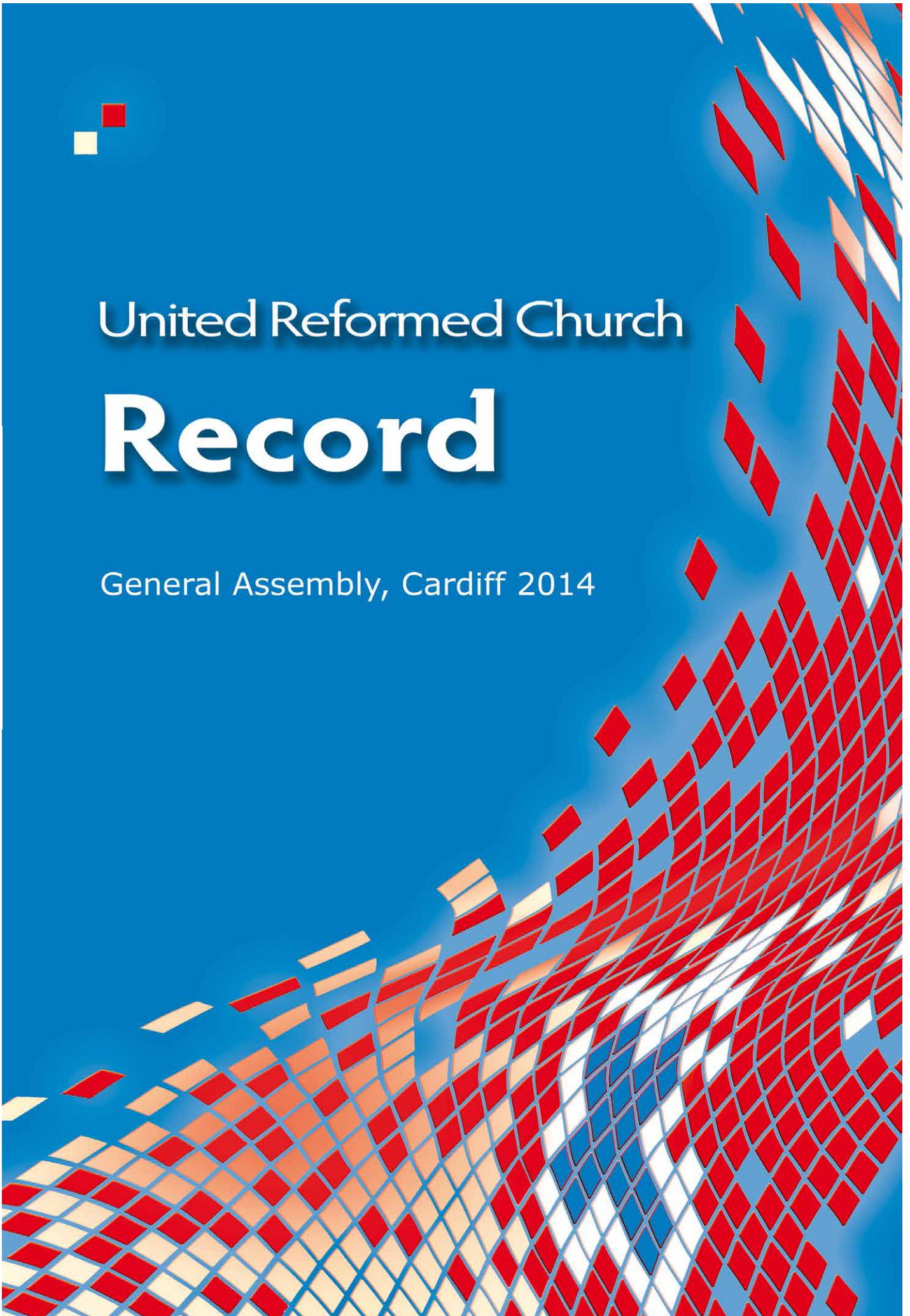




United Reformed Church

# Record

General Assembly, Cardiff 2014



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# Matters for consideration and action

United Reformed Church • General Assembly 2014

| Resolution number |   | Report page/s               | Record page/s | Synods   | Local churches |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------------|---------------|----------|----------------|
| <b>9</b>          | Mental health   | 83-87,231                   | 12-13         |          | <b>X</b>       |
| <b>11</b>         | Affirming the United Reformed Church's future           | 102-110, 232                | 5             | <b>X</b> | <b>X</b>       |
| <b>12</b>         | Conciliarity  | 111-119, 232                | 6             | <b>X</b> | <b>X</b>       |
| <b>15</b>         | Inclusive and expansive language                        | 99-101, 233                 | 15, 24        | <b>X</b> | <b>X</b>       |
| <b>16</b>         | Foodbanks   | 132,136, 234                | 12, 26        |          | <b>X</b>       |
| <b>19B2-4</b>     | Membership of governance bodies                         | 51-57,235                   | 15-17         | <b>X</b> |                |
| <b>19E</b>        | Membership of governance bodies                         | 51-57,235                   | 18            | <b>X</b> |                |
| <b>26</b>         | Scottish independence referendum 2014                   | 76,237                      | 8             |          | <b>X</b>       |
| <b>28</b>         | Giving to the ministry and mission fund                 | 77,238                      | 8             |          | <b>X</b>       |
| <b>31</b>         | Proposal for a consultation regarding same-sex marriage | <i>One plus One</i> booklet | 23, 25        | <b>X</b> | <b>X</b>       |





## Minutes of the **GENERAL ASSEMBLY of**

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH 2014

Thursday, 3 July 2014

*Business session 1*

At 2pm the Assembly was called to order by the convener of the Assembly arrangements committee, Dr David Robinson. The Youth Assembly cross was placed on stage, to the singing of the Moorland Primary School Junior Choir, followed by organ music played by the Revd Michael Hodgson.

The general secretary, the Revd Roberta Rominger, thanked the choir. Ms Rominger then invited the moderator, the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar, together with his chaplain, the Revd Melanie Smith, to constitute the Assembly with prayer. Dr Jagessar inducted the Revd David Grosch-Miller as moderator of General Assembly, gave thanks for the ministry of Mrs Val Morrison, and asked Assembly to pray for Mr John Ellis as he continued to serve as moderator. Dr Jagessar then presented a Bible to Mr Grosch-Miller, and the Assembly Bible was duly signed.

Mr Grosch-Miller thanked Dr Jagessar for his ministry as moderator, and also thanked his wife Leonora and his chaplain.

This was followed by a hymn and a reading from Genesis by the Revd Dr David Deeks.

The moderator, Mr John Ellis, then addressed the Assembly.

There followed a celebration of Holy Communion, during which the ministers and missionaries who had died since the last Assembly were remembered as the general secretary read their names.

The Assembly broke briefly, after which Mr Ellis took the chair.

The moderator welcomed the Lord Mayor of Cardiff, councillor Margaret Jones, to the Assembly, and the Lord Mayor responded with a welcome to the city of Cardiff.

The general secretary laid the roll of Assembly on the table.

The moderator introduced the platform party. He invited the pastoral listeners, the Revds Dick Gray, Jenny Mills and Neil Thorogood, to identify themselves and explained



that they would be available throughout Assembly. He introduced the intercessors, the Revds Nanette Lewis-Head and Kevin Snyman, and invited people to join them in the intercessors' area in the hall, if and when they desired.

The moderator then introduced and explained new procedures, including parallel sessions, electronic posting of minutes, and electronic voting. The moderators had ruled that electronic voting was valid under standing order 7. Mr Ellis explained the use of traffic lights in controlling the length of speeches and reminded the Assembly about the policy regarding live streaming over the internet.

The general secretary thanked the previous clerk, Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith, for her work and then proposed:

**Resolution 1** Appointment of acting clerk to the Assembly

**General Assembly appoints the Revd James Breslin as acting clerk to serve until a new clerk has been appointed.**

The resolution was passed by majority vote.

The clerk proposed:

**Resolution 2** Appointment of the convener of tellers for the election of the Moderators

**General Assembly appoints Rita Griffiths to serve as convener of tellers for the election of the moderators 2016-18.**

The resolution was passed by majority vote.

The general secretary proposed:

**Resolution 3** Appointment of facilitation group leaders

**General Assembly appoints the following people to serve as facilitation group leaders and members, with the freedom to involve others as appropriate: Mrs Claudette Binns, the Revd Mitchell Bunting, the Revd Claire Callanan, the Revd Samuel Cyuma, Ms Alison Dalton, the Revd John Humphreys, the Revd Anne Lewitt, the Revd Lis Mullen, the Revd Kristin Ofstad, Mr Simon Peters, and Mr Alistair Wilson.**

The resolution was passed by majority vote.

The session theme, the Welsh context of Assembly's gathering, was introduced with harpists and a choir.

Mrs Karen Morrison, head of children's and youth work, provided the first of a series of film clips of interviews with children in the United Reformed Church, based on 'The Children's Charter'.

The retiring moderator, Dr Michael Jagessar, reflected on his term of office.

The Revd Simon Walkling and other representatives of the Synod of Wales gave a flavour of life in Wales. The Revd Sally Thomas spoke about the emerging ecumenical scene, the Revd Aled Edwards, the general secretary of Cytun, spoke about interfaith work in Wales, and the Revd Andy Hughes, regional minister of the South Wales Baptist Association, spoke about partnership between churches and community engagement. These contributions were interspersed with music.

The moderators welcomed local ecumenical guests, those from British and Irish churches, and those from international churches.

The convener of the faith and order committee, the Revd Elizabeth Welch, introduced the following day's business on the future of the United Reformed Church.

The moderator thanked all those from the Synod of Wales for their contribution to the afternoon's session.

The Revd Nigel Uden, chaplain, led closing worship, accompanied by the harpists and the choir.

Assembly was adjourned until the following morning.

Friday, 4 July 2014

*Business session 2*

Opening worship was led by the chaplain, the Revd Dr Carla Grosch-Miller. Bible study based upon Ecclesiastes 11:1-6, was led by the Revd Tim Searle and was entitled, 'Cast your bread upon the waters'.

Mr Ellis took the chair and greeted the Revd Dr Keith Davies, representative of the Methodist Conference, who had just arrived. The clerk explained the arrangements for anyone wishing to access and make comments upon the minutes.

A children's clip was shown.

### **Faith and order committee: The future of the United Reformed Church**

The Revd Elizabeth Welch, convener of the committee, introduced the topic and responded to comments. The understanding of church membership would be an agenda item in the coming year. She then proposed the resolution.

Resolution **11** Faith and order committee: Affirming the United Reformed Church's future

- a) **General Assembly, affirming the United Reformed Church's identity as both United and Reformed, gives thanks to God for the particular gifts of these two threads in the Church's life, prays for the discernment of the Holy Spirit in the renewal of each, and commits the United Reformed Church to continue with the prophetic calling to unity in both the Church and the world.**
- b) **The General Assembly commends the paper 'What is the Spirit saying to the Churches? Affirming the United Reformed Church's future' for further study and reflection. Assembly invites people and councils at each level of the Church to feed back comments to the faith and order committee by July 2015.**

Passed by consensus.

Ms Welch then introduced Resolution 12.

## Resolution **12** Faith and order committee: Conciliarity

1. **General Assembly affirms conciliarity, and in particular the role of the church meeting, as one of the gifts of the United Reformed Church, both to the wider Church and to the society in which this Church is set.**
2. **In order that this affirmation may become a source of renewal across the United Reformed Church, General Assembly commissions the faith and order committee, in consultation with other committees as appropriate, to undertake the following work:**
  - a) **to produce resources for study which emphasise the theological understanding that undergirds conciliarity,**
  - b) **to suggest resources to enable meetings to be more engaged in their discernment of the mind of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit,**
  - c) **to offer reflections on the nature of church membership and ways in which it has evolved and is evolving,**
  - d) **to encourage the United Reformed Church through such media as Reform, the United Reformed Church website, and the United Reformed Facebook page to publish stories of creative ways in which churches meet.**
3. **General Assembly invites further reflection on this paper in the councils of the Church at all levels and invites comments to be fed back to the faith and order committee by July 2015.**

Ms Welch responded to a number of questions and assured Assembly that this was work in progress. The many contributions from the floor highlighted the differing opinions held that the committee would seek to address as its work continued. The resolution passed by consensus.

## Resolution **13** Faith and order committee: Ordained local ministry

1. **General Assembly, affirming the existing gift of elders and the diversity of gifts within each elders meeting as part of the United Reformed Church's distinctive contribution to the Church universal, wishes to reinvigorate the role of elders and welcomes current work to that end.**
2. **General Assembly directs the faith and order committee to set up a task group incorporating expertise from other committees of the United Reformed Church to explore the possibility of authorising 'celebrant elders' to preside at the sacraments.**

**To that end, General Assembly asks for work to be done in the following areas:**

- a) **the nature of ordination within the United Reformed Church, both of ministers of Word and sacrament and of elders;**
- b) **how within the understandings of the various traditions which make up our Church the sacrament of holy communion is linked to ordination;**
- c) **the suggested future relationships of 'celebrant elders' to local church leaders, lay preachers, ministers of Word and sacrament, synods and General Assembly;**
- d) **the nature and financing of the requisite training to support such elders in their calling;**
- e) **the accountability of such elders and the question of who would be responsible for discerning, authorising and supporting their vocation;**
- f) **the place of such elders in local ecumenical partnerships.**

**General Assembly instructs that the progress of such work be reported to General Assembly in 2016.**



Passed by agreement.

A children's clip was shown.

### **Election of moderators of General Assembly 2016 - 2018**

The clerk explained the process for the election and the moderator led Assembly in prayer. Members of Assembly were invited to cast their votes.

The moderator gave a reminder of the purpose and arrangements for the parallel sessions which would take place during the next session.

The Revd Nigel Uden said grace, and Assembly adjourned.

## *Business sessions 2 and 3*

The Assembly met in parallel sessions.

Children's and youth work/finance – chaired by the Revd David Grosch-Miller

Education and learning/Assembly arrangements – chaired by Mr John Ellis

Faith and order/communications and editorial – chaired by the Revd Dr

Michael Jagessar

Ministries/equalities – chaired by the Revd Prof. David Thompson

Mission/nominations/pastoral reference and welfare – chaired by Mrs Wilma Frew.

The Assembly then re-convened in plenary session, with the Revd David Grosch-Miller in the chair.

The chaplain, the Revd Nigel Uden, led Assembly in prayer.

The clerk presented the minutes of Thursday's sessions, which were accepted by the Assembly subject to the correction of minor typing errors.

A further children's clip was shown.

The moderator then invited the Revd Elizabeth Caswell, convener of the human sexuality task group, to present its report. She pointed out that the final sentence of the penultimate paragraph on page 17 ("There is also evidence...") should be deleted.

The moderator reminded Assembly that there were no pre-determined resolutions in this session. Discussion of a variety of views followed.

The moderator sought the permission of Assembly for a facilitation group to produce a draft resolution. This was agreed by a very large majority.

The Assembly then paused for worship, and after a brief break, Mr Ellis took the chair.

*Business session 4***Recognition of newly ordained ministers and newly commissioned church related community workers**

The general secretary read out a list of those ordained and inducted, or commissioned and inducted, since the last General Assembly. The moderators greeted those present in the hall.

**Recognition of jubilee ministers**

A series of images of jubilee ministers was projected on the screen, and the moderators greeted the Revd Howard John, the only jubilee minister present in the hall. The moderator led Assembly in prayer.

**Westminster College appeal**

The Revd Neil Thorogood, principal of Westminster College, reported on the success of the £7 million appeal. £7,024,000 had been raised and thanks were expressed to all those who contributed, particularly the Revd Dr Susan Durber, formal principal, Professor Sir Anthony Bottoms, former chair of the college governors and Mr Brian Long, chair of the appeal committee. The moderator requested the permission of the Assembly to write to Mr Long and this was agreed by acclaim.

**Mission Council report**

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar, immediate past moderator, presented the report and answered questions.

**Synod Resolutions****Resolution 28 South Western Synod: Giving to the ministry and mission fund**

The resolution was moved by the Revd Douglas Burnett.

**Resolution 28** South Western Synod: Giving to the ministry and mission fund  
**General Assembly challenges all local churches to increase their giving to the ministry and mission fund by at least 1% per annum.**

Resolved by agreement.

*Mr T Knight, Yorkshire Synod, registered a dissent.*

**Resolution 26 National Synod of Scotland: Scottish independence referendum 2014**

The Revd John Humphreys, moderator of the National Synod of Scotland, introduced the resolution.

**Resolution 26** National Synod of Scotland: Scottish independence referendum 2014  
**General Assembly calls the United Reformed Church to pray for the people of Scotland before, during and following the independence referendum to be held on 18 September 2014. These prayers should be for all, regardless of conviction, recognising how important the peoples of these islands are to each other.**

After debate, the resolution was agreed by consensus and the chaplain led the Assembly in prayer.

A children's clip was shown.

**En bloc business:**

The clerk informed Assembly that resolutions 17, 19, 20 and 22 had been removed from the published list of resolutions to be taken en bloc. He also stated that the South Western Synod had waived its right to speak to resolution 18. Furthermore, he stated that resolution 21 required a vote of two thirds of those voting to be passed. The clerk's advice was challenged and the moderator ruled that for the avoidance of doubt, the Assembly would abide by the advice of the clerk.

The Revd Elizabeth Nash stated that she had a question relating to resolution 24 and the moderator therefore instructed that resolution 24 be withdrawn from the list of en bloc resolutions.

The clerk then moved:

**Resolution 4** Grindon Church Community Centre  
**General Assembly receives the Grindon Church Community Centre as a mission project of the United Reformed Church.**

**Resolution 5** Mediacity Church (an Oasis/URC partnership)  
**General Assembly receives MediaCityUK Church as a mission project of the United Reformed Church.**

**Resolution 6** Metropolitan Church Manchester  
**General Assembly receives Metropolitan Church Manchester as a mission project of the United Reformed Church.**

**Resolution 7** Church changes  
**General Assembly receives notice of the closure of the local churches listed on pages 207 to 214 and on the order papers, and gives thanks to God for their worship, witness and service.**

**Resolution 8** General Assembly 2016  
**Assembly resolves to meet in Southport from 8 to 11 July 2016 (Friday to Monday) or at such time and place as may be determined.**

**Resolution 14** Finance committee  
**General Assembly notes the trustees' report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2013.**

**Resolution 18** Mission Council: Changes to the Structure  
**General Assembly resolves to ratify the resolution of Mission Council to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church as follows:**

**Insert the following immediately after 2.(6)(A)(xxiii) so as to become (xxiv) and renumber the later functions accordingly.**

**“(xxiv) to ensure that, where an Assembly Commission or an Appeals Commission following a Hearing under the Disciplinary Process contained in Section O of the Manual or a Review Commission or an Appeals Review Commission following a**

Hearing under the Incapacity Procedure contained in Section P of the Manual appends guidance to its decision to delete the name of the minister or Church Related Community Worker from the respective Roll, any such guidance is brought fully to the attention of those responsible for exercising oversight of the minister or Church Related Community Worker and any others who might in the future be identified as being proper and appropriate persons to receive such information;”

Remove references to the deputy general secretary as follows:

2.(6)(A)(xxiii) delete the words “, the Deputy General Secretary” replace the words “(acting through the Deputy General Secretary or his/her duly appointed deputy)” with “(acting through the General Assembly Representative or his/her duly appointed deputy)”

6.5

Replace the words “Deputy General Secretary” with the words “General Assembly Representative”.

Remove an inappropriate reference to Section O:

2.(4) In the sixth bullet point following the words “The moderator shall” replace the words “Section O” with “Disciplinary”

Remove inaccurate references to paragraph (B):

2.(4)(A), 2.(5)(A) and 2.(6)(A)

In each case replace the words “(subject to the restriction referred to in Paragraph (B) below)” with the words “(subject to the restriction referred to in Paragraph 7.4 below)”

## Resolution **21** Mission Council: Powers in pre-union trusts

- 1) **The General Assembly, in exercise of the powers conferred by s.18(1) of the United Reformed Church Act 1972 and s.10(1) of the United Reformed Church Act 1981, appoints until further notice the councils and other organs of the Church indicated in column 2 on page 45 to exercise any powers with respect to trusts and any powers of nomination vested prior to 5 October 1972 (or, as the case may be, prior to 26 September 1981) in the members, courts and other organs of dissolved associations indicated in column 1 on page 45.**
- 2) **In exercising any power vested in it by this resolution, a church meeting should act with due regard to any recommendations of the elders’ meeting or of other councils of the United Reformed Church exercising oversight over the local church concerned.**
- 3) **For the avoidance of doubt, this appointment does not affect trusts or powers in relation to property governed by s. 8(2) of and Schedule 2 to the Act of 1972, or by s. 6(2) of and Schedule 2 to the Act of 1981, or to property in Scotland.**
- 4) **In exercise of the power conferred by s.18(2) of the Act of 1972 and s.10(2) of the Act of 1981, the Assembly delegates any further exercise that may be necessary of its powers under s.18(1) and s.10(1) respectively (including any amendment of the provision now made) to Mission Council. This is in substitution for the delegation made to the executive committee by the Uniting Assembly of 1972.**

Resolution 21. The general secretary moved that resolution 21 be referred to synods for approval and reported accordingly to the general secretary by 31 March 2015. This was agreed. [N.B. This referral was later rescinded.]

### **Closing devotions**

Closing devotions focused on a recent visit to El Salvador and were led by the chaplain, the Revd Nigel Uden, assisted by the moderator and the Revd Dr Susan Durber.

The Assembly then stood adjourned until 9.00 am on Saturday morning.

Saturday, 5 July 2014

*Business session 5*

The chaplain, the Revd Nigel Uden led worship.

The Bible study based on Isaiah 12, 'living water and wells of salvation', was led by the Revd Kate Gray.

The Revd David Grosch-Miller took the chair and welcomed Mr Steve Kings to the Assembly in his capacity as a 'mental health first aider'. The moderator encouraged members of Assembly to expedite the business of the day to make space for more people to speak on the outcome of the deliberations of the facilitation group.

Further discussion on resolution 21 had taken place between the clerk and the legal adviser and it was announced that this resolution did not require the constitutional process of referral to the synods and a further ratification vote. The legal adviser would submit a formal note to this effect.

A children's clip was shown.

There followed the announcement of the result of voting for the moderators-elect for 2016-2018.

Ms Rita Griffiths, the convener of tellers announced the following:

254 votes cast with 4 spoiled papers, Mr Alan Yates was elected as the elder moderator.

258 votes cast, with 2 spoiled papers, the Revd Kevin Watson was elected as the minister moderator.

The Revd David Tatem then introduced Dekan Michael Pernt-Weigel from the Palatinate Church who addressed the Assembly on behalf of the international guests. He brought greetings from his Church and spoke on the commemoration of World War One from a German perspective. Assembly applauded as the moderator greeted Pfr Pernt-Weigel.

The Revd Tracey Lewis, the convener of the Mission committee, introduced the business of the committee.

There followed an act of commemoration for World War One.

Mrs Lewis encouraged the Assembly to consider with care how our churches might commemorate the anniversary in their local situations. She thanked those who then spoke to the Assembly in constructive terms for peace-seeking and reconciliation. Dr Andrew Bradstock explained that a task group had been appointed to listen to the churches and provide suitable materials to use for the commemoration.



Mrs Linda Mead placed a pot of red and white poppies beside the central Celtic cross on behalf of the mission committee and the joint public issues team.

Mrs Lewis introduced the Revd Dr Lee Hong-Jung, the general secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Korea, and invited him to address Assembly on the subject of the reunification of Korea. The moderator greeted Dr Lee and Assembly responded with acclamation.

The chaplain, the Revd Carla Grosch-Miller, led Assembly in prayer.

### **Resolution 16 Mission committee: Foodbanks**

Mrs Lewis proposed the resolution:

Resolution **16** Mission committee: Foodbanks

**General Assembly welcomes the resource pack on foodbanks produced by the joint public issues team and commends it for study and use by all churches.**

She spoke of the resource 'Faith in Foodbanks?', which the joint public issues team had produced. Mrs Lewis and Dr Bradstock responded to comments. They stated that the resources were presently available only online but it might be possible to produce printed copies.

The resolution was passed by a unanimous vote.

There followed a further children's clip

### **Resolution 25**

Mr John Ellis, convener of the nominating group, proposed the resolution:

Resolution **25** Appointment of general secretary

**General Assembly appoints the Revd John Proctor to serve as general secretary from 6th July 2014 until 30th June 2021**

The resolution was passed.

The general secretary introduced resolution 29:

Resolution **29** Appointment of Assembly clerk

**General Assembly appoints the Revd Michael Hopkins to be the clerk of the General Assembly for an initial period of six years commencing directly after the Mission Council in November 2014.**

The resolution was passed.

The moderator then greeted Mr Proctor and Mr Hopkins, and the Assembly welcomed them with acclamation, and then the moderator led the Assembly in prayer.

### **Resolution 9 Children's and youth work committee: Mental health**

The convener of the committee, the Revd Tim Meachin, proposed the resolution:

Resolution **9** Children's and youth work committee: Mental health

- a) **General Assembly commits the United Reformed Church to raising awareness of mental ill health issues and challenging the stigma of mental ill health, and asks the education and learning committee to ensure the adequate provision of training for those responsible for pastoral care, including ministers, in appropriate responses to mental health issues.**

- b) **Assembly calls on synods and local churches to follow the lead of the National Synod of Scotland by committing themselves to work towards ending the stigma of mental ill health and to make links with agencies that provide support and training appropriate to their specific contexts and localities.**

The resolution was passed by consensus. The chaplain then led the Assembly in prayer.

The moderator invited the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar to introduce the Congregational and General Insurance Company Community Awards and to welcome Mrs Margaret Slater from the insurance company. Dr Jagessar announced the winners of the awards for 2014.

The following church projects were declared equal 'runners-up':

Chapelfield Grow Your Own, Manchester

Hope Restored, Llandudno

Messy Church SEND, Hemel Hempstead

The winner was announced as Glenorchy Work Club, Exmouth.

The moderator welcomed representatives from each of the projects and presented the awards. He then announced that video clips of the four projects would be shown in the hall during the lunch break.

The moderator then greeted the Revd Phil Potter of Fresh Expressions, who would be leading a fringe meeting at lunch time.

The general secretary proposed:

**Resolution 17** Mission Council: Assembly-appointed posts

**General Assembly confirms the list of Assembly-appointed posts and the various affiliation requirements as outlined on pages 36 to 37 of the Book of Reports.**

The following amendment was proposed by Mr John Smith, convener of the education and learning committee, and was accepted by the general secretary:

**p. 37 2c) remove the principal of Westminster College from this category**

**Add 2d) Assembly confirms that the post of principal of Westminster College is restricted to ministers of Word and sacraments of the United Reformed Church or one of its partners within the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council (DECC) or the Council for World Mission.**

**Re-number the current 2d to 2e.**

**The resolution: General Assembly confirms the list of Assembly-appointed posts and the various affiliation requirements as outlined on pages 36 to 37 of the Book of Reports with the following amendment.**

**p. 37 2c) remove the principal of Westminster College from this category**

**Add 2d) Assembly confirms that the post of principal of Westminster College is restricted to ministers of Word and sacraments of the United Reformed Church**

**or one of its partners within the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council (DECC) or the Council for World Mission.**

**Re-number the current 2d to 2e.**

The amendment was passed by a substantial majority, after which the substantive resolution was agreed.

The moderator explained his ruling that the facilitation group should not be approached by members of the Assembly. He believed that trust was needed to enable the group to do its work effectively.

The chaplain said Grace before lunch.

## *Business session 6*

Mr John Ellis took the chair.

The clerk presented the minutes of the sessions which took place on Friday, and they were accepted, subject to minor corrections.

### **Resolution 10 Education and learning committee: Ministerial green shoots fund**

General Assembly endorses the development of a ministerial green shoots fund for education for ministry phase 1 (EM1) students according to the provisions outlined on pages 92 to 94. This will be applicable to new students starting EM1 in September 2015.

The moderator ruled that a decision would need to be made by majority vote, if consensus agreement was not achieved.

The committee convener, the Revd John Smith, proposed the resolution.

Discussion then took place with considerable concern that a source of funding from local sending churches should not be seen as a supplement for Ministry and Mission because it could undermine the fund. The gift of a further 1% all from churches would cover the funding shortfall required. The cost of training was felt to be a core cost to the Church.

An alternative resolution was suggested but did not win favour: General Assembly directs the education and learning committee to set up a bursary fund to ensure all EM1 students are able to finish their training and asked the committee to consult with finance on alternative ways funding might be found.

In light of the division in the Assembly, the moderator ruled that this resolution be remaindered.

A further children's clip was then shown.

The Revd Richard Church introduced the synod moderators' report, which was warmly received.

General Assembly then proceeded to sing a hymn as a prayer.

## Resolution **22** Mission Council: Role of the synod moderator

**General Assembly approves the role description for the synod moderator set out on pages 41 to 43 of the Book of Reports as a model for future synod moderator appointment groups.**

This resolution was proposed by the general secretary and the resolution was carried by a large majority.

### **Equalities committee**

The convener, the Revd Elizabeth Nash, drew attention to the work done by the committee, monitoring the personnel serving the church in its staffing, committees and trust body.

In proposing resolution 15, she stated that it was intended to be permissive, not instructive.

### **Resolution 15 Equalities committee: Inclusive and expansive language**

The resolution was amended, as follows:

General Assembly affirms the commitment made in 1984 to use inclusive language in all publications. It now seeks to build on that commitment by encouraging all those who lead and participate in worship, all those who train worship leaders, including resource centres for learning and lay preachers conferences, children's and youth leaders, local churches and synods, to explore and give intentional consideration to their use of inclusive and expansive language and imagery in worship.

This was not passed by consensus or agreement.

## *Business session 7*

The Revd David Grosch-Miller was in the chair.

There followed a further children's clip, after which the chaplain led Assembly in prayer.

The items removed from the 'en bloc' section were then dealt with as follows:

### **Resolution 19 Mission Council: Membership of governance bodies**

The clerk explained that resolution 19 as printed in the Book of Reports was a single resolution containing a number of governance changes some, but not all, of which either constituted changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church or fell under the terms of paragraph 2(5)(A)(xi) of the Structure. It was thought that a single resolution could encompass all of these changes, but subsequent to the publication of the Book of Reports it became clear that the composite resolution was causing confusion. Therefore resolution 19 had been rewritten and was presented as a series of linked but separate resolutions, as follows:

**Resolution 19A**

General Assembly resolves to amend the structure of the United Reformed Church 2(6)(h) by deleting the words “six representatives of the Synod of Scotland”

The general secretary proposed that this resolution be withdrawn to allow for further consultation within the Synod of Scotland.

**This was agreed**

**Resolution 19B(1)**

General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church by adding the words “members of the United Reformed Church (save for those in categories (g), (l), (m) and (n)) as follows” to the first sentence of paragraph 2(6).

An amendment was introduced to insert” **(b)**” and “**(k)**” into the section within the brackets.

Proposer: The Revd Tim Meachin

Seconder: Mr Andrew Weston

If agreed that sentence would read:

The General Assembly which shall embody the unity of the United Reformed Church and act as the central organ of its life and the final authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, in all matters of doctrine and order and in all other concerns of its common life shall consist of members of the United Reformed Church (save for those in categories (b), (g), (k), (l), (m) and (n) as follows:

**Moved: That the resolution be deferred.**

Proposer: Mr Simon Peters

Seconder: Mr David Harvey

Passed by majority vote.

Resolution **19B(2)**

**General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church by deleting the words “a committee convener or otherwise entitled to membership of the Assembly” from Paragraph 2(6)(d) .**

That sentence would now read:

Where the moderator of synod is an officer of the Assembly the synod concerned shall appoint a substitute as its representative;

Passed by majority vote.

Resolution **19B(3)**

**General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church by deleting the words “being members of the United Reformed Church” from Paragraph 2(6)(f).**

That sentence would now read.

A staff representative and a student representative from each of such theological colleges as the General Assembly has designated as resource centres for learning, and a staff representative and a student representative from such other colleges or centres as shall from time to time be designated by the education and learning committee as engaged in significant training for the United Reformed Church;



Passed by majority vote.

### Resolution **19B(4)**

**General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church by adding the words “former chairmen and presidents of the Congregational Union of Scotland,” before the words “provided that” and by deleting the words “such former officers are members of the United Reformed Church and that” and “as are members of the United Reformed Church” to Paragraph 2(6)(j)**

That sentence would now read

Two in total from the following: former moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, past chairmen of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, past presidents of the Congregational Church in England and Wales, former moderators of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, former chairmen or presidents of the Annual Conference of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, former presidents of the Annual Conference of the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, and former chairmen and presidents of the Congregational Union of Scotland, provided that they shall have been elected by a college consisting of all such past and former moderators, presidents and chairmen;

Passed by majority vote.

### Resolution **19B(5)**

**General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church by deleting the words “being members of the United Reformed Church” from Paragraph 2(6)(k)**

This sentence would now read:

Such number of representatives of the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth as the Assembly shall from time to time determine (at present three);

The resolution was withdrawn.

### Resolution **19C**

**General Assembly determines under the terms of Paragraph 2(6)(n) of the Structure that the deputy general secretary administration and resources, the deputy general secretary discipleship and the deputy general secretary mission shall be added to the membership of the General Assembly.**

This was passed by majority vote.

### Resolution **19D**

**General Assembly agrees that the deputy treasurer shall be a member of the United Reformed Church, and further under the terms of Paragraph 2(6)9h) appoints the deputy treasurer for the time being to membership of the General Assembly.**

Passed by majority vote.

## Resolution **19E**

**General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church by adding the words “and Assembly appointed ministers who are members of a local church in that synod”**

This sentence would now read:

The synod being representative of the local churches in that province or nation united for the purpose of dealing with matters of wider concern shall consist of:

- (a) All ministers, registered pastors (in Scotland) and church related community workers engaged directly in the service of the United Reformed Church within that synod, and Assembly appointed ministers who are members of a local church in that synod.

An amendment to insert the words, “**former moderators of General Assembly**” before the words “and Assembly appointed ministers” was proposed by Mrs Wilma Frew, seconded by Mrs Margaret Marshall. The clerk recommended the acceptance of the amendment. Passed by majority vote.

This sentence will now read:

- (b) **All ministers, registered pastors (in Scotland) and church related community workers engaged directly in the service of the United Reformed Church within that synod, former Moderators of General Assembly and Assembly appointed ministers who are members of a local church in that synod.**

This was passed by majority vote.

## Resolution **19F**

**a) General Assembly resolves that the membership of Mission Council shall be:**

1. **Moderators of Assembly**
2. **Moderators-elect of Assembly**
3. **Immediate past moderators**
4. **General secretary**
5. **Deputy general secretaries**
6. **Clerk**
7. **Treasurer**
8. **Deputy treasurer**
9. **Conveners of all Assembly standing committees**
10. **Synod moderators**
11. **Three further representatives of each synod**
12. **Three representatives of FURY (including the FURY moderator)**
13. **Chair of the United Reformed Church trust**

**With the exception of those in category 5 (the deputy general secretaries) all the above shall be members of the United Reformed Church.**

**b) General Assembly further resolves that:**

**The legal adviser and the convener of the law and polity advisory group shall be in attendance with the right to speak at all times, but not to use consensus cards or to vote.**

**Staff secretaries shall be in attendance with the right to speak (except during the decision stage of the consensus process) but not to use consensus cards or to vote.**

**Up to two ecumenical representatives may attend with the right to speak (except during the decision stage of the consensus process) but not to use consensus cards or to vote.**

**Also present shall be the moderators' chaplains, the minute secretary, the consensus adviser (pending separate decision) and other staff members as agreed by committee conveners and the general secretary. These may participate in group sessions, and may speak during plenary sessions with the consent of the moderator.**

**From time to time there may be visitors and/or observers present by prior arrangement with the general secretary. They shall not have the right to speak or participate in any way during plenary or group sessions, unless with the explicit consent of the moderator.**

Notice of an amendment had been received.

To delete the sentence: "With the exception of those in category 5 (the deputy general secretaries) all the above shall be members of the United Reformed Church" and replace it with:

'With the exception of those in categories 5 and 12 (the deputy general secretaries **and the three representatives of FURY (including the FURY moderator)**) all the above shall be members of the United Reformed Church'.

Proposed: The Revd Tim Meachin

Seconded: Mr Andrew Weston

The amendment was put to the vote and passed by majority.

The resolution was put.

Passed by majority vote.

The general secretary moved that resolutions 19 B2, 3 and 4 and 19E be referred to the synods with responses returned to the general secretary by 31 March 2015.

**This was agreed.**

### **Nominations committee**

The Revd John Durell, convener of the committee, introduced and proposed the resolutions and the supplementary sections on the order papers for Thursday and Friday. Mr Durell stressed that the committee did its utmost to make committees balanced in terms of gender, ordination and ethnicity. Sadly, this was not always achieved. This was particularly true in relation to the make-up of the URC trust, but the committee relied on the synods making their nominations of people to serve.

An updated nominations committee list of Assembly committees and other appointments is available on the yearbook online section of the urc website:

<http://www.urch.org.uk/yearbook-online.html>

## Resolution **24** Nominations committee

- a) **General Assembly appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pages 138-152 of the *Book of Reports*, subject to the additions and corrections contained in the Supplementary Report to Assembly.**
- b) **General Assembly re-appoints the Revd Paul Whittle to serve as moderator of the Eastern Synod until 31 August 2020.**
- c) **General Assembly re-appoints the Revd Kevin Watson to serve as moderator of the Yorkshire Synod until 31 May 2020.**
- d) **General Assembly appoints the Revd Jacky Embrey to serve as moderator of the Mersey Synod until General Assembly 2020.**
- e) **General Assembly re-appoints the Revd Andrew Prasad to serve as Moderator of Thames North Synod until 30 September 2020.**
- f) **General Assembly resolves that the annual term for all new members of the United Reformed Church trust appointed from Assembly 2014 onwards run from 1 September to 31 August.**
- g) **General Assembly resolves to re-appoint Dr David Robinson and the Revd Prof David Thompson as members of the URC trust until 31 August 2018.**
- h) **General Assembly resolves to re-appoint the Revd Michael Davies as a member of the URC trust until 31 August 2018.**

The following names had been offered to supplement the report contained on pp. 138-152. Corrections were also offered.

### **2.1 Mission committee**

The Revd Andrew Willett (3) [2018]

### **3.1 5 Assessment board**

Ms Pat Oliver (9) [retiring 2019]

### **3.2 Education and learning committee**

Convener elect: The Revd Dr Neil Messer

#### **3.2.1 Windermere management committee**

Miss Margery Pitcher (2) [2018]

The Revd Stuart Scott (synod training and development officer)

Mrs Ruth Clarke (representative of Carver Memorial United Reformed Church)

### **3.3 Children's and youth work committee**

Mrs Ruth Roddison (4) [2018]

The Revd Heather Cadoux (11) [2018]

Mrs Alison Tanson (12) [2018]

### **4.11 URC trustees**

Synod group 2: Mr Peter Pay (9) [2018]

Synod group 3: Mr Andrew Summers (10) [2015];

Mrs Margaret Thompson (7) [2018]

Assembly further invited the trust to co-opt Mrs Val Morrison (4) to serve until 2018.

**4.6.1 Panel for General Assembly appointments**

The Revd Raymond Singh (11) (2019)

The Revd Reginald Mudewa (11) (2019)

**Amendments to the published report:**

- 1.2 Human resources advisory group:** Mr Alistair Forsyth should read Mr Alastair Forsyth.
- 1.4 Listed buildings advisory group**  
Delete Mr Neil Mackenzie. Mr Peter West will continue as convener.  
The Northern Synod representative is now the Revd Ray Angelsea.
- 1.5 MIND (ministerial incapacity and discipline) advisory group**  
The Revd David Skitt would continue as the consultant for ministers and crcws.
- 1.6 Resource sharing task group**  
The secretary is Mr Chris Atherton  
Delete Mrs Wakeman and replace with Mr Andrew Perkins.
- 2.1 Mission committee**  
The Revd Stephen Newell would serve until 2018.  
Delete Revd Sam White. (7)
- 3.1.4 Ministries – retired ministers’ housing sub-committee**  
‘Secretary’ should read: ‘secretary, retired ministers’ housing society Ltd’.
- 3.2.1 Windermere management committee**  
The convener will serve until 2018.  
Delete Mr Peter Farrand.
- 3.2.3 Education and learning finance sub-committee**  
*Ex-officio* should read honorary treasurer.
- 3.3 Children’s and youth work committee**  
Delete the Revd Sue Mackenzie.
- 3.3.1 Pilots management sub-committee**  
Delete: *The Congregational Federation also has two representatives*
- 4.3 Equalities committee:** Mrs Tunde Biyi should read Mr Tunde Biyi.
- 4.5 Finance committee:** Mrs Elsie Gillard should read Mrs Elsie Gilliland.
- 4.6 Nominations committee**  
Mersey Synod is represented by the Revd Robert Shallcross.
- 4.6.1 Panel for General Assembly appointments**  
Add the Revd Geoffrey Clarke. \*\* (5)[2019]
- 4.7 Pastoral reference and welfare committee:** The convener-elect will serve until 2019.
- 4.8 Disciplinary process – commission panel**  
The Revd David Skitt would not serve as convener.  
The post was currently vacant as was that of deputy convener.  
Delete Ms Nneoma Chyima.  
The Revd Wendy Swann should read the Revd Wendy Swan.  
Mr Alistair Forsyth should read Mr Alastair Forsyth.



**4.11.1 Church House management group:** Delete head of human resources

**4.11.2 Remuneration sub-committee**

Convener: deputy general secretary administration and resources  
Delete Ms Carmila Legarda.

**4.12 The United Reformed Church ministers' pension trust Ltd:**

The Revd David Bedford would serve until 2016.

**4.13 Pensions Executive:** Mr Steven Manders should read the Revd Steven Manders.

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

The representatives of the United Reformed Church are the Revd Richard Mortimer, Ms Karen Campbell, the Revd James Breslin, Mr Simon Peters and the secretary for world church relations.

**6.8.6 CTE Group for Evangelisation:** Should read deputy general secretary mission.

**8.2 Westminster College: Board of governors**

The post of honorary college treasurer is vacant.  
The Revd Dr Jane Leach has replaced the Revd Andrew Norman as the representative of the Cambridge Theological Federation.

**10.2 Churches legislation advisory service representatives** should read:

Mrs Sheila Duncan/general secretary/deputy general secretary administration and resources.

**10.14 Westhill Endowment Fund**

Delete Mr Howard Bridge, the Revd Stephen Orchard, the Revd Elizabeth Welch.  
Add Mr Simon Rowntree, Ms Julie Grove.

**For Information**

The following appointments had been made:

**Deputy general secretary (mission):** Ms Francis Brien

**Deputy general secretary (administration and resources):** Mrs Jane Baird

**Westminster college director of pastoral and church programmes:**

Revd Samantha White

**Secretary for ministries:** The Revd Craig Bowman had been reappointed until General Assembly 2020.

The post of deputy general secretary (discipleship) was vacant.

Resolution 24 was passed by majority vote.

The Revds Elizabeth Nash and Fran Kissack and Mr Rhys McKavanagh requested that their dissent be noted.

The moderator greeted the Revds Kevin Watson, Paul Whittle and Andrew Prasad, recently re-appointed, and agreed to send the thanks of the Assembly to the Revds Howard Sharp and Rowena Francis for their work now completed.

He welcomed the Revds Jacky Embrey who was newly appointed; Roy Lowes, soon to retire; and Ruth Whitehead, who had recently come into post.

The moderator made a statement regarding the closure of the previous session. He assured Assembly that time would be found to complete the business on Sunday morning.

The chaplain led Assembly in prayer.

## Facilitation group report

The Revd Lis Mullen introduced the report and thanks were offered to the group for their work. She proposed the following resolution.

General Assembly re-affirms that marriage is a gift and calling of God: that the abundance of God's love and grace is given to us as the template for human relationships. Whilst holding to its Commitment on Human Sexuality made in 2007, the United Reformed Church:

- Recognises the unique journey of salvation of each human soul through Christ
- Resolves out of love to support fellow disciples in their walk with Christ
- Understands and testifies to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

General Assembly affirms the spiritual integrity, rooted in the discernment of the Word and will of God, both of those who prayerfully feel a calling to celebrate same-sex marriage as a Christian ordinance and of those who do not.

General Assembly gives permission to those who wish to uphold the traditional view of marriage to do so and also gives permission to church meetings and ministers who so decide to take the necessary steps to be able to solemnise and register marriages between same-sex couples and to instruct trust bodies accordingly. It further invites the National Synod of Scotland to consider appropriate action for the Scottish context.

Accepting our differences of conviction, General Assembly re-affirms the United Reformed Church's commitment to make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

A wide variety of views were expressed. Many supported the resolution offered; however Assembly was divided.

The clerk advised that he believed the resolution would require a two-thirds majority. It could be passed at this Assembly and referred to synods and church meetings, with a final decision at Mission Council in May. Alternatively, this Assembly could set a consultation process in train which would lead to a decision being taken at the next meeting of the General Assembly in 2016.

The legal adviser stated that Assembly needed to be clear as to whether this was a statement of policy or not.

The general secretary restated the clerk's two scenarios for clarification and the chaplain led Assembly in prayer.

A large majority were in favour of the first scenario offered but those showing blue cards were not prepared to accept an agreed decision.

Ms Morag McLintock suggested deferment of the decision until the session on Sunday morning. A majority of those present agreed and the moderator ruled that it would be remaindered.

Closing worship was led by the Revd Carla Grosch-Miller. The Bible study was held over in hope that time could be found in the Sunday morning session.

Worship included thanks for the service of the Revd Roberta Rominger as general secretary from 2008. The Revd David Grosch-Miller paid tribute to the commitment she had made to the Church and all the Church owed her for what she had given during that time. Mrs Rominger received a standing ovation. She then replied briefly.

The session ended with the moderator leading a 'liturgy of letting go'.

The Revd Nigel Uden led the opening worship after which Mr John Ellis took the chair.

### **Reception of new mission projects**

The moderator greeted representatives of the following new projects:

Ms Elisabeth Meikle from Grindon

Mr Andy Braunston from the Metropolitan Church

The Revd Stuart Nixon from MediaCityUK Church

### **Remaindered business**

The moderator explained that there was great pressure on the time available for the remaindered business, so that the Bible study would take place later in the morning – if there was time.

### **Resolution 10 Ministerial green shoots**

The education and learning committee asked to withdraw the resolution for further consultation. Assembly agreed.

### **Resolution 15 Equalities committee: Expansive language**

Assembly returned to a further decision session.

#### Resolution **15** Equalities committee: Expansive language

**General Assembly affirms the commitment made in 1984 to use inclusive language in all publications. It now seeks to build on that commitment by encouraging all those who lead and participate in worship, all those who train worship leaders, including resource centres for learning and lay preachers conferences, children's and youth leaders, local churches and synods, to explore and give intentional consideration to their use of inclusive and expansive language and imagery in worship.**

The amended resolution passed by agreement.

*The Revd Paul Ellis asked for his dissent to be recorded.*

### **Resolution 23 Mission Council: Changes to standing orders**

General Assembly agrees the changes to the Standing Orders as listed on pages 60 to 69 in the Book of Reports.

The Assembly arrangements committee asked members of Assembly to complete the evaluation form and requested that resolution 23 be withdrawn. The clerk asked that comments relating to standing orders be sent to him.

Assembly agreed that the resolution be withdrawn.

### **Resolution 27 West Midlands Synod: Age limit for non-stipendiary ministry candidates**

Assembly agreed that this should be deferred to Mission Council for a decision.

**Resolution 30 Westminster College governors**

The general secretary moved:

**Resolution 30** Westminster College governors

**Assembly agrees to amend clause 2.2.2.2 of the provisions for the governors of Westminster College to read, 'Within the total membership there shall be a representative of the Cambridge Theological Federation, a representative of the University of Cambridge or the Faculty of Divinity of the University, and a representative of Anglia Ruskin University.'**

Passed by majority vote.

The Revd David Grosch-Miller took the chair and the chaplain led Assembly in prayer.

**The work of the facilitation group – continued.**

The Revd John Proctor spoke on behalf of the Assembly officers.

Mr Proctor moved Resolution 31:

**Resolution 31** Proposal for a consultation regarding same-sex marriage

**A clear majority of members of Assembly expressed the view that local congregations should be permitted to offer same-sex marriage to those who seek that opportunity. However, because our decision-making process is based on the seeking of full consensus, Assembly was unable to reach agreement.**

**Assembly therefore resolves to pursue this discussion in the most constructive and consultative way that it can, as follows:**

- (1) to invite synods and local congregations (a) to reflect on the report of the facilitation group, (b) to discuss whether they would wish a future meeting of the Assembly to authorise local church meetings to offer same-sex marriage services, and (c) to report their views to the General Secretary by 31st March 2015.**
- (2) to authorise the officers of Assembly to furnish these discussions with appropriate resources, including an offer of the support of facilitators.**

Many questions were asked to which the Revd John Proctor and the clerk responded. Finally, the resolution he offered was passed by agreement.

The moderator commended Assembly for the manner in which it had conducted this particular business. The chaplain then led the Assembly in prayer.

Mr Ellis then took the chair.

**Address to the throne**

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar read the Address to Assembly, and Assembly agreed that it should be forwarded to Her Majesty the Queen:

To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty,

The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church meeting in Cardiff sends Your Majesty its warmest greetings in this the 63rd year of Your Majesty's reign. We give thanks to God for your years of faithful and dedicated service to the people of Britain and the Commonwealth, and are greatly encouraged by Your Majesty's continued affirmation that the foundation upon which your life of service has been built is your strong faith in our generous and loving God.

We join with the nation and the Commonwealth in giving thanks to God for the safe arrival of Your Majesty's great-grandchild, Prince George. We continue to pray for the health and strength of the Duke of Edinburgh and all members of the Royal Family as each seeks to serve the nation and Commonwealth in their several ways.

This year people across the globe will be remembering the outbreak of the First World War, and will recall especially the courage and leadership shown by your grandfather and father respectively in the two world wars of the last century. As a Church we shall be seeking to honour the many millions whose lives were tragically shortened in the 1914-18 conflict, and, in the name of the One known as the Prince of Peace, continue to promote non-violent solutions to conflict and the principles of truth-telling and reconciliation.

Some of our churches are engaging in creative projects to honour the dead of the Great War, such as researching the life stories behind the names which appear on memorial stones and plinths inside and outside their buildings. Church members are making these stories known in their local community, enabling the many young men now remembered merely as names on lists to be brought to life and their heroism and sacrifice better understood. Projects such as these will also highlight the profound *human* tragedy behind all war.

Many of our churches are also serving their local communities by hosting or supporting foodbanks. As Your Majesty will be aware, the number of foodbanks in the United Kingdom has risen alarmingly in recent years, with more and more people finding they are unable to afford adequate food for themselves and their children. Many foodbanks operate from church buildings of all denominations and are supported practically and financially by committed Christians.

Members of United Reformed Churches engaged in foodbank work are expressing their concern and distress at the stories they hear from people needing their services, many of whom are in low paid and temporary work or experiencing delays in the payment of their benefits. Our church members welcome the opportunity to serve their fellow men and women in the spirit of the Gospel, but believe it is also important that the reasons *why* so many appear to need foodbanks in order to survive be properly investigated.

The United Reformed Church has therefore joined with other Churches and faith organisations in pressing Your Majesty's Government for a rigorous inquiry into the causes of increased foodbank use, and for these causes to be addressed. In the past it was generally people in exceptional circumstances who found themselves in food poverty; now it is becoming more common. As the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster recently put it, 'Something is going seriously wrong when, in a country as affluent as ours, people are left in that destitute situation and depend solely on the handouts of the charity of foodbanks.' This is even more troubling given that much of our ethos as a people has been shaped by Christian principles that affirm 'full life for all'.

As the above examples of our current work suggest we continue, as a Church, to be committed to preaching and sharing the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ with its power to transform both individuals and communities for the better. We understand the promise of 'life in all its fullness' which Jesus came to announce (John 10.10) to be a message of hope for all, especially those forced, perhaps through no fault of their own, to the margins of society.

Shortly we shall learn how the people of Scotland have voted in their referendum on independence. While we do not hold a view with regard to this question, we pray, as a diverse Church in three nations, that all involved will receive the result with grace and generosity and resolve to work together for the common good, in accord with the Edinburgh agreement.

May the generous God whom we serve, and who sustains and encourages, continue to strengthen and sustain Your Majesty in the years ahead.

**Moderators' acceptance speeches.**

Mr Alan Yates and the Revd Kevin Watson addressed the Assembly.

**Minutes of Saturday and the final session**

The clerk moved the minutes of the first and second sessions of Saturday with amendments, and asked that the final sets of minutes be added to the Record of Assembly. Assembly agreed.

**Thanks**

The moderator thanked the members of the 'back-room' team which assisted the Assembly arrangements committee; the communications team, the stewards and local organisers; the staff of St David's Hall, the musicians and singers; the intercessors, the listeners and the facilitation group; the time keeper and the team at the 'top table'. He noted that the Revd Roberta Rominger, Dr David Robinson, Mrs Irene Wren and the Revd James Breslin had all completed their periods of service as Assembly concluded and thanked them for their contributions. He thanked both chaplains for their invaluable support and contributions to the worship. He asked Assembly to forgive the mistakes which might have been made and commended members for their participation in speeches, listening and in prayer as Assembly had sought to discern the will of God for the United Reformed Church at this time.

The clerk noted that the Revd Michael Davies had been present at every Assembly of the United Reformed Church.

**Thanks to the Synod of Wales and welcome to Mersey Synod**

Mrs Rita Griffiths, clerk to the Mersey Synod, thanked the Synod of Wales and gave a poetic advanced welcome to the Assembly who will meet in Southport in July 2016.

**Thanks to the moderators**

The general secretary thanked the Revd David Grosch-Miller and Mr John Ellis for the manner in which they had conducted the business.

**Final notices**

The text of the final Bible study would be posted on the URC website. Ideas for additional resources relevant to the morning's business would be welcomed.

**Closing worship and renewal of baptismal vows**

The Assembly was joined for the final act of worship by many members of local congregations, some accompanied by children. Worship was led by the moderators and their chaplains and a session for the children was organised elsewhere. During worship, the Revd John Proctor was inducted to the role of general secretary and Ms Francis Brien and Mrs Jane Baird were inducted as deputy general secretaries for mission and administration and resources, respectively.

The Revd David Grosch-Miller delivered his address, at the conclusion of which, Susan Vieira da Silva sang 'Wade in the water'.

The moderators and their chaplains encouraged all present to renew their baptismal vows and, assisted by members of FURY, sprinkled the congregation with water. An offering was taken for Water Aid. The children accompanying visitors to Assembly then returned and, encouraged by Mr Ellis, shared their tree building activity.

At the close of worship the general secretary announced, "Moderators, the General Assembly has completed its business and now adjourns to meet in Southport on 8 to 11 July 2016 or at such time or place as shall be determined."



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