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URC Peace Fellowship becomes part of the Fellowship of Reconciliation

The URC Peace Fellowship has announced that its work is to continue as part of the ecumenical charity, the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

The Peace Fellowship was set up in 1999 to raise the profile of issues of peace and justice in the United Reformed Church, and support members in peace making initiatives at local, national and international levels. It has worked closely with the Church & Society team at Church House, and the Joint Public Issues Team.

After a period of reflection and consultation, the Fellowship's committee decided last year that the best way for members to continue to be engaged with issues of peace making and peace building would be as part of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR), with which it has worked closely over many years. It has invited all members to join FoR, and will wind up its activities as an independent organisation this month.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation supports its members by providing opportunities to meet with other peacemakers from around the country and to take action locally. This includes an annual educational conference, producing resources for use individually or in collective worship, a regular newsletter, and providing opportunities to campaign for change and connect with peacemakers around the globe.

Andrew Jack, outgoing convenor of the Peace Fellowship, commented: "The URC Peace Fellowship has worked to ensure that peace is given its rightful place within the denomination, although it has not always been possible to ensure that these matters received the attention they were due. I feel some sadness that we have had to conclude that the URC Peace Fellowship no longer has an independent future, but recognise the possibilities for future witness to Christian peace-making and peace building that is offered within FoR. The future for the URC Peace Fellowship within FoR raises exciting opportunities for a more effective witness for peace in the present challenging political climate. I pray that these new arrangements will be a step forward in bringing God's peace on earth."

Simeon Mitchell, Secretary for Church and Society, commented: "For 20 years, the URC Peace Fellowship has played a key role in bringing together URC members with a commitment to peacemaking and raising peace concerns within and beyond the denomination. It has been an important complement to the education and advocacy on issues such nuclear weapons and drones carried out through the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team. I am delighted that URC peacemakers will continue to be supported and brought together under the auspices of the Fellowship of Reconciliation."

John Cooper, Director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, added: "The United Reformed Church has often challenged and shaped the wider peace and justice witness of the wider Christian Church. This has included an Assembly Report about Non-Violent protest in the 1980s and the vast hymnody of Fred Kaan. More recently it was ministers Melanie Smith and Mark Meatcher leading inspiring worship and witness in protest against the DSEI Arms Fair. The Peace Fellowship has long worked with the Fellowship of Reconciliation and we look forward to a future with increased URC membership and a future URC network of peacemakers emerging."

To find out more about the Fellowship of Reconciliation, visit www.for.org.uk

To learn about the Joint Public Issues Team's work on issues of peace and justice, visit www.jointpublicissues.org.uk