
Peter Southcombe  
Daphne Toppie  
Rikki Twigg  
John Wade  
Michael Wear  
Kenneth Wilkinson

## New ministers

### **The Moderator welcomed new ministers, newly commissioned Church Related Community Workers and ministers new to their URC roles:**

The Revd Roberta Mary Ritson  
Bellingham LEP, Wark LEP and Horsley Village Church

The Revd Louise Sanders  
St Andrew's, Monkseaton and Trinity, Ashington LEP

The Revd Gilbert Esuh Esambe  
Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, Lancashire East Missional Partnership

The Revd Walt Wallace Johnson  
The Bolton and Salford Missional Partnership

The Revd Karen Helen Jones  
The North Staffordshire Group: Burslem; Chesterton; Longton; Tomkin; Uttoxeter

The Revd Mark Andrew Rodgers  
The Shropshire Team Ministry: Preeshenlle URC, Christ Church URC/PCW, Shrewsbury URC;  
Church Stretton URC, Oakengates Telford URC, Trinity Newport URC

The Revd Gillian Barbara Bailey  
Christ Church Milton

The Revd Stanslous Chatikobo  
Trinity Church, Ashwell and Walkern and Sandon United Church

The Revd Margaret Ruth Dewis  
Bush Hill Park; Christ Church; Lancaster Road

The Revd Nathan Glover Eddy

The Revd Rodolphe Blanchard-Kowal  
Bexley, Geddes Place and Emmanuel Sidcup

The Revd David George Cumbers  
All Saints, Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath, and Hassocks

The Revd John Francis Arthur O'Hanlon  
Rivertown URC

Ms Alice Victoria Louise Gilbert  
Priesthill and Shawlands CRCW Project

The Revd Derek McDonald  
Greenock East URC

## Jubilee ministers, 2024

| Years of service | Name                             | Synod         | Date of ordination |
|------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| 50               | Ann Frances Jackson              | Northern      | 25 May, 1974       |
| 50               | John Maldwyn Parry               | North Western | 20 January, 1974   |
| 50               | Walter John Houston              | Mersey        | 29 March, 1974     |
| 50               | Peter Heckels                    | Yorkshire     | 22 June, 1974      |
| 50               | Anthony Roger Lee                | Yorkshire     | 1 July, 1974       |
| 50               | David Howlett                    | East Midlands | 31 March, 1974     |
| 50               | George Clifford Graham Bembridge | Wessex        | 21 September, 1974 |
| 50               | Bernard Alan Collins             | Wessex        | 12 July, 1974      |
| 50               | Richard Frank Davis              | Wessex        | 1 July, 1974       |
| 50               | Anita Margaret Evans             | Wessex        | 25 September, 1974 |
| 50               | Rodney John Wood                 | Southern      | 1 July, 1974       |
| 50               | William Dick McNaughton          | Scotland      | 2 August, 1974     |
| 50               | Gerald Christopher Moule         | Scotland      | 3 March, 1974      |
| 60               | James Ashford Hollyman           | North Western | 23 September, 1964 |
| 60               | Neville Jarrett                  | Mersey        | 1 July, 1964       |
| 60               | Derek Alan Newton                | Eastern       | 4 July, 1964       |
| 60               | Anthony John Coates              | South Western | 24 July, 1964      |
| 60               | Adrian Stanley John Phippen      | South Western | 24 June, 1964      |
| 60               | Stephen Mitchell Thornton        | Wessex        | 18 July, 1964      |
| 60               | Derek Geoffrey Wensley           | Wessex        | 11 July, 1964      |
| 60               | Robert John Blows                | Southern      | 7 October, 1964    |
| 60               | Frank Jones                      | Southern      | 1 July, 1964       |
| 60               | Joseph Ross McLaren              | Scotland      | 4 June, 1964       |
| 60               | Robert Freeland Philip           | Scotland      | 22 May, 1964       |
| 70               | Malcolm Hill                     | Eastern       | 19 July, 1954      |
| 70               | Brian Edward Ranford             | South Western | 9 July, 1954       |
| 70               | Anthony David Tucker             | Wessex        | 24 July, 1954      |
| 75               | Peter John Humphrey Brewer       | Eastern       | 24 September, 1949 |



## Address to the throne

The Moderator invited the Revd Fiona Bennett, Immediate Past Moderator to introduce the Address to the Throne, and read the text to Assembly for agreement.

To the King's Most Excellent Majesty:

The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, meeting in Derbyshire, sends loyal greetings to Your Majesty. Grace, mercy and peace from God the Creator and Christ Jesus our Lord.

In a time of trial and concern for you and your family, we assure you of our continued prayers as you and the Princess of Wales recover from cancer treatment. We were heartened that, alongside outpourings of sympathy from the British people, many were inspired through your example to undergo medical tests themselves, with the potential for lives to be saved through early intervention.

Words from St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians – 'if one member suffers, all suffer with it' – resonate with us today. Deepening geopolitical unrest has been a source of grave concern for our Church. We have been horrified by news from Church partners in Myanmar, where attacks have resulted in the loss of life and the destruction of homes and church buildings. We are earnestly calling for non-violent international intervention to restore a democratic government.

Our General Assembly is supporting peaceful resolution to the conflict in Gaza. The richness of our relationships with the Palestinian and Israeli peoples has compounded both our shared sense of grief and our desire for solutions that affirm human dignity and the right for all to live in peace. Recognising Your Majesty's commitment to positive interfaith dialogue, we were gladdened by the announcement of Your Royal Patronage of the Council of Christians and Jews, an organisation with which the URC has close links.

The United Reformed Church continues to address the complexities of racial justice. We remain committed to becoming an anti-racist Church, with a denomination-wide training programme that stimulates a deeper understanding of the issues. A delegation visited Jamaica in April to deliver an apology for our Church's historic involvement in transatlantic slavery. Described as a 'profound act of healing' by the Moderator of General Assembly, we seek to embody these words with positive acts that seek to repair justice through how we use our resources, including the creation of mentoring projects for young Black men living in Great Britain and through increased collaboration with partners in Africa and the Caribbean.

The URC has a strong history of supporting those in our urban and rural communities experiencing food poverty and destitution, social isolation, homelessness, or who are seeking asylum. We lament the enduring nature of these issues caused by world events and the decisions of successive governments that have failed to prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable. After the recent General Election, we are encouraging our local churches to commit to praying for Your Majesty's Government, and to develop meaningful relationships with the Member of Parliament for each constituency, for the good of the whole community.

In the face of an undeniable existential crisis for life on Earth as we experience it today, many of our local churches are wrestling with how to affordably adapt their buildings and practice for the benefit of all people and our planet's natural environment. A concern for our global

neighbours, together with a faith in the One who inspires us to service and sacrifice, gives us the determination to keep challenging ourselves and others to act decisively to protect our world, to reduce our carbon footprint and to be a prophetic voice when other institutions have been reluctant to take action.

As we strive for all this, we are encouraged to find expressed in Your Majesty's words and actions a similar unwavering commitment to service, to caring for the vulnerable, of maintaining flourishing partnerships and to cherishing our environment, informed by your own faith and experience. May God guide and uphold Your Majesty as you also seek to do the will of Christ, who strengthens us.

You, Creator God, have written  
your great name on humankind.  
For our growing in your likeness,  
bring the life of Christ to mind  
that, by our response and service,  
Earth its destiny may find.

from 'For the healing of the nations'  
by URC minister and hymnwriter Fred Kaan

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*Agreed.*

# Church closures

## Northern Synod

### Falstone United Reformed Church

Travelling south from Kielder water, near the Scottish border, you might see Falstone's grey tower glowing in mute sunshine. How can a place whose stones hold centuries of prayer and history (1709-2023) ever be reduced to a handful of words?

The earliest North Tyne ministry held its roots in the 16th century, when the Duke of Northumberland's chaplain was John Knox. Around this time, Alexander Pedden of Galloway came south and took refuge in a cave at Deadwater Fell, secretly baptising locals and holding illegal meetings attended by shepherds. One farm, Light Pipe, had a secret pulpit.

The Revd James Murray walked to church through a forest so dense that the sky was nowhere to be seen. The Revd James Wood challenged many deplorable habits, from illicit sales of whiskey to tardiness at burials. Two ministers, the Revds John S Gray and Hugh Miller, died at Otterstonelea, on separate occasions and in unexplained circumstances, each while returning from preaching. By the fifth generation of Falstone, ministers were caring for nearly 1,000 souls, including pupils at four small schools at Falstone, Hott, Kielder and Platchetts.

Today, a handful of folk hold the faith in upper north Tyne. Falstone Church of England congregation has proved welcoming, yet we mourn free expression in worship, which has never been part of the state Church. As we take time to celebrate a rich faith history and make good endings, may we also take time to listen as people mourn. A study of the past brings us all to the roots of our faith. Thanks be to God.

### Warkworth United Reformed Church

No report given.

## North Western Synod

### St. Andrew's Silloth

St. Andrew's Silloth held its closing service on Sunday 3 September. Founded in 1886 for Scottish dock workers to worship at a Presbyterian 'kirk', it became a place of worship for over 130 years. Its life and service were celebrated by many ecumenical friends, people with family links to the church, and several former ministers who travelled considerable distances to attend its closure. Church Secretary and Elder Sue Calvert, whose family have a long connection with the church, shared its history and her memories of the people important to its life.

Despite the sadness of the day, the service emphasised that the Church is its people, not buildings, and its work will continue. Hospitality has always been at the heart of St. Andrew's, and there was a wonderful tea after the service where happy memories were shared.

At the end of the service everyone was given mustard seeds to plant, to remember that the Church is always changing, going through different seasons and growing in different ways: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). "For truly I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20-21).

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The seeds sown over the years will continue to bear fruit and now new seeds and ways of worship will be planted – so expect an outbreak of mustard trees in Silloth in the future!

### **Trinity United Church Chettham**

Trinity Chettham, built as a Presbyterian Church, was very popular with people from Scotland who came to Manchester to work for large companies (until the 1970s). The church occupies a key site on one of the major routes into the city centre. Cheetham Hill is one of the most densely populated areas in the country and one of the most ethnically diverse. Over the years, there has been a rich diversity of cultures represented in the church. Fellowship meals were always wonderful occasions!

In the early 1980s, St Luke's Church of England, further down Cheetham Hill, developed serious building issues and were forced to leave the building abruptly. An LEP was proposed at Trinity. Ministry was provided from both the Anglican and United Reformed Churches from then on. Over many years, several URC ministers and committees worked very hard to try to secure plans for the refurbishment and modernisation of the building as a shared project between the Anglican and United Reformed Churches. Sadly, the project did not materialise. The pandemic was a final blow to such plans.

This church has had a fine record of offering a wonderful welcome to people from so many cultures and backgrounds, and members have played a valuable role in hosting neighbourhood meetings and interfaith gatherings. Thanks be to God.

## Mersey Synod

### **St George's**

No report given.

## Yorkshire Synod

### **Christ Church, Castleford**

The story of Christ Church URC, Castleford, started in 1859 when a travelling tea dealer moved to the town and formed a church with some friends, renting rooms as plans were formulated to build a permanent home. Through the help of Sir Titus Salt (who funded many Yorkshire church foundations as well as the one in Saltaire), a permanent home was started on Carlton Street in 1862, seating 500. This building was extended in 1876 to seat a further 250 to meet the needs of the growing mining community in the vicinity. By the start of the 20th century the church had cricket, rugby and football clubs under its wing, and hosted scout and guide groups.

By the mid 1970s, Christ Church was part of an extended pastorate incorporating Brotherton and Knottingley URCs. However, the decline in the mining industry from the early 1980s took its toll on both the community and the church. Brotherton URC ceased to meet in 2016, by which time Christ Church was close to forming an LEP with the local Methodist Church. Unfortunately, this did not materialise, and the decision was made to close in the summer of 2023, giving thanks to God for the congregation's life and service in this community.

### **Cornerstone Church**

Cornerstone Church has a long and varied history, having roots in both the Congregational and Wesleyan Methodist traditions. In 2011, Lidget Green URC joined with Great Horton Methodist Church to form the Cornerstone LEP on the Methodist church site. However, prior to that,

Lidget Green URC congregation, who met along the grandly named Necropolis Road, had incorporated collectively Great Horton and Horton Bank Top Congregational Churches in south-west Bradford; a heritage that dated back to 1861 for Great Horton, 1883 for Horton Bank Top, and 1888 for Lidget Green.

We thank God for the faithful who have served in so many ways and for our Christian presence in this place over the years. The church meeting resolved to close on 31 August 2023.

### **Stainland and Holywell Green United Reformed Church**

The coming together of Stainland URC and Holywell Green URC in 1996 marked the creation of a single URC presence in an area steeped in non-conformity. Stainland was founded in 1813 as a secession from the local Anglican church by a group of independently minded farmers, weavers and artisans. They were able to acquire a piece of land on which they built a chapel and, within a year of its completion in 1814, it is recorded that six baptisms had taken place. By 1838-9 the chapel was deemed too small and it was extended, with a building across the road rented as a separate Sunday school.

A couple of miles down the road, in the more industrial Holywell Green, local mill owners John Crossley and Joseph James built a day school and church in 1852-3 for the growing community. In April 1872, a new church was planned by another mill owning family, the Shaws, for their model village and this opened in April 1874. It had a pulpit of Caen stone and polished granite pillars, cost £10,000 and accommodated 620 worshippers. By the mid-1970s, the congregation felt that the school building was the better place to worship. The former church building was demolished in October 1978 with much of the furniture, pews and stained glass being exported to America.

After the amalgamation of the churches, the church was used by many local organisations, most recently as a warm space during the recent Covid-19 pandemic. Sadly though, it was the aftermath of the pandemic that reduced the number of active members who, with heavy hearts, resolved to close on 31 December 2023.

## **East Midlands Synod**

### **Castle Square**

Formed by ten young members of the independent tradition, passionate in their evangelical desire to proclaim Jesus and wanting a church that could not be imposed on from outside, the church's opening service was held on 9 December 1818.

The founders had been influenced by the Revd William Holmes, whose ministry spanned from 1817 until 1854. Holmes had founded several other congregations, and preaching posts at South Brink (1848-1967) and Gorefield (1836-1979), from where at least five young men trained as ministers.

However, the church owed a large debt on the building, and it was Holmes's successor, James Smith, who led the church in undergoing major refurbishment, acquiring a manse. James Thomas served to the end of the First World War, enabling the building of the Sunday School in 1911 and clearing the debt partly through the Centenary Celebration.

Over the years, the church ably engaged with various social activities in the town centre: theatricals (1930s), fund raising bazaars and Rose Fair (1980s-2019), the Women's Own

(1927-2020) and midweek activities for young people. The church was very much part of the community for many, not just an hour on Sunday.

By the time the URC formed in 1972 we had begun sharing ministry with Long Sutton, which closed in 2008. Today we are part of the South Lincolnshire Area.

Post Covid-19 saw a combination of not being able to provide Elders and officers, diminishing income, diminishing numbers, and an average age of members into their eighties. The final service, on 23 April 2023, had a real sense of celebration and we thank all who took part.

### **Ermine United Reformed Church**

In 1952, Lincoln Free Church Federal Council resolved to build a Free Church on the Ermine Estate. The three Congregational churches in the city accepted the challenge. Sunday school, working jointly with the Church of England, began in 1954. Joint evening services followed until 1956. These were held in the Infants School until St John's Hall was built. On 23 July 1956, the foundation stone was laid. Ermine Church was opened and dedicated in February 1957.

In the early days help and support came from Newland Congregational Church and a United Deacons Meeting was formed. While the membership was never large, the church was thriving, with a full congregation and a large Sunday School. Perhaps this was due to the Methodists, Baptists and the Salvation Army worshipping with us. We all worked well together and have many happy memories of being a community with concerts, galas and uniformed organisations.

As the estate expanded, with the building of a new community centre, many of our lets moved on and vandalism on the estate increased but despite our setbacks, we have kept our faith because we believed this is where God wanted us to be. However, with a decreasing congregation, due to age, we made the painful decision to close. The building may be closed but we still keep our faith and give thanks as our members start on the next phase of their church life and God's mission.

### **Great Doddington United Reformed Church**

Great Doddington non-conformity goes back to 1691. The family of Richard Pitts held services in his home in 1789. The first chapel on High Street was opened on 30 October 1830. In 1882, the chapel united with Wellingborough Congregational Church where the chapel thrived, with 95 scholars in the Sunday school. Fundraising was needed to keep the chapel in good repair but, by 1898, as the result of a leaking roof and little heating, new premises were required. The old chapel was exchanged for a piece of land on which the current chapel now stands, built at a cost of £750.

The new chapel opened on 14 December 1899. It thrived and, in 1924, more rooms were required for the primary and junior ages. In 1939 many children were evacuated to the village from London and the chapel was used as a day school for them.

In 1972, the chapel became part of the United Reformed Church. Over the years, the chapel has been looked after by many dedicated people, but membership has declined and it was felt that it was time to close. On 25 November 2023, a closing service was held. Thanks were given to the ministers, Sunday school teachers, pianists and organists, ladies who made the cakes, those who ensured the building was clean and warm, treasurers and money raisers who over the years have kept the church going. But most importantly, we give thanks with all our hearts to those who had the dream in the beginning and to God for being with us throughout this journey.

## Independent Chapel

The Independent Chapel was built in 1824 after moving from a barn in Earl Shilton centre. As with many churches, it was formed from a Sunday school that started in 1808. Over the following years, the church members and Sunday school increased to several hundred. In 1881 a new schoolroom was added to the church. Further outbuildings were added in 1905.

At the centenary, records show there were 272 children with 26 teachers. Church membership also increased. In 1920, tennis courts were bought and, together with football and cricket teams, competition with other churches was part of church life. Ladies' and men's groups were formed. In 1971, the old Victorian school room was demolished and replaced by the Pelican Centre. A new manse was built in 1962 (now privately owned). By the 1970s, membership and Sunday school numbers began to decrease as sporting events and Sunday shopping began to impose on worship. The decline in members continued over recent years and with much soul searching it was decided, with an awareness of the age and health problems of Elders, to hold our last service on Sunday 17 December 2023. For the congregation's life and witness, thanks be to God.

## Rose Hill United Reformed Church

Rose Hill traces its history to the Great Ejection of 1662, with worship held at 'the Blue Meeting House', named because of its blue roof tiles. In 1822 a plot of land was purchased, and the former Independent Chapel held its first service on 29 May 1823 as Soresby Street Congregational Church.

Always outward focused, it seeded five churches: Wingerworth, Brampton, Whittington Moor and Holymoorside, and the Revd George Seashell worked extensively to form a Ragged School. Rose Hill has been involved with the Whit Walk of witness since its inception in 1850. 1967 saw a merger with Brampton and Whittington Moor Congregational churches to become Chesterfield Congregational Church, changing its name in 1972 to Rose Hill URC.

School rooms were added in 1956, used for many plays and musicals. In 2011, the Eastwood Hall and the school rooms were leased to Chesterfield Studios, a Performing Arts group working with young people. A partnership with the Volunteer Centre led to the Befrienders Group, with volunteers from the church meeting with those who were lonely, isolated and elderly for food and social activities.

Post-pandemic, a serious issue with the roof used our reserves and the cost of the remaining works was simply too high.

Our Mission Statement states, "In God's service we proclaim the Gospel through preaching, teaching, and outreach in the community." Our seeding of new churches, our working with new fledgling churches and our imaginative use of our buildings to work with the community have been the mainstay of our church life since we moved to the building in 1823. The final service took place on 3 September 2023.

## Sutton in Ashfield United Reformed Church

In 1670, surviving under Oliver Cromwell and Charles II, the church was tolerated on Mr Allwood's Estate. In 1743, the estate was sold and a new Independent Meeting House was built, behind the shops on King Street.

## General Assembly

When the chapel was demolished in 1900 to make way for the marketplace, the Revd J Stevenson oversaw the opening in 1906 of Victoria Street Congregational Church (a Grade II listed building), with 600 seats and a 700-plus pipe organ.

In 1951 we celebrated our 300th Anniversary, lighting up the dull days of post-war Britain complete with floodlights on the outside of the building. A highlight during this time was the annual Whitsuntide procession with banners to the marketplace for the open-air service accompanied by colliery bands.

The 1970s brought new challenges: demolition in the area, a dual carriageway isolating the church from local housing. But it saw new adventures, too, to further God's mission in a number of joint pastorates: firstly with Mansfield URC, under the Revd John Paull and then the Revds Chris Baker, URC Pilots Officer, and Hamish Temple, who ministered in the 1980s and 1990s; and in 2000 with Bulwell URC to celebrate its 350th anniversary, guided by the Revd Maureen Buxton and then by the Revd Colin Bones. The church is now part of the North Notts Church Partnership.

We have always been active, from the Revd T Roome teaching night school for the fellowship in 1803 to supporting Christian Aid and the John Eastwood Hospice. Latterly, with dwindling numbers and volunteers, we decided to take the brave decision to close.

For our life and witness, thanks be to God.

## West Midlands Synod

### **Bournville United Reformed Church**

On 9 July 2023 the members and many friends of Bournville URC, from the Cadbury pastorate and from neighbouring churches, who were associated with the church in times past and present, gathered in Bournville United Reformed Church to celebrate its anniversary for one last time and to officially close the church.

The church, formerly Churches of Christ, was formed in 1906 and moved into the Beaumont Road church building in 1914. In the service of thanksgiving and closure, we gave thanks for the many years of faithful, supportive ministry and welcoming, friendly fellowship in the church building, where Communion was celebrated every Sunday. Bible study and prayer meetings were faithfully attended, and many occasions were celebrated with food and laughter.

As a church located in the middle of a residential street, we reached out into the community with prayer walks as well as participating in activities organised by B30 Churches Together. We remembered the many people, young and old, who were part of the congregation, who had given leadership and supported the church in its ministry and outreach, who had been baptised in the church and who met in the church building for activities, including, for many years, a very successful Pilots company.

It was a joyful service. Wonderful and life-transforming memories were shared and encouraging words were spoken by the Synod Moderator, Steve Faber. The church was beautifully decorated with banners, woodcarvings, artwork, puppets, and various symbols that reminded us of the lively, loving and talented congregation that has met in the lovely Beaumont Road church building over the years.



## **Coleshill United Church**

The church was built and founded as a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in 1900, a traditional small church of that time. The Congregational Church in Coleshill closed in 1970 and the members of both congregations came to worship together. The church came to be known as the United Church (Congregational and Methodist) Coleshill.

The church continued to worship and serve the community until 2023, when the aging congregation took the bold step to close, giving thanks to God for its life and witness on 15 October 2023.

## **Trinity Church**

Built by William Baldwin in 1873, the church became Trinity United Church, Hednesford, in 1986 when St John's Methodist Church in Station Road and Mount Street United Reformed Church signed a Sharing Agreement.

During the First World War, the chapel played an important role in supporting the welfare of troops at the Great War camps at Cannock Chase. The schoolroom served over 250,000 meals, and more than £1,000 (around £54,090 today) was raised for the soldiers. In 1928, stained glass windows were unveiled to commemorate the lives of men from the church who died in the First World War.

Trinity Church, Hednesford, closed on 16 July 2023 after 150 years of ongoing witness and service in the area.

## **Eastern Synod**

### **Brentwood United Reformed Church**

When Brentwood United Reformed Church closed in July 2023, 160 people gathered to celebrate 60 years of life and witness as a town centre church, but the Congregational witness went back, past the 1847 building, to a dissenting gathering in the late 17th century. Its membership peaked in 1925 at 382.

As Brentwood URC, it had a fine preaching tradition, a lively Bible study group and active youth work. It led the town in support for Christian Aid and hosted weekly Ecumenical Prayers. It also developed a strong eclectic music tradition – an ad hoc orchestra and the exploration of new hymns from many traditions. The strength of its youth work in the 1970s-1990s – uniformed but also weekly getting together and drama summer weeks – was shown in the return of so many at the closing service. Membership in those years reached 85.

Over the years, Brentwood grew into a church of the open door – to different nationalities, different Christian traditions, seekers and doubters, as well as being a meeting place for many community users – a weekly lunch club, a recorder group and Gamblers Anonymous as well as a group of childminders and their young charges, and a busy dance school.

Since 2000 it was a smaller, more contemplative church – weekly Sacred Space, a shawl ministry knitting group, an exhibition in art and music for 'stations of the resurrection' – while continuing generous support for Christian Aid, Commitment for Life and other good causes. When two key families moved away and six, mostly elderly, members and friends died during Covid-19, it seemed the time to close.

Thanks be to God.

## **Christ Church United Reformed Church**

When a new ring road was built in Colchester in the early 1970s, both St Mary's-at-the-Walls Parish Church and Headgate Congregational Church found themselves isolated from many of their members. It was decided that their buildings should be sold and, in ecumenical partnership, the money be used to demolish and rebuild a church (Christ Church) in Ireton Road. From the outset, it was intended that each congregation should remain within their own denomination but otherwise work together. The legal sharing agreement was signed in 1976 (by which time Headgate had become part of the URC) and Christ Church was hailed as Colchester's first ecumenical church at its opening in 1978.

Unfortunately, as time passed, the work needed to maintain two separate churches in one building could not be justified and the URC congregation decided to withdraw from the LEP while they were still large enough in number to make future plans. The choice was to enter into discussion with Lion Walk URC in central Colchester. Sadly, Covid-19 impeded this initiative and, to allow the Anglican church to proceed with plans for what would now be the Parish Church, the URC withdrew from the Sharing Agreement and Christ Church URC formally closed at a service on 23 September 2023, the URC members joining other fellowships.

The story which began over 180 years ago at Headgate Congregational Church has thus drawn to a close but we rejoice that Christian worship and service first established by the Anglican Church in a building at Christ Church in 1904 can continue, enriched by the shared fellowship of the last 46 years.

## **Dunmow (New Street) United Reformed Church**

Following the Act of Uniformity, the church was founded in 1662. In 1664, during turbulent times, Thomas Archer was excommunicated for 'making various and large sermons in his house and sometimes in his barn'.

The Act of Toleration made life easier. By 1715 congregations of over 400 people were commonplace, with the first chapel erected in 1718 in New Street.

In 1869, the Revd James Irvine oversaw the building of the present church at a cost of £2,500 and 'Olive View House' for the manse, the entire cost funded by direct giving and, as recorded in the archives, without 'resorting to those abominable bazaars'. Congregations reached 700. In 1924, Scout, Guide, Cub and Brownie companies were formed, along with the Parents Association. Women were appointed as deacons for the first time. Between 1934 and 1942, a Boys' Brigade Company and the Girls' Life Brigade were established.

During the Second World War, the fellowship supported 50 Belgian refugees. A canteen and social club was established for servicemen in the district and friendship with St Mary's Church of England was deepened, a relationship which continues to exist today.

In 2007, the church was refurbished with underfloor heating; pews were removed, and chairs introduced.

Recently there have been many social and political changes in the UK, not least the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The dream that started all those years ago is taking us in a new direction. Members will now look for care at another congregation, in other meeting places. Haggai 2:9 says, "My glory will be greater in the latter house than they were in the former house."

Our prayer is that the people of Dunmow URC will be more glory-filled in the days to come.

## **Fowlmere United Reformed Church**

Fowlmere URC began its life in 1754 in the house belonging to the Wedd family, which was used as a licenced Meeting House for Independents. Outgrowing that building, a new brick meeting house was built in 1780, with its first service in 1781.

In 1782, Fowlmere's first minister was appointed. Over the years the building was added to, with the apsidal extension in 1870, a school room in 1878 and the tower and clock in 1881.

The gallery was probably erected in the 17th century but was later carried on iron columns. Most of the early non-conformist baptismal registers and marriage and burial registers are missing, together with the church books. These were sent to the Memorial Hall in London and are thought to have been destroyed in the blitz of the Second World War.

Located in rural Cambridgeshire, the church most recently had been working towards its bronze eco-award.

However, circumstances post-Covid-19 meant the members made the brave decision to close and the final service was held on 25 February 2024.

## **South Western Synod**

### **Bedminster URC (West Street Congregational Church)**

Sir John Smyth of Ashton Court invited a Mr Bennett to Bedminster to develop the coal mining industry. A converted Christian, he wanted all workers to hear the Gospel and opened a place of worship on Stanley Street, originally a tent. In partnership with Baptists and Penn Street Tabernacle the worship meetings continued and the land was purchased in 1865. In 1906, the Congregational Council opened the chapel and new school at a cost of £1,500. By the end of 1907, and under the leadership of the Revd Thomas Hilton, there were 273 scholars and 21 teachers.

As the church grew, various new halls were added in 1912 and then in 1956. Activities included youth clubs, the Brigades, Stepping Stones, Sunday schools, Cubs, Scouts, Sisterhood ladies' meetings, and men's clubs, with table games, Saturday night socials and concerts.

As congregations decreased, other churches, Zion Chapel and Bishopsworth, joined us. Even to the end, the chapel maintained great community relationships, with numerous activities serving the community hosted here. Members also loved and supported each other beautifully as they aged.

After our last Local Church Leader Colin was called away, we decided to go out with a party... which we duly did. There are too many people to give thanks for over the years, but one deserves a mention: thanks to Julie for keeping the lights on, and all the wonderful memories. To God be the Glory.

### **The Church of Christ the Servant**

Christ the Servant began life as a church plant in October 1996 in Abbey Meads, the first phase of the North Swindon Development. The fellowship started with an open-air service on the village green and then services were held in the front room of the manse. As the congregation grew, we became nomadic, moving from the temporary community centre to the Abbey Meads Primary School, then St Andrews church, before finally moving into our own church building in July 2001. It was at the inauguration service that the Methodist District, URC Southwestern

Synod, West of England Baptist Association, Anglican Swindon Deanery and Roman Catholic Clifton Diocese formally confirmed their declaration of intent to support Christ the Servant LEP.

Although we were always a small congregation (only about 30 formal members) we regularly ran many outreach events: Junior Church classes (5 to 16); Alpha Courses; monthly Men's Breakfast and weekly Cell Group Bible study meetings; children's Holiday Clubs; Lights Night evenings; monthly prayer meetings; summer fêtes; Christmas markets; Christmas carol singing; parade, carol and Christingle services; junior and adult church choirs.

Rental space within the building was provided to a wide variety of community groups; the aim of which was to build relationships across the community and generate a church family wider than just the worshipping congregation.

Our spiritual leadership was provided by Deaconess Maureen Spinks (Methodist), from October 1996 to July 2001; the Revd Brian Sweetman (Baptist), from September 2001 to September 2010; the Revd Gerald England (URC), part-time, from June 2011 to August 2016; and finally the Revd Rachael Wilson (Methodist), part-time, from September 2016 to July 2022.

### **Emmanuel Church**

Emmanuel started as a Methodist community in 1687. The first meeting took place in a brothel when two Methodist ministers, on their way back to Ireland from a conference in Bristol, took shelter in Ilfracombe as the weather was too dangerous for their ship to carry on. Having been denied the chance to preach at the parish church, they asked for the use of a private house near the harbour, which unbeknown to them was a local brothel.

However, from such dubious beginnings Methodism spread in the locality. Several small chapels sprang up around the town and surrounding countryside. Eventually a bigger central house of worship was built on Ropery Meadow. This in turn became too small to house the congregation comfortably, so plans were made to rebuild on the same site. However, the then local Urban District Council had other plans for the site and offered a plot of land between Market Street and Avenue Road in exchange. This is where the new Methodist Church was built.

In 1987, the Methodist Church and the local URC in the High Street combined and created Emmanuel Church. The Methodist building was used by both congregations as a Local Ecumenical Partnership.

Sadly, over the years a lot of work needed doing just to maintain the building. With an ageing and dwindling congregation, it became apparent that maintenance costs, along with the financial assessments we had to pay, were just too much for us to carry, and so it was with great sadness and heavy hearts we took the decision that we could no longer worship in this building.

### **Trinity United Reformed Church**

The foundation stone of the present building was laid in 1937 and the church opened in 1938. Before that, Presbyterian worship started in Plymouth in 1853 with a large building in Wyndham Street, to which Scottish troops paraded each Sunday morning. The church was full, with people queueing to get in.

As Plymouth expanded and people moved to new estates, a new building was erected in Torr Lane. In 1944, a bomb dropped close by, damaging the church roof and small hall. In 1972, the church united with the Congregationalists and became Trinity United Reformed Church.

When there was a Guide company and two Brownie packs, they paraded during family services, held once a month, and frequently enacted Bible stories to enhance the theme of the service. Church weekends were a popular part of church life, when we enjoyed fellowship, learning and fun at a residential venue.

The church has served the community with 50-50 sales that brought people from all around Plymouth. Later, Tabletop Sales were always well supported. An art exhibition was held for over 30 years, allowing local artists to display and sell their work. Lunch clubs and a film club were popular with local residents. Over the years, several thousands of pounds were raised for various charities.

The Ladies Fellowship, house group, walking group, badminton and Scottish dancers still meet, albeit at different venues now that the church has closed, and most of the members have joined other church fellowships. We thank God for our life and service over the years.

## **Upton Cheyney Chapel**

Upton Cheyney Chapel can trace its roots to the ministry of John Cennick, a friend and co-worker of John Wesley and George Whitfield, who came to the village to preach in 1740, attracting hundreds of people. The squire, unhappy with this, paid mobs to interrupt proceedings. Eventually, two of the mob changed sides and peace reigned as the villagers of Upton Cheyney were won round.

In 1794, records show an application for non-conformist worship by John Hopes and, in 1830, William Clark began services in his kitchen. The chapel was built in 1834, with the schoolroom in 1849. Later, land was purchased for a burial ground next to the chapel.

Part of the Bristol Itinerant Society, the chapel remained independent for many years, supported with preachers from a local theological college. In 1966, the church covenanted to be part of the Congregational Church and, in 1972, the United Reformed Church.

From 1984, the chapel joined in a group pastorate with Hanham, Oldland Common and Wick URCs. Without leadership after the Revd Adrian Phippen retired in 2005, the chapel resolved to close in 2010 due to low numbers.

However, new lease of life came when local resident Stuart Turner inspired the villagers of Upton Cheyney to support the chapel. The resolution was rescinded and in 2012, under the Revd Meryl White, the congregation developed the fellowship, reached out to the community and carried out renovations to the chapel.

Sadly, while villagers supported some activities, very few became members and interest slipped away. After several deaths in the congregation, numbers became too low to continue, and the chapel closed on 10 September 2023 with a service of thanksgiving.

## **Wessex Synod**

### **Hedge End**

In the early years of the last century, a group of friends were meeting at the home of Mr Luke Abraham in Hedge End. It was decided to build a hall where they could hold their meetings. A committee and trustees were appointed, and fundraising began. They decided to construct the building out of iron and wood, and it was to be called the Mission Hall, although locally it became known as The Tin Church.

## General Assembly

The opening ceremony was held on 10 March 1909 and the congregation grew. In 1938 the Revd W T (Bill) Evans became minister, leading the church to become part of the Congregational Union in 1945. When it celebrated its golden jubilee in 1959, the celebrations were held in the local parish rooms as the church was not large enough to accommodate the 150 people who attended.

In 1972, the church became part of the URC. In 1985, the church relocated to its new site nearby. In 1988, Mr Evans retired after 50 years of service to the church. Subsequently, the fellowship became a joint pastorate with Bitterne in Southampton. In later years, the church was ably served by various local preachers and members although, sadly, the number of elderly members dwindled, leaving just a few to carry on the witness in Hedge End.

The church closed at the end of 2023 after 114 years of serving the local community. Among those at the closing service was Mrs Vera Blunt (née Abraham), who was a descendent of one of the fellowship's founders.

### **Woodley Airfield Church**

Woodley Airfield Church (WAC) was founded in the community centre by Churches Together in Woodley in the early 90s through links with the Revd David Byrne, the parish church and Christ Church LEP. Building on strong relationships with Woodley C of E Primary school, we moved there, believing our call was to draw people to Christ and to nurture them. Leading services in the school, our display box at the school's entrance displayed Bible scenes which the children loved. We supported the school with various gifts, participated in the Summer Fair, and contributed to the coloured-glass windows and the installation of a Prayer Garden.

Our informal worship style and approach to pastoral care was ideal for vulnerable people who needed to feel safe. To this day, several of us meet online to pray together most mornings. Monday People, a weekly accessible worship session for adults with learning difficulties, saw God at work as together we grew in faith and understanding. With support from Christ Church, St Johns, and Methodist local preachers, house groups met until numbers declined. Our links with Christ Church remained through involvement in their groups, the Rainbow Community Café and the annual Holiday Bible Club week in August.

Those who joined us for a while and moved on were blessed and changed by the Holy Spirit. With numbers declining and no clear direction for the future, it is time for us to close and move on. WAC was a beautiful flower which grew, matured, and produced a wonderful seedpod. Now it is time for the seeds to be scattered and growth to be shared. Praise God for his love and mercy!

## Thames North Synod

### **Camden Town, Trinity**

No report given.

### **Colindale, The Hyde**

No report given.

### **Heaton Way Church/Congregational United Reformed**

Heaton Way Church in Harold Hill, Romford, was one of the most exciting new churches built after the Second World War: a courageous missionary endeavour built in response

to the desperate need for housing in the East End of London, with a particular focus on Bethnal Green.

South Street Congregational Church saw the need and responded, selling its church on a prime site, releasing money to build a new church in Western Road and purchase the site at Heaton Way. The building at Heaton Way was financed mainly by war damage compensation from Woodford Green.

Sunday school began in a builder's hut with the Baptists, numbers sometimes exceeding 200 children. When the Baptists moved on, the Congregationalists continued on the Heaton Grange Estate with 16 members from South Street congregation joining the enthusiastic members on the estate, and the church opened on 3 March 1962.

The church flourished with monthly family and parade services growing to over 120 people of all ages. Young people played a significant role in the life of the church, and many recall the annual adventure residentials in Wales.

The church might be remembered for its engagement with the interests of the community, most notably for its campaign in making Straight Road safe for residents. The work of Ron and Frances Trotter (Church Secretary for over 50 years) and that of many others will long be remembered as will the friendliness and fellowship of the Sunday morning services. We thank God for this work for the Kingdom, knowing that many lives were changed, and Christ's love shown.

### **Manor Road United Reformed Church**

Stoke Newington Presbyterian Church occupied its site from 1873, inhabiting a traditional Gothic red brick building. In the 1960s the members and their then minister, the Revd Margaret Boaden, took the courageous step of demolishing the church, halls and manse, replacing them with a new church and connected blocks of flats, Geneva Court, that they initially operated through their own housing association. The new church was opened in 1970 and, in 1972, became Manor Road United Reformed Church.

Through the 70s and 80s this church developed as a lively multi-racial fellowship with a variety of community activities including a lunch club, a playgroup, a voluntary legal advice service, various youth activities and organisations, and regular social events for the people living in Geneva Court. The church itself developed as part of the Hackney Team Ministry in close fellowship with other United Reformed churches in the Borough of Hackney.

From the late 80s onwards, it became a harder struggle to keep community activities going, but the church continued, ably led now by non-stipendiary leadership, most notably Joyce Berry. However, as members moved away, it proved harder to attract new members. The loss of three key Elders during Covid-19 times, including Fitz Howard (Church Officer since the new church began in 1970), left the church with little strength for regeneration. At the end of 2022, the decision was taken to close, with Sunday services ceasing after Easter 2023.

As we close, we give thanks for the many and varied people who have shared in, and benefited from, the ministry of this creative and lively church.

## National Synod of Wales

### **Crundale United Reformed Church**

Crundale URC was founded in 1837 in the village of Crundale, Pembrokeshire. The church was a member of the Landsker Pastorate. Its members now worship with other local congregations.

It held its last service on 24 June 2023. We give thanks to God for its life and Christian witness over the years.

### **New Street United Church**

New Street Congregational Church, one of the many 'English Congs' in Wales was founded around 1780, opening on its present site in 1794 with land purchased from the estate of Edward Clive, 1st Earl of Powis, son of Viscount Clive of India. On 10 June 1845, a special service celebrated the opening of a larger building.

The revivals of 1859 and 1904 impacted New Street, which saw an increase in membership. A new schoolroom was built for the 200 or so Sunday school pupils. In later years, the main church was sold to local independent Baptists and the former Sunday school became the church and sanctuary.

The church meeting joined the United Reformed Church in 1972 as part of the new ecumenism, sharing ministry with nearby churches and, in 1984, the Spirit led the congregation to form a local ecumenical partnership with the Presbyterian Church, a partnership which continued until this year.

The church has been faithfully served by generations of ministers, latterly by the Revd Dr Diane Stirling-Jones, who served with dedication until her retirement on 31 July 2023. In the lead up to her retirement, the church considered its options and made the decision to close.

The closing service took place on 31 July, remembering the efforts of past and current members and thanking God for the witness of the church and its congregation over many decades. Let us thank God for all that has been achieved in bringing the Gospel to the people of Welshpool and pray that this continues in a different way through the independent church now meeting there.

To God be the glory.



# Nominations

Assembly committees and other appointments:

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

11. The names in the following list have been approved by General Assembly and have been updated after the close of Assembly. The list is available at: [bit.ly/URCNom](https://bit.ly/URCNom). Committee Secretaries are advised to refer to this list for the membership of their Committee.

### Officers of Assembly

|                              |                             |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Assembly Moderator:          | The Revd Timothy Meadows    |
| Assembly Moderator-elect     | Ms Catriona Wheeler         |
| Clerk of General Assembly:   | The Revd Sarah Moore [2030] |
| Assistant Clerk of Assembly: | Vacancy                     |
| Honorary Treasurer:          | Mr Alan Yates [2029]        |

## 1. Assembly Executive

Assembly Executive acts on behalf of General Assembly. It consists of the officers of Assembly, the immediate past and elect Assembly Moderators, the General Secretary and Treasurer and their Deputies, four representatives from each Synod, normally, but not necessarily, including the Moderator and the Synod Clerk, together with the Convenors of Assembly Committees, the Chair of the United Reformed Church Trust and three members for URC Youth, including the URC Youth Moderator. In attendance are staff secretaries, Assembly Moderator's chaplain and others as appropriate.

### 1.2 Law and Policy Advisory group

Convenor: Ms Morag McLintock [2028]†  
Secretary: Mr Neil Mackenzie [2026]†  
General Secretary  
Clerk to General Assembly  
Assistant Clerk to General Assembly  
Synod Clerk representative: Mr Tim Hopley {2027}\*\*  
Property, legal and trust officers' representative: Ms Muna Levan-Harris  
Nominated members:  
The Revd Steven Manders [2025]      Mr Dean Taylor [2026]\*\*  
In attendance: Legal Adviser

### 1.3 Listed buildings advisory group

Convenor: The Revd Dr James Mather [2025]† (nominated by the group)  
Secretary: Mr Geoff Milnes [2025]† (nominated by the group)  
General Secretary  
Synod representatives:  
Vacancy (1)      Mr Michael Williams (2)  
Ms Alison Lee (3)      Vacancy (4)  
Mrs Judith Booth (5)      Mr Matthew McDade (6)  
Mr Peter West (7)      Mr Roger James (8)  
Vacancy (9)      Vacancy (10)  
Mr Colin McCracken (11)

### 1.4 Resource sharing task group

Convenor: The Revd Steve Faber [2026] (Synod Moderator)  
Secretary: Mr Chris Atherton  
Treasurer: Vacancy  
Miss Margaret Atkinson      Mr Mike Gould  
URC Treasurer

## 1.5 Net Zero task group

Convenor: The Revd Chris Baillie

Representative members:

Deputy General Secretary (Mission)

The Revd George Watt [2025]

Mr Bill Potter

Mr Clifford Patten

Ms Victoria James

Ms Maya Withall

Ms Judy Harris

Mr Matthew McDade

Ms Eileen Newington

Synod Moderator

Finance Committee

URC Trust

Chief Operating Officer

URC Youth

URC Children

Synod Property Officer

Synod Green Apostle

## 2. General Secretariat

### 2.1 Worship, Faith and Order Committee

The Convenor and Members normally serve for four years

Convenor: The Revd Dr Robert Pope [2026]

Secretaries:

The Minister for Digital Worship: The Revd Andy Braunston

Mission Support Officer: Ms Lindsey Brown

Nominated members:

The Revd Dr Andrew Prasad [2029]

Ms Diana Paulding [2026]

The Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson [2027]

The Revd Sue McCoan [2026]

The Revd Kristin Ofstad [2026]

### 2.2 Nominations Committee

Convenor: Ms Victoria Paulding [2028]\*\*

A member of the General Secretariat

Ms Deborah Brooks [2028]\*\*

Ms Laura Everard [2028]\*\*

The Revd Andrew Mudharara [2028]\*\*

Human Resources

Vacancy

#### 2.2.1 Panel for General Assembly appointments

Members usually serve for five years as training is required.

#### Retiring 2024

Dr Paul Ashitey (10)

The Revd Sal Bateman (10)

Mr David Gartside (3)

The Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson (9)

The Revd George Mwaura (5)

The Revd Paul Robinson (12)

Mr Alex Walker (4)

Mr Matthew Barkley (9)

The Revd Lucy Brierley (9)

The Revd Peter Henderson (7)

Mrs Pippa Hodgson (5)

Ms Victoria Paulding (5)

Mr Patrick Sheard (1)

Mr Reuben Watt (11)

#### Retiring 2026

The Revd Janet Adamson (13)

Mrs Helen Lidgett (5)

## General Assembly

The Revd Reginald Mudenda (11)  
The Revd Mark Robinson (9)

Mrs Pat Poinen (1)  
Mrs Darnette Whitby-Reid (10)

### Retiring 2027

Mrs Sue Brown\*\* (9)  
Mrs Wendy Dunnett\*\* (9)  
Mr Trevor Orr\*\* (4)

Ms Lorraine Downer\*\* (10)  
The Revd Elaine Hutchinson\*\*(6)

### Retiring 2028

Ms Linda Austin\*\*  
Mrs Barbara Ellis† (3)  
The Revd Alison Hall †(3)  
Ms Megan Price \*\* (12)  
Mr Donald Swift (3)\*\*

Mrs Sheila Davies † (3)  
Mrs Rita Griffiths\*\*(3)  
The Revd Stephens Manders\*\*  
Mr Bill Robson †† (13)

## 2.3 Complaints and Discipline Advisory Group (formerly MIND)

Convenor: The Revd Steven Manders [2026]\*\*

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary for Discipleship

General Secretary

Secretary for Ministries

Consultant to Investigation Team: The Revd Ian Kirby [2027]

Consultant for Ministers: Mrs Fiona Smith [2026]

Training Officer: Vacancy

Synod Moderator: The Revd Bridget Banks [2025]

Convenor for Assembly Commission for Discipline: The Revd Nigel Adkinson [2028]

Senior Member Investigation Team: The Revd Martin Spain [2029]

Secretary Assembly Commission for Discipline: Mr Philip Laws [2026]

Secretary Disciplinary Appeal Commission: The Revd Andy Braunston

Clerk of General Assembly: The Revd Sarah Moore [2030]

Assistant Clerk of General Assembly: Vacancy

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Ms Sharon Barr

## 2.4 Assembly Standing Panel for Discipline

Minister members:

The Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson

The Revd Nick Mark

Elder members: Mr Tim Crossley

Ms Sandra Wood

The Revd Raymond Singh

Mr Dodie Khurshid

## 2.5 Disciplinary Investigation Panel

Senior Member: The Revd Martin Spain [2029]

Deputy Senior Member: Vacancy

Members (not time-limited):

Mr John Collings

Mrs Chris Harris

Mr Andrew Howes

The Revd Lesley Moseley

The Revd Zadie Orr

Mr Giles Robinson

Mrs Margaret Smith

The Revd Martin Ferris

Mr Keir Hounsome

Ms Alison Jiggins

The Revd Craig Muir

Mr Mark Rigby

Ms Cathy Simpson

The Revd Martin Spain

Mrs Liz Swanwick  
Dr Gordon Woods

The Revd Dr Janet Tollington  
The Revd Geoff Wright

## 2.6 Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel

Convenor: The Revd Nigel Adkinson [2028]

Deputy Convenor: Dr David Jones [2028]

Members (not time-limited):

The Revd Nigel Adkinson

Ms Nneoma Chima

Ms Mary Coole

Ms Janine Cowie

Mr Remi Ferguson

Mrs Cathy Glazier

The Revd Dominic Grant

Prof Graham Handscomb

The Revd Jonathan Hill

Dr David Jones

Ms Maria Lee

The Revd Alan McGougan

Ms Morag McLintock

The Revd Sarah Moore

Mr Dean Taylor

Ms Marie Trubic

Mr Gordon Wanless

Mr Ian Corless

Mrs Barbara Ellis

The Revd Peter Flint

Ms Barbara Goom

The Revd John Grundy

The Revd Marcus Hargis

The Revd Terry Jin

Mrs Mary Kelly

The Revd Sue McCoan

The Revd Martha McInnes

Dr James Mawdesley

The Revd Wilbert Sayimani

The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe

Mrs Janet Virr

Ms Darnette Whitby-Reid

## 2.7 Disciplinary Appeals Commission

Appointed by the Officers of General Assembly

Secretary: The Revd Andy Braunston

The Revd Fiona Bennett

The Revd Clare Downing

Mr Alastair Forsyth

Ms Elizabeth Lawson KC

Mrs Val Morrison

The Revd Nigel Uden

The Revd Bill Bowman

Mr John Ellis

The Revd Walt Johnson JP

Ms Muna Levan-Harris

Mr Richard Pooler

## 2.8 Pastoral reference and welfare committee

Convenor: The Revd Dr Elizabeth Welch [2027]\*\*

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)

General Secretary

Deputy Treasurer

Synod Moderator: The Revd Bridget Banks [2026]

Nominated Members:

The Revd Ruth Dillon [2028]

Mrs Bridget Akinyombo [2028]

Mrs Hilary Miles [2026]\*\*

One vacancy

## 3. Mission department

### 3.1 Mission committee

Convenor: Sarah Lane Cawte [2028]

Deputy Convenor-elect: The Revd Wilbert Sayimani [2024 -2028]\*\*

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Mission)

The Revd Sally Bateman (1) [2028]\*\*

Mr Aftab Mughal (2) [2025]

The Revd Stuart Nixon (3) [2026]  
The Revd Jane Wade (5) [2027]  
The Revd Alex Clare-Young (7) [2027]  
The Revd Ray Stanyon (9) [2025]  
The Revd Martin Knight (11) [2026]  
The Revd John Bremner (13) [2027]

The Revd Barry Welch (4) [2027]  
The Revd Debbie Brown (6) [2027]  
The Revd Henriette Wentink (8) [2027]  
The Revd Eddie Boon (10)\*\* [2027]  
The Revd Branwen Rees (12) [2026]

### **3.1.1 Commitment for Life (CfL) reference group**

Convenor: Mr Richard Lewney [2028]†

At least two CfL advocates

Representative of mission team

Representative of mission committee

Representative from Christian Aid

Representative of Global Justice Now

Programme Officer for Global Justice and Partnerships

### **3.1.2 Interfaith Enabling Group**

The convenor is nominated by the Mission Committee.

Convenor: The Revd Tracey Lewis [2028]†

Secretary: The Programme Officer for URC Global Justice and Partnerships

Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for the National Synod of Scotland

Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for the National Synod of Wales

Nominated members:

Ms Victoria Turner [2025]

Mr Andy Lie [2027]†

Co-opted Members

The Revd Dr Graham Adams [2024]

The Revd Dr Mark Godin [2024]

The Revd Dr John Parry

### **3.1.3 Joint Public Issues Team strategy and policy group**

Deputy General Secretary (Mission)

Synod Moderator: The Revd Steve Faber [2024]

### **3.1.4 Rural strategy group (United Reformed Church/Methodist)**

Future being reviewed by the Mission Committee

### **3.1.5 Pioneer and Fresh Expressions Enabling group**

Representatives:

Mission Committee

Ministries Committee

Education and Learning Committee

Children and Youth Work Committee

URC Pioneer Network

### **3.1.6 Legacies of Slavery Task Group**

Convenor: Professor David Reynolds

Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries

Programme Officer (Global, Justice and Partnerships)

The Revd Stephen Ansa-Addo

The Revd John Campbell  
The Revd Zaidie Orr

Ms Victoria Turner

## 4. Discipleship department

### 4.1 Ministries committee

Convenor: The Revd Mary Thomas [2026]\*\*

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Leadership in worship advocate: Mrs Maggie Kirkbride [2027]\*\*

Synod Moderator: The Revd Jamie Kissack [2026]

Convenors of the Accreditations (CRCW and SCM), Maintenance of Ministry and Retired Ministers' Housing sub-committees

Convenor of the Assessment Board

Nominated members:

Mrs Gill Bates [2028]†

Miss Chris Kellett [2025]

The Revd Lesley Moseley [2025]

The Revd Terry Jin [2027]\*\*

#### 4.1.1 Accreditations (CRCW and SCM) sub-committee

Convenor: The Revd Dr Paul Dean [2025]

Joint Secretaries: Secretary for Ministries and Head of Community Engagement

Convenor of the Assessment Board

Representatives:

Synod Moderator: The Revd Jamie Kissack [2026]

SCMs: Vacancy

CRCWs: Ms Jo Patterson [2026]

Nominated members:

The Revd Alison Micklem [2025]

The Revd Carole Marsden [2026]

The Revd Jacob Bali [2026]

#### 4.1.2 Maintenance of ministry sub-committee

Under review

#### 4.1.3 Retired Ministers' Housing Society sub-committee

Terms of service shall be for four years with the possibility of a further term of four years.

The convenor shall be a member of the Ministries Committee nominated by that Committee.

Convenor: The Revd Paul Whittle [2027]†

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

Synod Moderator: The Revd George Felton [2025]

Nominated members:

The Revd Don Nichols [2026] \*\*

The Revd David Lawrence [2027] \*\*

Representative members:

Tenants:

The Revd Dr Martin Camroux

Retired Ministers' Housing Society:

The Revd Simon Walkling

Co-opted member:

The Revd David Coote

#### 4.1.4 Assessment board

Members usually serve for five years as training is required.

Convenor: Professor Bill Gould [2026]†

**Retiring 2025**

Ms Mercy Nimako (11)

The Revd Samuel Silungwe (5)

Ms Liz Sharples (5)

**Retiring 2026**

The Revd Lis Mullen (2)

The Revd Gerald England (8)†

The Revd Sue McCoan (10)

**Retiring 2027**

The Revd Jamie Kissack (4)

Mrs Kate Yates (10)

Mr Simon Loveitt (4)

The Revd Tim Lowe (4)

The Revd Jacob Bali (11)

**Retiring 2028**

Mr Keith Reading (3)

**4.2 Education and Learning Committee**

Convenor: Mrs Pippa Hodgson [2027]

Secretary: Secretary for Education and Learning

Nominated Members: (nominated by the Nominations Committee)

Mrs Margaret Marshall [2028] †

The Revd Andrew Mudharara [2026]

Ms Maggie Eldridge-Mrotzek [2028]\*\*

Ex-officio Members:

A General Assembly Moderator (current, past or elect)

General Secretary

Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)

Representative Members: (nominated by the appropriate group)

RCL Principals: The Revd Dr John McNeil Scott [2026]\*\*

Synod Training and Development Officers: The Revd Dr Rob Hoch [2026]\*\*

CYDOs and other Children and Youth Work officers: Mr Richard Knott [2026]\*\*

EM1 students

Non-voting members: (nominated by the appropriate group)

Synod Moderator: The Revd Clare Downing [2025]

Methodist Church representative (in attendance as required):

Mr Richard Armiger [2026]

RCL Principals: The Revd Dr Robert Pope (Interim)

The Revd Dr Adam Scott

Secretary for Ministries

**4.2.1 Stepwise development group**

Convenor: The Revd Alison Davis

Administrator: Stepwise Programme Assistant

Secretary for Education and Learning

Stepwise Programme Manager

Education and Learning Instructional Designer

Education and Learning Programme Officer (by invitation)

Convenor of the Stepwise Learning Standards Board

Representatives – serving appropriate terms of service:

Children's and Youth Work Committee: Mr Leo Roberts



Synod mission enablers network: The Revd Stuart Radcliffe  
 Synod training and development officers: Vacancy  
 Resource Centres for Learning: a tutor  
 Together Ethnic and Minority URC: The Revd Zaidie Orr  
 Co-opted members:  
 The Revd Simon Goddard (Fresh Expressions)  
 The Revd Peter Henderson  
 Mr Iain Johnston (Faith in Community Scotland)

The convenor and the co-opted members are appointed by the Education and Learning Committee.

#### **4.3 Children's and Youth Work Committee**

Convenor: The Revd Samantha Sheehan [2028]  
 Secretary: Head of Children's and Youth Work  
 URC Youth Moderator URC Youth Moderator-elect  
 Pilots representative  
 Nominated members:  
 Mr Matthew Barkley [2027]† Mr Reuben Watt [2027]†  
 The Revd Janine Atkinson [2028] † The Revd Julian Sanders [2025]  
 Ms Caroline Akinyele [2025]

#### **4.4 Safeguarding Committee**

Convenor: The Revd Roger Jones [2026]  
 Secretary: Designated Safeguarding Lead  
 Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)  
 Secretary for Ministries  
 Training and Development Coordinator  
 Policy Development Coordinator  
 Nominated members:  
 Mrs Kate Yates [2026]\*\* Mrs Margaret Thompson [2028]\*\*  
 Synod Safeguarding Practice Group representative:  
 Ms Julie Rafferty [2026]\*\*  
 Synod Moderator: The Revd George Watt [2025]  
 National Synod of Scotland representative: Vacancy  
 URC Advocated Survivors Group representatives (up to two): group not yet operative  
 Independent members:  
 Mr Tim Carter (Methodist Church) [2026]\*\*  
 Ms Fi Cisneros [2026]\*\*  
 In attendance:  
 Head of Children's and Youth Work Secretary for Education and Learning

### **5. Administration and resources department**

#### **5.1 Business Committee**

Convenor: The Revd Mark Robinson [2025]  
 Secretary: General Secretary  
 Moderator of General Assembly  
 Moderator-elect and Immediate-past Moderator of General Assembly  
 Clerk of General Assembly Assistant Clerk of General Assembly

URC Treasurer

Nominated members:

Ms Darnette Whitby-Reid [2025]

Mr Reuben Watt [2026]\*\*

**5.2 Resources Committee**

Convenor: The Revd Dr Michael Hopkins [2028]

Nominated Members:

Ms Jane Humphrey [2026]

Mr Tim Llewelyn [2028]

The Revd Nick Mark [2028]

Ms Joanna Morfoh [2028]

Mr Steve Tringham [2028]

Vacancy (Human Resources)

Ex-officio members:

Chief Operating Officer – Secretary

The Chief Finance Officer

Treasurer

Deputy Treasurer

**5.3 Equalities Committee**

Convenor: The Revd Naison Hove [2026]

Secretary: The Revd David Salsbury [2027]†

URC Youth Equalities and Diversity Representative: Vacancy

Nominated members:

The Revd Jayne Taylor [2027]

The Revd Jo Clare-Young [2028]†

Ms Judy Rogers [2028] †

Mrs Janet Raven [2026]

Ms Kirsty Mabbott [2027]

Ms Megan Westgarth [2028]\*\*

**5.3.1 Affirmative Action task group**

Convenor: Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries

Secretary: Equalities Committee Secretary

Representative members:

Mission Committee: Ms Lindsey Brown

URC Youth: Ms Philippa Osei

Members:

Ms Muskaan Jonathan

The Revd John Macaulay

The Revd Andrew Mudharara

The Revd George Mwaura

Mrs Pat Poinen

**5.4. Pensions Committee**

Convenor: The Revd Dr Janet Tollington [2026]\*\*

Secretary: Pensions Manager

Nominated members:

Ms Joana Marfoh [2028]†

The Revd John Piper [2025]†

Co-opted members, maximum of three:

Mr David Martin

Treasurer or Deputy Treasurer

Convenor of the Investment Committee

Convenor of the Maintenance of Ministry sub-committee

Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources)

In attendance:

Chief Finance Officer

Secretary for Ministries (for Ministers' Pension Fund matters)

## 5.5 United Reformed Church Trust

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

Chair: Ms Catriona Wheeler [2026]

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Deputy Secretary: Mr John Samson

Members:

Group one (Synods 1, 2, 3, 4, 13):

The Revd Nick Mark (13) [2028] †

Group two (Synods 5, 6, 7, 8, 12):

Mr Clifford Patten (7) [2028] †

Mr David Greatorex (5) [2028] †

The Revd James Breslin (5) [2028] †

Mr David Lathbury (6) [2026] †

Dr Stephen Thompson (7) [2026]\*\*

Group three (Synods 9,10,11):

The Revd Julian Macro (9) [2025]

The Revd John Macaulay (10) [2026]\*\*

There is one vacancy for a group member

URC Youth appointee: Vacancy

Moderator of General Assembly

Clerk of General Assembly

General Secretary

Treasurer

In attendance:

Convenor of the Investment Committee

Minute secretary

Chief Finance Officer

### 5.5.1 Remuneration Committee

Convenor: Mr William McVey

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources)

Ms Sushila Jetha (Methodist HR)

URC Treasurer

In attendance: Chief Finance Officer

## 5.6 The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd

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

Chair: Mrs Bridget Micklem [December 2027] †

Deputy chair: Mr Lyndon Thomas

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Church Nominated Trustees/Directors:

Mr Colin MacBean [2028] †

Mrs Faith Paulding [2025]

Convenor of the Pensions Committee: The Revd Dr Janet Tollington

URC Deputy Treasurer: Mr Vaughan Griffiths

Convenor of the Maintenance of Ministry sub-committee: Mr David Coote  
(Pending a review of MoM sub-committee)

Convenor of the Investment Committee: Mr Richard Nunn

Member Nominated Trustees/Directors:

The Revd Caroline Vodden [2026]

The Revd Daniel Cheyne [2026]

Two vacancies

## **5.7 Investment Committee**

Convenor: Mr Richard Nunn [2026]

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Members:

Dame Katharine Barker [2027]

Mr Lyndon Thomas [31.12.2026] †

Mr Mark Kirkbride [2027]\*\*

Mr Timothy Lancaster [2027]\*\*

URC Treasurer

Convenor, Pensions Committee

Chair of United Reformed Church Trust or another director

Chair of United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust or another director

Treasurer, Westminster College

In attendance: Chief Finance Officer

## **6. Representatives to meetings of sister churches**

### **6.1 General Synod of the Church of England**

Mission Committee nomination

### **6.2 Methodist Conference**

The Revd Geoffrey Clarke

### **6.3 Congregational Federation**

Mission Committee nomination

### **6.4 Church of Scotland**

Assembly Moderator and Synod representative

### **6.5 United Free Church of Scotland**

Synod nomination

### **6.6 Scottish Assembly of the Congregational Federation**

Synod nomination

### **6.7 Scottish Episcopal Church**

Synod nomination

### **6.8 Methodist Church in Scotland**

Synod nomination

### **6.9 Baptist Union of Scotland**

Synod nomination

### **6.10 Presbyterian Church of Wales**

Assembly Moderator

### **6.11 Union of Welsh Independents**

Synod nomination

**6.12 Covenanted Baptists**

Synod nomination

**6.13 Church in Wales Governing Board**

Synod nomination

**6.14 Provincial Synod of the Moravian Church**

Mission Committee nomination

**7. Representatives on ecumenical church bodies**

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

**7.1 World Council of Churches 2022 Assembly**

Delegates: The Revd Sarah Moore and Ms Karen Campbell

**7.2 Council for World Mission Assembly**

The following are appointed for the 2024 CWM Assembly:

Ms Karen Campbell

Ms Lindsey Brown

The Revd Tim Meadows

Mr Zeerak-Shahbaz

**7.3 World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) General Council**

Representatives are appointed for each meeting of the Council

**7.4 Conference of European Churches Assembly**

Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations and one other

**7.5 The Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council**

The Revd Rowena Francis

The Revd Professor David Thompson

Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries

**7.6 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI)****7.6.1 CTBI Church leaders' meeting**

General Secretary

**7.6.2 CTBI environmental issues network**

The Revd Mike Shrubsole

**7.6.3 CTBI consultative group on ministry amongst children (CGMC)**

Head of Children's and Youth Work and one other

**7.6.4 CTBI Inter-religious network**

Programme Officer (Global, Justice and Partnerships)

**7.6.5 CTBI China forum**

The Revd John Scott

**7.6.6 CTBI Churches' refugee network**

The Revd Fleur Houston

## **7.7 Churches Together in England (CTE)**

### **7.7.1 CTE enabling group**

Mission Support Officer

### **7.7.2 CTE group for evangelisation**

Deputy General Secretary (Mission)

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

Appointed by the National Synod of Scotland

## **7.9 National Sponsoring Body for Scotland**

Appointed by the National Synod of Scotland

## **7.10 Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN)**

Appointed by the National Synod of Wales

## **7.11 Commission of Covenanted Churches in Wales**

Appointed by the National Synod of Wales

## **7.12 Free Church education committee**

Ms Sarah Lane Cawte

One vacancy

## **7.13 European Churches' environmental network**

The Revd David Coleman

## **7.14 Churches' committee on funerals and crematoria**

The Revd Sally Thomas

## **7.15 Churches' forum for safeguarding**

Designated Safeguarding Lead

## **7.16 Churches' network for nonviolence**

Head of Children's and Youth Work

## **7.17 Churches Visitor and Tourism Association**

Mrs Valerie Jenkins

## **7.18 Joint liturgical group**

The Revd Dr Ana Gobledale

## **8. Representatives on formal bilateral and multilateral committees**

### **8.1 Methodist/United Reformed Church liaison group**

Co-convenor: The Revd Geoffrey Clarke (Synod Moderator) (five-year term) [2026]

Co-secretary: Mission Support Officer

Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for the National Synod of Scotland

Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer for the National Synod of Wales

Nominated Members – serving one or two four-year terms:

The Revd Memona Shahbaz [2027\*\*]

Mr Tim Hopley [2025]

### 8.1.1 Methodist/United Reformed Church strategic oversight group

The General Secretariat

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

[see note 7]

Appointed by the National Synod of Scotland

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

The Revd Dr Julian Templeton

### 8.4 Roman Catholic/United Reformed Church Dialogue Group

Co-chair: The Revd Philip Brooks

Co-secretary: Ms Lindsey Brown

Members:

Mr John Cornell

The Revd Dr Sarah Hall

The Revd Jason McCullagh

The Revd Lindsey Sanderson

## 9. Representatives on governing bodies of theological colleges, etc

### 9.1 Northern College

The Revd Raymond Singh [2025]†

Mrs Margaret Marshall [2028]

The Revd John Grundy [2025]

The Revd Mark Bates [2026]†

Dr Lesley Coote [2026]\*\*

Synod Moderator: The Revd James Kissack [2024]

In attendance: Secretary for Education and Learning

### 9.2 Westminster College: board of governors

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

Convenor: The Revd Nigel Uden [2025]

Convenor-elect: Vacancy:

Clerk to the governors: The Revd Naomi Young-Rodas [2028]

Honorary Treasurer (Westminster College): Mr Gilbert Heathcote [2029]

Principal: The Revd Dr Peter McEnhill

Mr John Ellis [2029]

Mrs Darnette Whitby-Reid [2025]

The Revd Stuart Scott [2025] †

The Revd David Miller [2028]

The Revd Ryan Simons [2029]

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

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

### **9.2.1 The Cheshunt Foundation**

The Revd Stephen Ansa-Addo [2026]

### **9.2.2 Cambridge Theological Federation**

Convenor, Westminster College governors

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

### **10.1 Caterham School**

Southern Synod Moderator

### **10.2 Eltham College**

Mr Martin Fosten

### **10.3 Walthamstow Hall**

Vacancy

### **10.4 Milton Mount Foundation**

Mrs Daphne Bembridge [2027] †

Mr Ray Dunnnett [2028] †

The Revd Kevin Swaine [2028] †

The Revd Derek Lindfield [2026]

Mrs Ann Bulley [2028]

Five URC governors serve four-year terms, which may be renewed.

### **10.5 Silcoates School**

The Revd Jason McCullagh [2027] †

The Revd Dr Rosalind Selby [2027]\*\*

Governors serve three-year terms.

### **10.6 Taunton School**

Baptist governor at present

### **10.7 Bishops Stortford College**

Mr Richard Harrison

## **11. Miscellaneous**

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

### **11.1 Arthur Rank Centre**

The Revd Elizabeth Caswell

### **11.2 Churches Legislation Advisory Service**

Ms Muna Levan Harris [2027] †                      General Secretary

### **11.3 Congregational Fund Board**

The Revd Janine Atkinson [2027] †

Mrs Mary Steele [2027] †



The Revd Howard Sharp [2027]\*\*  
 The Revd Dr Bachelard Kaze Yemtsa [2028]\*\*  
 One vacancy

#### **11.4 Congregational Memorial Hall Trust**

Mr John Ellis [2027]† Mrs Margaret Thompson [2024]  
 Mr Philip Bonnier [2025] The Revd Derek Wales [2025]  
 The Revd Julian Macro [2026]\*\* Mrs Margaret Thompson [2028] †  
 Representatives serve four-year terms which may be renewed.

#### **11.5 Historic England Places of Worship Forum**

Convenor of the listed buildings advisory group

#### **11.6 Lord Wharton's Charity**

Mr Neil McKenzie [2027]\*\*

#### **11.7 Retired ministers' and widows' fund**

The Revd Julian Macro One vacancy  
 Ms Liz Sharples

#### **11.8 Roots for Churches Ltd**

The Revd Jenny Mills\*\*  
 Nominated by the Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)

#### **11.9 Samuel Robinson's Charities**

Mr Tony Alderman

#### **11.10 Scout Association – URC General Assembly Chaplain**

The Revd Keith Morrison  
 This appointment is made by the Children's and Youth Work Committee.

#### **11.11 United Reformed Church History Society**

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar [2029] †  
 Mrs Jean Wyber [2027]  
 Dr Simone Maghenzani [2028]  
 Council Members serve five-year terms which may be renewed.

#### **11.12 World Day of Prayer**

England, Wales and Ireland: The Revd Jane Weedon [2027]  
 Scotland: Synod appointment.

#### **11.13 Westhill Endowment Trust**

The Revd Clare Callanan [2027]  
 The Revd Dr Kathryn Price [2027]

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