

Paper G1

Report to General Assembly 2026

Nominations Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Victoria Blunt victoria.blunt@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>Resolution 32 General Assembly adopts the recommendations for ‘good practice’ for Synods in selecting representatives to attend General Assembly, as set out in section 2.4 of the report, and commends these to Synods.</p> <p>Resolution 33 General Assembly instructs the Nominations Committee to work with the Business Committee and those responsible for communications in the Offices of General Assembly to produce and distribute the relevant resources to support these recommendations, including promotional media and application templates, in preparation for General Assembly 2027.</p> <p>Resolution 34 General Assembly resolves that there be two co-opted ordinary members of the Church Life Fund Committee in order to ensure that there is diversity on the committee.</p> <p>Resolution 35 General Assembly gives thanks for all who have served on General Assembly committees and as representatives of the Church. Where terms of service have ended, or resignations have been received, General Assembly discharges these volunteers with thanks for their service.</p> <p>Resolution 36 General Assembly appoints members of committees and representatives of the Church as set out in paragraph 7 of this Report, subject to the adoptions and corrections contained in supplementary Reports to Assembly.</p> <p>Resolution 37 General Assembly thanks John Bradbury for his service thus far and appoints him to serve as General Secretary for a further term of 5 years from General Assembly 2027 to General Assembly 2032.</p>

	<p>Resolution 38 General Assembly reappoints the Revd Jamie Kissack to serve as Moderator of the Yorkshire Synod until 30th September 2032.</p>
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Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To report on the work of the Nominations Committee since General Assembly 2025, specifically regarding Resolution 7 and the standardisation of safer recruitment across all committees and representative roles.
Main points	<p>Progress on Resolution 7 (2025) regarding Synod representation at General Assembly.</p> <p>Implementation of safer recruitment and person specifications for core and specialist committees.</p> <p>Development of data collection for protected characteristics to ensure church-wide diversity.</p> <p>Appointment of the re-formed Assembly Appointments Panel and Church Life Fund Committee.</p>
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2025, Resolution 7
Consultation has taken place with...	EDIB sub-committee, Synod Clerks, the URC Legal Advisor, and the Director of Strategy and Programmes.

Summary of impact

Financial	None.
External (eg ecumenical)	Recruitment of members to ecumenical bodies.

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1. Committee Work and Safer Recruitment

- 1.1 A primary focus since General Assembly 2025 has been supporting Core and Specialist committees with nominating members through formal safer recruitment processes. These processes are becoming embedded, resulting in a wider diversity of names, including individuals who have not previously served at the Assembly level.
- 1.2 The Nominations Committee would like to thank the committees for their support with supporting the safer recruitment processes. As we have transitioned into this new way of working, there have been occasions when the Nominations Committee have received requests for appointments to be made outside of the standard processes. We have worked with committees on these, and where appropriate, have shared justifications for these with Assembly Executive.

However, as the processes are now embedded, the Nominations Committee has decided that all future Assembly level appointments must be advertised and recruited in line with the safer recruitment processes set out. This includes advertising roles, even if someone is prepared to serve a second term. This was

communicated to all Assembly committee convenors and staff of the Offices of General Assembly by letter in March 2026.

1.3 For appointments outside of these committees — such as URC representatives on external bodies or groups like the Congregational Hall Memorial Trust — the committee has produced person specifications and job descriptions to support transparent advertising.

1.4 We are currently developing methods to collect information on protected characteristics for existing committees and candidates. This will allow us to support committees more effectively in reflecting the diversity of the URC. This work will continue into the coming year.

2. Response to Resolution 7 (2025): Synod Representation

2.1 General Assembly 2025 Resolution 7 instructed the Nominations Committee to bring recommendations for best practice in appointing Synod representatives to ensure diversity. The Nominations Committee has consulted with the Equalities, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) sub-committee, Synod Clerks and the URC Legal Advisor.

2.2 While the original resolution used the term ‘safer recruitment’, consultations concluded that this phrasing did not represent what was needed for selecting representatives to attend General Assembly. Instead, the Nominations Committee decided that the intent behind this term was that the focus should be on inclusive advertising of the opportunity and enabling the pool of attendees to be broadened.

2.3 As part of the discussions surrounding the work on this resolution, consideration was given to what ‘the diversity of the URC’ means. Through consultation, the Nominations Committee felt that the following should be considered:

- Lay and ordained members, including those who are not Elders.
- Age
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender identity and gender reassignment
- Marriage/Civil Partnership status
- Race
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Class
- Disability
- Neurodiversity
- Theological diversity and diversity of thought
- Inclusion of all congregations, such as Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs)

2.4 Following consultation, the Nominations Committee proposes the following recommendations for ‘good practice’ for Synods in selecting representatives to attend General Assembly.

- An ‘advert’ for attending General Assembly is circulated via Synod Newsletters.
- There are centrally produced social media adverts, website adverts and information about attending General Assembly as a synod representatives

which are made available to Synods to use as they so wish. This includes short videos about General Assembly (such as 'Is it for me?') which make it clear that General Assembly is for a wide range of people across the URC.

- Social media adverts and the videos are shared on the central URC social media platforms, as well as being available for Synods to use.
- The communication highlight that there is no financial cost to attending General Assembly. Synods, and the Offices of General Assembly, should have mechanisms in place to purchase travel tickets for attendees prior to Assembly, not rely on attendees being able to purchase them themselves and be reimbursed afterwards.
- An online form (e.g. Google Forms) is available for people to express an interest in attending General Assembly. An example of this is shared with Synods, although Synods are free to produce their own. For those who do not use the internet, there is also the possibility of contacting Synod Office.
- For any candidate, a verbal reference should be given from their minister or church secretary for lay members, and from the Synod Moderator for ministers.

2.5 Throughout the consultation, a number of points were raised about how arrangements for General Assembly could be made more inclusive and thus help to broaden the appeal of attending to a more diverse pool of people. These suggestions lay outside the remit of the Nominations Committee, but were shared with the Business Committee.

2.6 This section of the paper relates to Resolutions 32 and 33.

3. Assembly Appointments Panel

3.1 Following 2025 resolutions, the committee has advertised for and conducted safer recruitment checks for the re-formed Assembly Appointments Panel. The names for these are in Section 7.

4. Church Life Fund Committee

4.1 The Nominations Committee has also worked alongside Synods and Myles Dunnett, Director of Strategy and Programmes, to propose names for the Church Life Fund Committee. Recommended names for this committee are in Section 7.

4.2 In accordance with the terms of reference set by General Assembly 2026, this committee is made up of 13 Synod representatives (one from each Synod), two representatives of the URC Trust, one Youth Representative and one Convenor.

4.3 The representatives of the URC Trust have been selected by the URC Trust.

4.4 The convenor role was advertised.

4.5 For the Synod representatives, each Synod was asked to provide two names of suitable candidates. All candidates undertook a safer recruitment interview. One candidate from each Synod was then selected in order to try to reflect the diversity of the URC.

4.6 At the time of writing this paper, no names have been suggested for the Youth Representative. We will therefore run another recruitment round for this.

4.7 Out of 26 names put forward by Synods, only one individual was from a Global Majority Heritage background. This is not sufficient representation for a committee with 13 Synod Representatives and at least 17 members in total. The Nominations Committee is committed to ensure diversity in our General Assembly-mandated work and therefore propose to co-opt two additional ordinary members, to improve the quality of our governance decision making. This represents a living out of the Church's commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion, belonging, and anti-racism through deliberate action. In light of this, the Nominations Committee asked all synods to suggest a name for Nominations Committee to approach. At the time of writing, two names have been received and approaches to these individuals are being made before safer recruitment processes begin.

4.8 Resolution 34 is the proposal to co-opt two additional ordinary members of Global Majority Heritage background to ensure that there is diversity on the committee.

5. Thanks to all who serve on Assembly Committees

5.1 The Church remains fortunate to have numerous dedicated members who generously contribute their time and talents to serve on its committees, panels, and working groups, as well as by representing the Church on outside bodies. The Nominations Committee wishes to express its sincere appreciation for all who offer their service in these roles.

6. Those to be appointed or re-appointed

6.1 The committee brings to General Assembly for appointment the names of people to serve as Assembly Officers, as convenors and secretaries of Assembly committees, or as members of those committees, for set periods. It also recommends names of people to serve on various Panels and to represent the United Reformed Church on other bodies.

6.2 Those agreeing to be appointed for the first time or for a further term:

Committee/group	Name	Role	Years	
Pensions Committee Convenor	The Revd Janet Tollington	Convenor	2026 - 2030	Extension of term of service due to buy-in, buy-out
URC Trust Member	Ms Alanna Hurman	Member	2026-2030	
Safeguarding Committee	Roger Jones	Convenor	To continue until post is filled	To continue whilst new convenor is appointed
Safeguarding Committee	Rev Alecia Johnstone	Member	2026-2029	
Complaints and Discipline Advisory Group	Mrs Fiona Smith	Consultant to Ministers in Section O	2026-2030	Continuation in post
Assembly Appointments Panel	The Revd Janet Tollington	Member	2026 - 2031	
Assembly Appointments Panel	The Revd Gilbert Esambe	Member	2026 - 2031	
Assembly Appointments Panel	The Revd Alex Jacob	Member	2026 - 2031	

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Assembly Appointments Panel	Mr Tony Brett	Member	2026 - 2031	
Assembly Appointments Panel	The Revd Carole Marsden	Member	2026 - 2031	
Assembly Appointments Panel	Dr Ewen Harley	Member	2026 - 2031	
Assembly Appointments Panel	Ms Muna Levan-Harris	Member	2026 - 2031	
Church Life Fund Committee	The Revd Philip Brooks	Convenor	2026 - 2029	
Church Life Fund Committee	Mr David Coaker	Member	2026 - 2029	
Church Life Fund Committee	Mr Marcelle Plaatjies	Member	2026 - 2029	
Church Life Fund Committee	Mr Reuben Watt	Member	2026 - 2029	
Church Life Fund Committee	Mr John Denison	Member	2026 - 2029	
Church Life Fund Committee	Mr Gordon Woods	Member	2026 - 2029	
Church Life Fund Committee	The Revd Jessica Ashcroft-Townsley	Member	2026 - 2029	
Church Life Fund Committee	The Revd Jacky Embrey	Member	2026 - 2029	
Church Life Fund Committee	The Revd Joan Grindrod-Helmn	Member	2026 - 2029	
Church Life Fund Committee	The Revd Simon Walkling	Member	2026 - 2029	
Church Life Fund Committee	Mr Steven Smillie	Member	2026 - 2029	
Church Life Fund Committee	Mr Keith Berry	Member	2026 - 2029	
Church Life Fund Committee	Ms Helen McCormack	Member	2026 - 2029	
Church Life Fund Committee	The Revd Alison Micklem	Member	2026 - 2029	
Church Life Fund Committee	The Revd James Breslin	URC Trust Representative Member	2026 - 2029	
Church Life Fund Committee	Mr Alan Yates	URC Trust Representative Member	2026 - 2029	
Resources Committee	Mr Steve Powell	Finance Representative	2026-2030	
Ministers Pension Fund	The Revd Janet Tollington	Ex officio trustee, as Convenor of the URC Pensions Committee	2026-2027	Extension of term due to buy-in/buy-out

Ministers Pension Fund	Mr Richard Nunn	Ex officio trustee, as Convenor of the URC Investment Committee	2026-2027	Extension of term due to buy-in/buy-out
Ministers Pension Fund	The Revd Caroline Vodden	Member Nominated Trustee	2026-2027	Extension of term due to buy-in/buy-out
Ministries Committee	The Revd Jan Adamson	Member	2026-2030	
Ministries Committee	Ms Gill Bates	Member	2026-2030	Serving a second term
Westminster College Board of Governors	Mr Derek Graham	Governor	2026-2032	
Westminster College Board of Governors	The Revd Catherine Lewis-Smith	Governor	2026-2032	

7. Membership of committees, panels and working groups, and representatives to other bodies

7.1 In the interests of clarity and brevity, this report includes only the changes to the membership of committees, panels, and working groups. A full list of current membership will be published in the Record of Assembly and is available on request from the Nominations Committee at nominations@urc.org.uk.

8. Review of the General Secretary

8.1 A review panel convened by the Moderator of General Assembly, Mrs Catriona Wheeler, met to consider the term of the Revd John Bradbury. The panel considered 360-degree feedback, John's own reflections, and held extensive conversations with John.

8.2 The panel noted that John feels a strong sense of call to serve a further term as General Secretary. The feedback from the review was positive and consequently, the Review Panel recommends that John Bradbury's term as General Secretary be renewed.

8.3 Arising out of the feedback and discussion, the following recommendations and comments are made in relation to John's responsibilities:

- **Provide theological and pastoral leadership**

The URC needs to create space and opportunities for John to provide accessible theological insights for the denomination and the wider world.

- **Provide pastoral and operational oversight to the URC**

The panel noted the very positive ongoing relationship with the Moderators and commends John for this work.

- **Serving both General Assembly and Mission Council**

While there are no specific recommendations, the panel noted that disciplinary processes take a large element of John's time. It is hoped the new disciplinary process will reduce this workload.

- **Provide leadership to and management of the general secretariat**

The panel recommends that John be supplied with a 'second pair of hands' — an executive role to deal strategically with the day-to-day management of meetings, papers, and agendas. This would free John to lead strategically with a wide appreciation of the big picture.

- **Oversee the co-ordination of the work of the Offices of General Assembly**

While this now rests with the Chief Operating Officer, the panel suggests that this change needs further embedding at the Offices of General Assembly. The proposed creation of a Head of Governance is welcomed.

- **Foster and maintain links with the wider Church**

John should be given full support to explore these links, noting fruitful conversations with the Methodists and his fulfilling work as Executive President of the Communion of Protestant Churches.

- **Ensure positive external relations**

Support should be given to John as he thinks through the theological and ecclesial response to the rise of the populist right, nationalism, and Christian nationalism during his sabbatical.

- **Other matters**

The panel recommends that the Business Committee consider coaching or a support group for the General Secretary. It is further recommended that John has an annual appraisal, that consideration be given to whether termed appointments at Church House fit the URC's sense of call, and that the General Secretary's line manager be any Officer of Assembly rather than a Moderator. Finally, significant thought should be given to succession planning.

8.4 In light of the review, Nominations Committee recommends to General Assembly that John Bradbury is appointed to serve as General Secretary for a further term of five years. This is set out in Resolution 37.

9. **Review of the Moderator of Yorkshire Synod**

9.1 A review group met to review the term of the Revd Jamie Kissack as Moderator of Yorkshire Synod. The group warmly commends Jamie's reappointment for a further five-year term. He is widely valued as a wise, pastoral and strategic Moderator whose ministry is marked by theological depth, attentiveness to people and congregations, and a gift for fostering relationships in which others can flourish. His leadership has helped to strengthen mission, support ecumenical engagement, and guide the Synod's life with calmness, care and creative purpose. While noting the importance of continuing to develop clear communication and sustainable patterns of responsibility, the group is confident that Jamie is the right person to continue in this role and strongly recommends the extension of his call.

9.2 In the light of this, Nominations Committee bring Resolution 38 The renewed term is dated to Jamie's anticipated retirement date, shortly beyond a standard five-year term.

10. **Notification of the reappointment of the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith to serve a second term as Deputy General Secretary (Ministries).**

10.1 The role of Deputy General Secretary (Ministries) is a role appointed by an appointments group, comprised of those on the Assembly Appointments Panel, rather than a nominating group; therefore, the group has the devolved authority to make the appointment without a General Assembly resolution. We are pleased to

report that the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith has been appointed to serve as Deputy General Secretary (Ministries) for a further term.

A full five-year term would take Nicola beyond her anticipated retirement date of 31st January 2029, although Nicola has indicated that she will apply to serve for a few months beyond her normal retirement date so her retirement co-indices with that of her husband. She will apply through the accreditations sub-committee in the normal way to secure this.

- 10.2 The reappointment panel reported that, in a demanding period of transition and change, Nicola has brought order, stability and thoughtful leadership to the broad area of Ministries, helping to ensure that the Church has a sound basis in policy and process to support the flourishing of its various ministries. Her work is clearly valued by colleagues, particularly Synod Moderators, who appreciate her support and wisdom in complex ministerial situations.

The panel was impressed by her passion, commitment, experience and specialist knowledge, and commends both the resilience with which she has responded to a challenging and evolving role and her desire to leave a positive legacy for the wider Church and give thanks for the significant contribution Nicola has made during her first term.