

Paper B3

Inter Faith Report

Faith in Action Committee

Basic information

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Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Resolution 7 General Assembly warmly commends the journey towards a joint Christian-Muslim declaration, encouraging the Faith in Action Committee through the Inter Faith Enabling Group to deepen these ongoing inter faith efforts, tasking them to report back to General Assembly in 2027 on progress and action.</p> <p>Resolution 8 General Assembly commends the prayerful study of the <i>Kairos II</i> document across the URC and tasks the Faith in Action Committee to keep under review ways in which deep solidarity might be expressed to our partners in the region.</p> <p>Resolution 9 General Assembly instructs the Business Committee to establish a task group to address issues surrounding antisemitism within the life of the United Reformed Church, in consultation with the Inter Faith Enabling Group, the Worship, Faith and Order Committee, The Faith in Action Committee and the Ministries Committee, and to bring terms of reference, membership, and budget to Assembly Executive in February 2027 for approval.</p>

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Building effective inter faith relations within and in communities.
Main points	Resisting the rise of far-right nationalism; commending inter faith efforts towards a Christian-Muslim Declaration and council; addressing antisemitism.
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	Inter Faith Enabling Group; Moderator of the National Synod of Scotland; Imams, archbishops, bishops, and other faith leaders in the UK and Ireland, hosted by the Duke of Buccleuch and

	Queensberry; CTE, CTBI, Irish and European faith representatives; the Woolf Institute; the Council for Christians and Jews; Faith in Action Committee.
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Summary of impact

Financial	A clear picture of the financial requirements of Resolution 1 and 3 has yet to emerge, though it is anticipated that these will be drawn from the Faith in Action budget e.g. for travel and education, and also from the Inter Faith Fund, which is perfectly set up for precisely this kind of work.
External (eg ecumenical)	It is anticipated that the resolutions will positively impact on our inter faith relations with Muslims and Jews, and also on inter faith activity across society, enabling effective engagement with government, media, business, education and civic life, while supporting people of all faiths, beliefs, and age-groups to work together towards more integrated social cohesion.

Far-right nationalism and Christian Muslim relations

This past year has been a wake-up call for the Church's commitment to inter faith work. The rise of far-right nationalism invoking the name of Jesus to vilify other religions is sending shockwaves through the Church. The URC's Inter Faith Enabling Group (IFEG) has for many years supported actions that directly address the danger of religious 'othering' by those claiming to speak in the name of Jesus. We have encouraged the councils of the Church to deepen their inter faith work. For example, very recently the URC's online congregation **yourchurch** has been resourced to host events specifically focussed on how far-right nationalism impacts on faith communities.

The IFEG continues to support a critically important reconciliation initiative being undertaken by the Chief Imam of Scotland, the Archbishop of York, and representatives of a wide range of Muslim and Christian bodies. At a time of increasingly fractured, identity-driven narratives and the instrumentalising of religious language and institutions to prop up divisive political discourse and policy, mistrust among faith communities can accelerate wildly. This distrust is fuelled by deeper shifts in media ecosystems, often controlled by financial and political interests, thus weakening trust in democratic and religious institutions.

Given these underlying shifts, Muslim and Christian leaders in the UK have recognised the need for suitably structured and sustained engagements at a denominational as well as local level. Important bilateral and local inter faith initiatives exist across the United Kingdom, but there is presently no recognised structure for sustained Christian-Muslim engagement at senior denominational level with shared institutional responsibility.

Christian-Muslim joint declaration

Our good friend and inter faith interlocutor Imam Dr Sayed Ali Abbas Razawi OBE, Chief Imam of Scotland, has worked tirelessly to bring together senior leadership members of Muslim (Sunni, Shia, Ismaili, and Bohra) and Christian (Free Church, Reformed, Anglican, Catholic and Eastern and Western Orthodox) communities. The hope of these gatherings is to bring about a joint Christian-Muslim declaration that is both timely and constructive. Consideration is also being given to the establishment of a



representative leadership council in the United Kingdom and Ireland, with wider European connectivity that reflects the sustained dialogue, relationship-building and co-operation. The consultation process has been designed to enable public engagement and effective communications, particularly during periods of heightened public attention. It has aimed to foster a deeper appreciation of other traditions to promote both social cohesion and community resilience, while addressing misinformation, encouraging youth engagement, and offering pastoral support during times of social strain.

General Assembly is asked to offer its warm support for these initiatives, tasking the Faith in Action Committee to bring a report to the 2027 General Assembly on progress.

Following the closure of the Inter Faith Network

The closure of the Inter Faith Network for the UK (IFN) has raised an important and pressing question: ***What comes next for inter faith cooperation in England?*** The IFN operated across the whole of the UK, and though there are national inter faith bodies in Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, England is the exception. The closure of the IFN creates a vacuum there. The URC's Inter Faith Enabling Group is supportive of the ongoing efforts to build a constructive and sustainable future for inter faith engagement. These efforts are working on how best to create arrangements that advocate for inter faith activity across society, engage effectively with government, media, business, education and civic life, and support people of all faiths, beliefs, and age-groups to work together for the common good.

Any new structure is envisaged to be a national, multi faith organisation, partnership, or federation to oversee the strategy and management of multi faith and inter faith developments in the UK. Some of the issues include whether, for example, it will be provided with a grant from the government to facilitate this mission, with annual increases awarded in line with inflation. Questions being dealt with include: Will it be given the authority via a charitable status to raise funds, including from The National Lottery Community Fund, in accordance with the aims and objectives of the agency? Will it be given clear principles and guidelines to provide direct representation to government, political parties, civil servants and major NGOs on faith development (cf. the National Council for Voluntary Organisations) and also to engage, participate, and share good practices of Interfaith strategies outside of the UK?

In November 2025, representatives of faith and belief groups and stakeholder organisations were invited to discuss the way forward. A working party has been formed, supported by a 'sounding board' of a wide range of stakeholders. These stakeholders

receive all the meeting notes and help to shape the consultations. The working party itself has representatives of the groups that had been members of IFN. It benefits from having a balance between Abrahamic and Dharmic traditions. It promotes gender representation.

This working party is undertaking a series of regional consultations with specific interest groups. There will be an online consultation with recommendations for consideration by a wide range of stakeholders. The working party is chaired by the Revd Canon Hilary Barber, former co-chair of the IFN, and Zerbanoo Gifford, President of the World Zoroastrian Organisation.

Finally, it is right that the government has recognised the significance of Inter Faith Week, mentioning it in the recently published strategy for social cohesion, *Protecting What Matters* (see <http://bit.ly/4wfemQv>).

‘Reaching out in love’ Interreligious Dialogue Toolkit

The Revd Peter Colwell, a URC minister and inter faith lead at Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, has been instrumental in the creation of an excellent interreligious dialogue toolkit. This new resource builds on more than five decades of experience in facilitating Church engagement with interreligious encounters and dialogue, which are integral to the call to Christian unity in a society that is increasingly diverse and multicultural.

‘Forming friendships and collaborative partnerships are important and valuable steps. This course emphasises the distinctive contribution that an intentional focus on dialogue can make, deepening those relationships and supporting all to live out their faith at the service of the whole community.’

‘The toolkit is aimed at Christians seeking to initiate or develop interreligious dialogue in their local communities and/or other contexts in which they work. It is explicitly grounded in our calling as followers of Christ and the values that flow from our faith and seeks to build on the learning from the dialogue of difference that has been developed in our ecumenical journey. It emphasises that, in engaging in this work, we are building on a long tradition of Christian thought and practice in which we can find inspiration and guidance.’

One can find, download, and share the toolkit on the inter faith page of the URC website - <https://urc.org.uk/who-we-are/what-we-do/inter-faith/>



Kairos II

In response to the events in Gaza since October 7, 2023, the Kairos Palestine movement issued a renewed call for justice through the release of a second document, *Kairos II*. The document was developed collaboratively by lay and ordained Palestinian Christians and underwent extensive review and editing within the Palestinian Christian community. *Kairos II* was launched at a conference at Bethlehem Bible College on Friday November 14, 2025, under the tagline 'A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide.'

In March 2026, a URC group comprising our General Assembly Moderator, along with youth, local congregation, and staff representation was scheduled to participate in an ecumenical visit to the Holy Land. This trip was cancelled due to safety fears following the illegal US and Israeli attacks on Iran and Lebanon and subsequent retaliation. The Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and our Commitment for Life partners across Israel and Palestine have witnessed first-hand the rapidly intensifying injustices faced by Palestinian communities, especially Palestinian Christians, who fear for their existence and survival in the Holy Land. Palestinian Christian leaders are asking for a show of solidarity by supporting the *Kairos II* document, pressing the UK government to uphold international law, and opposing Israel's proposed death penalty legislation for Palestinian prisoners. The Faith in Action Team therefore requests that General Assembly commends the *Kairos II* document for prayerful study and engagement across the councils of the Church. The Faith in Action Committee will keep under review ways in which deep, ecumenical solidarity with our partners in the region might be exercised and shared wherever possible, undertaking this solidarity in partnership within the broader Christian Community. The *Kairos II* document and a congregational study guide developed by the Palestine Justice Network of the Presbyterian Church (USA), with United Methodists for Kairos Response, and Friends of Sabeel North America can be found on the URC website here – <https://urc.org.uk/who-we-are/what-we-do/inter-faith/>

Christian-Jewish relations

We continue to support the Council for Christians and Jews, whose work to deepen Jewish-Christian relations and to confront antisemitism is vital both to the URC and to the UK. Antisemitism has deep roots in the Christian tradition, and in corruptions of our readings of Scripture and our theological formulations. Churches across all theological traditions, from the second half of the 20th century onwards, have been actively confronting this, particularly in the context of theology and Church life after the Shoah. We were starkly confronted by this in the last year, when a social media post inadvertently caused major offence to Jewish communities. A report commissioned by the Senior Leadership Team and the Officers of the General Assembly into this incident, in which the Woolf Institute from Cambridge provided specialist Jewish-Christian expertise, has made recommendations that we need to review in light of the clear, though often unconscious, antisemitism embedded in our life as a Church. It recommends consideration be given to education in Jewish-Christian relations, and understandings of Judaism within our theology and practice. The Worship, Faith and Order Committee has also considered this and believes further work would be helpful. We are committed to being an anti-racist Church, and this requires us to contemplate antisemitism within our life as seriously as any other form of racism.