

Saturday 4 July

Session Three

The Moderator invited the Chaplain to lead worship and the Revd Dr Peter Green to lead a Bible study.

15 A3 – Business Committee - EM1 Resource Centres for Learning Review

The Moderator invited Dr Bradbury to address Assembly on Paper A3. The Treasurer, Mr Alan Yates, also spoke to Assembly about the financial issues within the report.

The Moderator then invited the Revd Dr Peter McEnhill, Principal of Westminster College, the Revd Dr Adam Scott, URC Principal at Luther King Theological College, and the Revd Dr John McNeil Scott, Principal of the Scottish College to address Assembly.

The Moderator asked Dr Bradbury to respond to the points made by the Principals in their addresses.

The Moderator adjourned the matter until Sunday afternoon.

Session Four

16 A2 – Business Committee - Fitness to Practice Process

The Moderator welcomed Dr Ed Morgan KC who addressed Assembly and thereafter answered questions posed from members of Assembly

The Moderator placed Resolution 1 into remaindered business.

17 Community Awards

The Moderator introduced the URC's Community Project awards which highlight local churches service of communities. The Moderator noted the awards are funded by Congregational with a total of £10,000 being given this year and invited Sarah Knowles, the People and Transformation Officer from Congregational to present the awards.

Winners

Children's and Youth Project at Stag Community Church, Rotherham
Time for Everyone from The Mead Centre at Newport Pagnell URC
Songs and Stories from St Andrews URC in Monkseaton
Pop-in project at Broadstone URC

Highly Commended Winners

Welcome Space at Old Meeting Place URC
St Arbucks Community Café from Trinity Church in Market Lavington

Session Five

18 General Assembly Moderator 2027/8

The Moderator invited the Revd Dr Susan Durber, sole nominee for Assembly Moderator 2027/8, to address Assembly and answer a unseen question. The Chaplain led Assembly in prayer and members voted thereafter.

19 C2 – Ministries - Sustainability of Stipendiary Ministers in the URC

The Moderator, Ms Catriona Wheeler invited the Revds Mary Thomas, Convenor Ministries Committee, and Nicola Furley-Smith Deputy General Secretary (Ministries) to present the paper. Assembly discussed the questions within the paper in informal groups before sharing some views in a plenary session.

20 C3 – Ministries - Three-year review and Strategic Framework for Ministry

The Moderator invited Ms Thomas and Ms Furley-Smith to present paper C3 and resolution 19. An engaged discussion ensued. The presenters noted the contributions from the floor including, but not exclusively, recognising the importance of attending to the experience and wisdom of the World Church as part of the proposed listening exercise together with being mindful of what is needed in formation, particularly for ministry in a Reformed church.

Assembly agreed to the proposed point of order, under standing order 12.13, “that the motion be now put.”

Resolution 19

Assembly instructs the Ministries Committee to conduct a review of learning and formation across all accredited ministries in the United Reformed Church in accordance with the outline in paper C3.

/carried

21 P3 – Thames North - The URC’s treatment of ministers arrested for theologically motivated peaceful civil disobedience

The Moderator invited the Revd Sally Thomas to present this paper from Thames North Synod along with the amended resolution.

Assembly agreed to the request from the proposers to amend the resolution to the text shown below.

A point of order, however, was raised noting that the Standing Orders (7.6.1) disallow contradictions in our business to the Basis of Union. It was suggested that the proposed Resolution contradicted the Basis of Union given the dissenting conscience is a matter for the Church to discern and not the individual. It was, therefore, requested the Resolution be ruled out of order. After seeking advice, the Moderator ruled Resolution 62 out of order.

Resolution 62

General Assembly expresses its concern about the disciplinary action which would potentially be taken against ministers in the URC should they be arrested for following their conscience and joining many others in protests against legislation which some see as unfair and authoritarian.

General Assembly recognises that such action by ministers is in line with both the dissenting tradition of the URC and our Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the URC: “We rejoice in the diversity of the Spirit’s gifts, and uphold the rights of personal conviction” and “We believe that Christ gives his Church a government distinct from the government of the state. In the things that affect obedience to God the Church is not subordinate to state but must serve the Lord Jesus Christ, as only Ruler and Head”.

Recognising that some ministers may feel called to peaceful protest given the current political climate worldwide, General Assembly asks the Complaints and Discipline Advisory Group and the Ministries Committee to urgently review its disciplinary procedures in cases of ‘theologically motivated peaceful civil disobedience’

/out of order

Thereafter Dr Bradbury, speaking as acting Convenor of the Complaints and Discipline Advisory Group, emphasised that the matters raised are live and under consideration. Dr Bradbury provided assurance to the Assembly that sanctions under the current disciplinary process are not automatic following an arrest or conviction

22 Papers removed from En Bloc: Resources Committee D1 and D2

a: D1-Update from Resources Committee

The Moderator invited the Revd Dr Michael Hopkins to introduce paper D1.

Dr Hopkins advised that Resolution 27 had been withdrawn.

Resolution 27

General Assembly notes the work of the Resources Committee.

/withdrawn

There being no questions, Dr Hopkins moved Resolution 28.

Resolution 28

General Assembly notes the Annual Report and audited accounts for 2025.

/carried unanimously

b: D2-Future of the Investment Committee

Dr Hopkins and Ms Victoria James, Chief Operating Officer presented Paper D2 and moved the resolutions

Resolution 29

General Assembly determines that following the buyout of the Ministers' Pension Scheme, a different style of committee is required and that the URC Investment Committee (URCIC) will cease to exist.

/carried

Resolution 30

General Assembly determines that a new Investment Committee will be created as a sub-committee of Resources Committee, reporting to the URC Trust.

/carried

Resolution 31

General Assembly approves the Terms of Reference for this new subcommittee.

/carried

Session Six

23 General Assembly 2027/8 Moderator

The Moderator announced that the Revd Dr Susan Durber had been elected to serve as Moderator for 2027/8. This was met with warm applause.

24 Minutes of Friday 3rd July

The Clerk moved the adoption of the minutes as amended for Friday 3rd July. These were approved unanimously.

25 B7 – Faith in Action - Legacies of Slavery:Affirming the Will and Finding the Way(s)

The Moderator invited Ms Sarah Jane Cawte, Convenor, Faith in Action Committee together with Professor David Reynolds and Ms Karen Campbell to return Assembly's attention to Paper B7 before considering the proposed resolutions separately.

Resolution 12

General Assembly adopts the specific three-strand Repairing Justice proposals offered by the Legacies of Slavery Task Group

/carried

Resolution 13

General Assembly adopts the allocation of monies from the Legacies of Slavery Fund in the following proportions:

- A. Up to 30% to be apportioned to the regional strand**
- B. A minimum of 60% to be apportioned to the Global strand – including, but not limited to, the development of New Free Villages in Jamaica.**

/carried

Resolution 14

General Assembly instructs the Legacies of Slavery Task Group to continue its work establishing partnerships both in the UK and globally to be resourced by the URC Legacies of Slavery Fund.

/carried

Resolution 15

General Assembly delegates the authority to determine specific funding allocations for each project to the Faith in Action and Business Committees, to be advised by the Legacies of Slavery Task Group, bringing updates to General Assembly via the usual reporting processes.

/Carried

Resolution 16

General Assembly instructs the Legacies of Slavery Task Group to work with the Senior Leadership Team, the Legal Advisor, The United Reformed Church Trust and other relevant bodies as necessary to ensure that appropriate governance and safeguarding structures are in place to honour the URC's fiduciary responsibilities.

/carried

26 K1 – URC Youth - Gendered language in the Basis of Union

The Moderator invited Ms Kacie Hodgson, Youth Moderator, and Mr James Laird to address Assembly on Paper K1 and Resolution 46.

Following a question about timescales, and recognising the time required to engage in the proposed review meaningfully, a commitment was given that were this Resolution passed, it would report to General Assembly 2028.

Resolution 46

General Assembly instructs the Faith and Order Committee to review the use of gendered language in the Basis of Union and its schedules, in consultation with other committees and sub-committees, including Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB), as well as Youth Executive.

/Carried

27 K2 – URC Youth - The Future Identity, Purpose, and Development of URC Youth

The Moderator invited Ms Kacie Hodgson, Youth Moderator, and Alexander Clements URC Youth Moderator Elect to address Assembly on Paper K2 and the resolutions contained within. Following a request, an assurance was given that Ministries Committee would be represented on the proposed task group.

Resolution 47

General Assembly instructs business committee to establish a task group to explore the identity, purpose and future development of URC Youth.

/Carried

Resolution 48

General Assembly instructs the task group to report to Youth Assembly on the progress of its work in 2027, and bring final recommendations to Youth Assembly 2028, which if adopted would form the basis of recommendations to be brought to General Assembly 2028.

/Carried

Resolution 49

General Assembly accepts the remit, membership and timescale of the task group.

/Carried

28 K3 – URC Youth - Welcome Directory

The Moderator invited Ms Maya Whithall and Jay Tynan, to address Assembly on Paper K3 and the updated resolutions within same.

An amendment was proposed, seconded and moved that in resolution 50 the words “in consultation with” be substituted with “and after agreement from”. This was accepted by the proposers and by most of Assembly.

Resolution 50

General Assembly encourages local churches to work with the Welcome Directory, to help prison leavers with joining faith communities, in line with guidance in the URC’s safeguarding Good Practice document, and after agreement from with the Synod Safeguarding Officer and Synod Pastoral Committee or equivalent.

/carried

Resolution 51

General Assembly strongly encourages local churches who feel able to join the Welcome Directory and for local churches, Synods and General Assembly to look into how churches can be supported in their involvement.

/carried

29: P2 – Wessex Synod - Keeping Trans people safe

The Moderator invited the Revd Dr Michael Hopkins and Ms Chrissie Chevasutt to introduce Resolution 53.

Resolution 53

General Assembly notes that, as affirmed in the statement agreed at General Assembly 2023, transgender, non-binary, and gender nonconforming people in the UK find that they are living in an increasingly hostile environment, which means that it is even more important that the church welcomes them, and has appropriate safeguarding measures in place. General Assembly further notes that St Columba's URC Oxford has therefore agreed that it is important to affirm its commitment to the 2023 resolution, and to publicise this on their church website. General Assembly invites other local churches to make similar affirmations, and to indicate their support to the Offices of the General Assembly as part of the Annual Return for publication on the URC website within the “Find a church” tool.

/Carried

30 Q1 – GA Members - Response to the impact of single-sex court rulings on transgender people and their communities

The Moderator invited Kacie Hodgson, URC Youth Moderator and Alexander Clements URC Youth Moderator Elect to introduce Resolutions 63 and 64

Resolution 63

The URC recognises the profound challenges and agonising decisions faced by organisations such as Girlguiding and the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) as they have responded to recent rulings and definitions regarding biological sex.

/carried

Resolution 64

The URC expresses deep pastoral concern for those affected by the decisions regarding trans rights made by Girlguiding and similar organisations in response to the Supreme Court ruling regarding gender identity.

/Carried

Session Seven

Assembly met in Parallel Sessions to discuss reports from the Faith in Action, Nominations, Ministries, Worship, Faith & Order, Safeguarding, Resources, and Church Life Fund Committees.

After this the Chaplain led Assembly in evening prayers.