

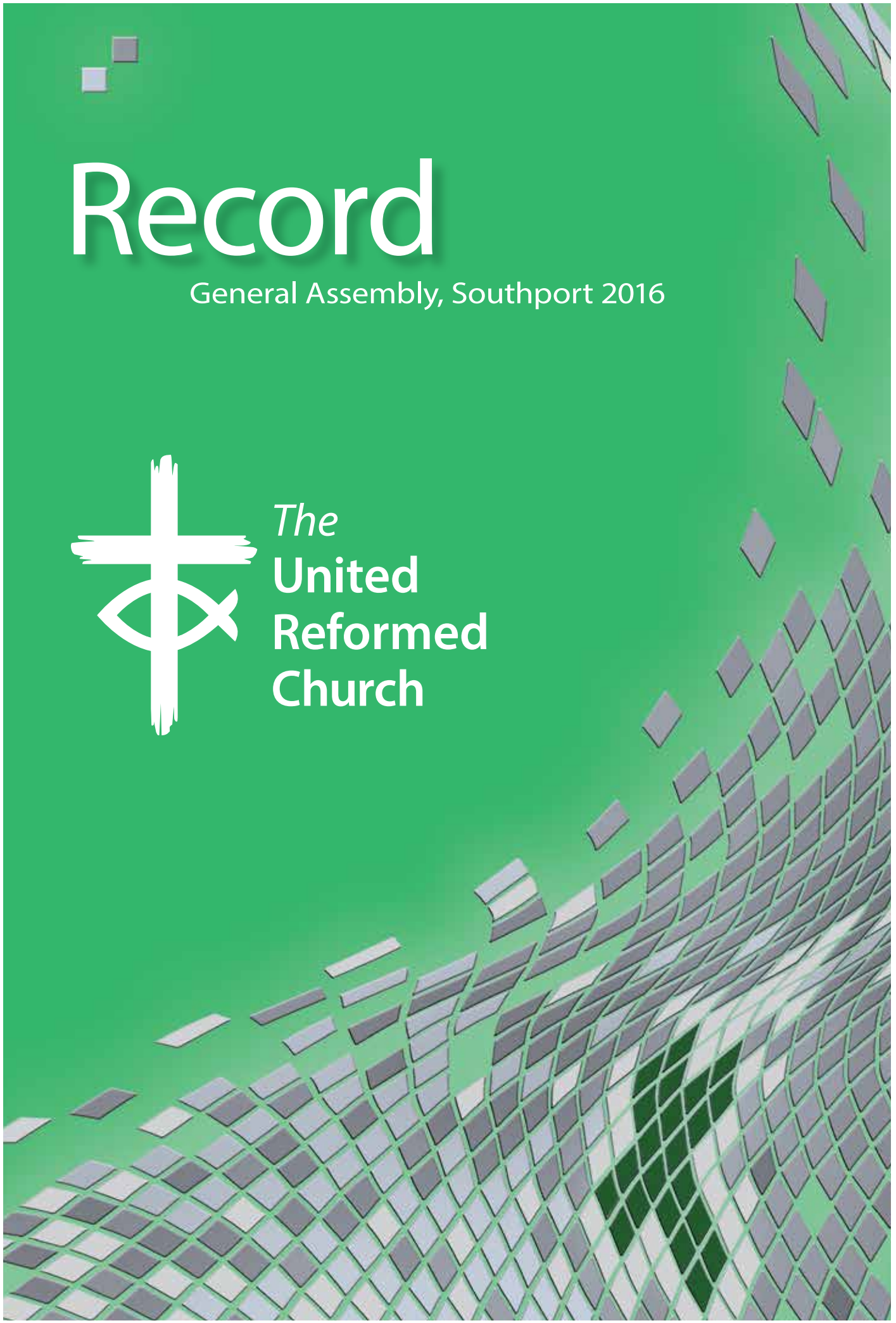


Record

General Assembly, Southport 2016



The
**United
Reformed
Church**



© The United Reformed Church, 2016

URC131

Published by

The United Reformed Church
86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT

All rights reserved. This material may be used freely within the churches.
No part of this publication may be reproduced outside the Church in any form or
by any means – graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying,
recording, taping or information storage and retrieval systems –
without the prior written permission of the publishers.

The publishers make no representation, express or implied, with regard to the
accuracy of the information contained in this book and cannot accept any legal responsibility
for any errors or omissions that may take place.

Photography

© United Reformed Church/Chris Andrews

Produced and printed by the communications department,
on behalf of the Assembly arrangements committee.

The United Reformed Church, Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT



Matters for consideration and action

United Reformed Church • General Assembly 2016

Resolution number		Report page/s	Record page/s	Synods	Local churches
3	Appeal, reference & constitutional review	20-23	16-17	X	
12	iChurch	60, 63	27	X	X
14-19	Authorised elders	90-107	31-33	X	
21	What Is the Spirit saying to the Churches?	119-127	15,28-29		X
28-29	Stipendiary minister nos. & deployment	154-161	30-31	X	
31 & 32	Environmental Policy	185-190	24	X	X
42 & 43	Youth representation in URC councils		34-35	X	
49	'Change the Story' around refugees		10		X
50	The European Union Referendum		29	X*	X

(* the reference to synod action in Res 50 is specific to Scotland)





The
**United
Reformed
Church**

Friday 8 July 2016

Minutes of an ordinary meeting of the United Reformed Church General Assembly

At Southport, and within the Floral Hall

Friday 8 July 2016 2.30pm
Business session one

The General Secretary invited the Moderator to constitute the Assembly, meeting in Southport on 8 July 2016, with prayer.

The Moderators, the Revd David Grosch-Miller and Mr John Ellis duly constituted Assembly, and led an act of worship assisted by their chaplains, the Revd Dr Carla Grosch-Miller and the Revd Nigel Uden. During worship, the Moderators inducted the Revd Kevin Watson and Mr Alan Yates as Moderators of the General Assembly. Mr Watson and Mr Yates both signed the Assembly Bible.

The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, expressed the thanks of the Church to Mr Ellis and Mr Grosch-Miller, and their chaplains, and presented gifts. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, then addressed Assembly. Following the singing of a hymn, the Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, took the chair.

The General Secretary laid the Roll of Assembly on the table:

ROLL OF ASSEMBLY 2016

Moderators

1. The Revd Kevin Watson
2. Mr Alan Yates

Clerk

3. The Revd Michael Hopkins

General Secretary

4. The Revd John Proctor

Deputy General Secretary

(Administration and Resources)

5. Mrs Jane Baird

Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)

6. The Revd Richard Church

Deputy General Secretary (Mission)

7. Ms Francis Brien

Moderators of synods

8. Northern – The Revd Lis Mullen
9. North Western – The Revd Andrew Mills
10. Mersey – The Revd Jacky Embrey
11. Yorkshire – The Revd Kevin Watson (*dual qualification*);
substitute rep: Mr Chris Reed
12. East Midlands – The Revd Peter Meek
13. West Midlands – The Revd Steve Faber
14. Eastern – The Revd Paul Whittle
15. South Western – The Revd Ruth Whitehead
16. Wessex – The Revd Clare Downing
17. Thames North – The Revd Dr Andrew Prasad
18. Southern – The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith
19. Wales – The Revd Simon Walkling
20. Scotland – The Revd Dr David Pickering

Convenors of General Assembly standing committees

21. Assembly arrangements – The Revd James Breslin
22. Children's and youth work – The Revd Tim Meachin
23. Communication and editorial – Mr Peter Knowles
24. Education and learning – The Revd Professor Neil Messer
25. Equalities – The Revd Helen Mee
26. Faith and order – The Revd Elizabeth Welch
27. Finance – Mr John Ellis
28. Ministries – vacant
29. Mission – The Revd Tracey Lewis
30. Nominations – Mrs Irene Wren
31. Pastoral reference and welfare – Mrs Wilma Frew

Convenor of the United Reformed Church Trust

32. The Revd Richard Gray

Immediate-past Moderators

33. Mr John Ellis (*dual qualification*)
34. The Revd David Grosch-Miller

Former Moderators (two places)

35. The Revd John Marsh
36. The Revd Professor Stephen Orchard

Resource Centres for Learning

37. Northern College Staff – The Revd Dr Rosalind Selby
38. Northern College Student – Mrs Lisa Wigfield
39. Scottish College Staff – Mr Mark Kirkbride
40. Scottish College Student – Mr Andy Braunston
41. Westminster College Staff – The Revd Samantha White
42. Westminster College Student – Mr Jacob Bali
43. The Windermere Centre – Mr Lawrence Moore

United Reformed Church Youth (three places)

44. Mr Stephen Ball
45. Mr Dan Morrell
46. Mr Sandy Nunn

United Reformed Church Chaplain to HM Forces (one place)

47. The Revd Michael Meachin

Northern Synod**Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers (six places)**

48. The Revd Elaine Brown
 49. The Revd Gordon Brown
 50. The Revd Joan Grindrod-Helmn
 51. The Revd David Herbert
 52. The Revd Rachel Poolman
 53. The Revd Matthew Prevett

Lay representatives (six places)

54. Mrs Margaret Brock
 55. Mrs Margaret Humberston
 56. Mr Robert Jones
 57. Mr Luke Noble*
 58. Mrs Linda Robson
 59. Ms Georgia Whelan*

North Western Synod**Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers (13 places)**

60. The Revd Mark Bates
 61. The Revd Philip Brooks
 62. The Revd David Coaker
 63. The Revd Paul Frampton
 64. The Revd David Harkison
 65. The Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee
 66. The Revd Brian Jolly
 67. The Revd Catherine Lewis-Smith
 68. The Revd Sarah Moore
 69. The Revd Pamela Noonan
 70. The Revd John Piper
 71. The Revd Dr Marion Tugwood
 72. The Revd Pamela Ward

Lay representatives (13 places)

73. Mr Nick Andrews
 74. Mrs Deborah Brooks
 75. Mr Chris Burton
 76. Mrs Pam Dent
 77. Mr Vernon Dunn
 78. Mr Jonnie Hill
 79. Mr Walt Johnson
 80. Mrs Pauline Jones
 81. Miss Charis Ollerenshaw*
 82. Mrs Marilyn Piper
 83. Dr Adam Scott
 84. Miss Connie Sutton*
 85. Miss Rachel Tugwood*

Mersey Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers (seven places)

- 86. The Revd Lorraine Aizelwood-Threlfall
- 87. The Revd Hilary Bell
- 88. The Revd Janet Calderley
- 89. The Revd Alan Crump
- 90. The Revd Dr Mark Godin
- 91. The Revd Tim Meadows
- 93. The Revd Chris Parker

Lay representatives (seven places)

- 94. Mr David Abbott
- 95. Mrs Joan Colwell
- 96. Mr Jake Convery*
- 97. Mrs Rita Griffiths
- 98. Ms Robin Hughes*
- 99. Mrs Eira Kelly
- 100. Ms Pam Gold

Yorkshire Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers (seven places)

- 101. The Revd Janine Atkinson
- 102. The Revd Dr James Coleman
- 103. The Revd Chris Dowd
- 104. The Revd Alison Micklem
- 105. The Revd Anne Lewitt
- 106. The Revd Zaidie Orr
- 107. Mrs Gwen Smithies

Lay representatives (seven places)

- 108. Mrs Judith Drake
- 109. Mrs Jennifer Leck
- 110. Mrs Pauline Mewis
- 110. Mr David Miall*
- 111. Mrs Marguerite Sobol
- 112. Mr Ron Sweeney
- 113. Miss Abigail Thomas*

East Midlands Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers (eight places)

- 114. The Revd Dr Deborah Baird
- 115. The Revd Mair Bradley
- 116. The Revd Geoffrey Clarke
- 117. The Revd Richard Eastman
- 118. The Revd Martha McInnes
- 119. The Revd Jenny Mills
- 120. The Revd Samuel Silungwe
- 121. The Revd Bachelard Yemtsa

Lay representatives (eight places)

- 122. Miss Natalie Gibbs*
- 123. Mr David Greatorex
- 124. Mrs Alison Hadley
- 125. Mrs Helen Lidgett

- 126. Mr Geoff Shaw
- 127. Mr Alan Thompson
- 128. Mrs Janet Thompson
- 129. *Place unfilled (reserved for a person aged 26 or under)*

West Midlands Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers (11 places)

- 130. The Revd Maz Allen
- 131. The Revd Angela Gemmer-Snell
- 132. The Revd Martin Hardy
- 133. The Revd Eric Massey
- 134. The Revd David Miller
- 135. The Revd Shirley Miller
- 136. The Revd Richard Pope
- 137. Mrs Adella Pritchard
- 138. The Revd Nadene Snyman
- 139. The Revd Nick Stanyon
- 140. The Revd David Walton

Lay representatives (11 places)

- 141. Mrs Claudette Binns
- 142. Mrs Brenda Climer
- 143. Mr John Davey
- 144. Miss Elinor Davies*
- 145. Mr Philip Dazeley
- 146. Mr Alan Eaton
- 147. Mr Michael Harvey*
- 148. Mrs Janet Kemp
- 149. Mrs Margaret Marshall
- 150. Mrs Glenis Massey
- 151. Mr Bill Potter

Eastern Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers (11 places)

- 152. The Revd Mark Ambrose
- 153. The Revd Lorna Bantock
- 154. The Revd Elaine Colechin
- 155. The Revd Sohail Ejaz
- 156. The Revd Geoff Felton
- 157. The Revd Ian Fosten
- 158. The Revd Trevor Hahn
- 159. The Revd Joshua Norris
- 160. The Revd Pamela Smith
- 161. The Revd Bruce Waldron
- 162. The Revd Tim Yau

Lay representatives (11 places)

- 163. Mrs Joyce Berry
- 164. Mrs Ruth Dixon
- 165. Miss George Elmer*
- 166. Mr Tony Gilbert
- 167. Mrs Wendy Gilbert
- 168. Mr Ian Hardie
- 169. Mr Keir Hounsome
- 170. Dr Christine MacLeod

- 171. Mrs Faith Paulding
- 172. Miss Anne Scarff
- 173. Mr Aaron Wood*

South Western Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers (eight places)

- 174. The Revd Dr. Susan Durber
- 175. The Revd Robert Jennings
- 176. The Revd Bohyun Kim
- 177. The Revd Lythan Nevard
- 178. The Revd Phil Nevard
- 179. The Revd Kathryn Price
- 180. The Revd Dr Hazel Starritt
- 181. The Revd Paul Stokes

Lay representatives (eight places)

- 182 Mr George Faris
- 183 Ms Susan Ingham
- 184 Mrs Gwen Jennings
- 185 Ms Haeun Kim*
- 186. Mr Tony Langmead
- 187. Ms Charmaine Mutare*
- 188. Ms Truida Mutare
- 189. Mr Rychard Winslade

Wessex Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers (13 places)

- 190. The Revd Nigel Appleton
- 191. The Revd Cliff Bembridge
- 192. The Revd Heather Cadoux
- 193. The Revd Gordon Connell
- 194. The Revd Ruth Dillon
- 195. The Revd Anne Dove
- 196. The Revd Tom Grant
- 197. The Revd Brian Harley
- 198. The Revd Helen Higgin-Botham
- 199. The Revd Graham Hoslett
- 200. The Revd Glyn Millington
- 201. Ms Pat Oliver
- 202. The Revd Alison Toplas

Lay representatives (13 places)

- 203. Mrs Sue Brown
- 204. Mr Roger Clark
- 205. Mrs Anna Crawford
- 206. Ms Laurence Devlin
- 207. Mrs Isobel Evans
- 208. Mr Colin Ferguson
- 209. Mrs Christine Hardwick
- 210. Mrs Rosie Martin
- 211. Mrs Janet Meachin
- 212. Mrs Brenda North
- 213. Mr David North
- 214. Miss Anna Ouston*
- 215. Mr Jonathan Steer*

Thames North Synod**Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers
(12 places)**

- 216. Ms Karen Campbell
- 217. The Revd Hugh Graham
- 218. The Revd Kate Hackett
- 219. The Revd Naison Hove
- 220. The Revd Owiny Laber
- 221. The Revd John Macaulay
- 222. The Revd John Mackerness
- 223. The Revd Dr Allan Smith
- 224. The Revd Martin Truscott
- 225. The Revd Jane Weedon
- 226. The Revd Henriette Wentink
- 227. The Revd Ann Woodhurst

Lay representatives (12 places)

- 228. Ms Sally Bateman
- 229. Mr Jack Charlesworth*
- 230. Mr Simon Fairnington
- 231. Mr Jeremy Flynn
- 232. Mrs Margaret Lamptey
- 233. Mr Tony Obi-Ezekpazu
- 234. Miss Victoria Paulding
- 235. Mr Tim Reith
- 236. Mr Vic Russell
- 237. Mr Dan Simpson*
- 238. Ms Rachel Southwood*
- 239. Mrs Kate Yates

Southern Synod**Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers
(16 places)**

- 240. The Revd Samantha Aspinall
- 241. The Revd Martin Belgrove
- 242. The Revd Bill Bowman
- 243. The Revd Michael Davies
- 244. The Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor
- 245. The Revd Peter Flint
- 246. The Revd Russell Furley-Smith
- 247. The Revd Kenneth Lynch
- 248. The Revd Helen Matthews
- 249. The Revd Iain McLaren
- 250. The Revd Jennifer Millington
- 251. The Revd Kim Plumpton
- 252. The Revd Andrew Royal
- 253. The Revd Dr Alan Spence
- 254. The Revd Julian Thomas
- 255. The Revd George Watt

Lay representatives (16 places)

- 256. Mr Colin Bridge
- 257. Mrs Rosemary Bridge
- 258. Dr Prince Brown-Engmann
- 259. Mr Ross Furley-Smith*
- 260. Miss Cathy Glazier
- 261. Miss Hannah Jones*

- 262. Mr Frank Liddell
- 263. Mrs Hilary Miles
- 264. Miss Sheila Rudofsky
- 265. Mr Clive Snashall
- 266. Miss Penny Thomas
- 267. Mr Robert Upward
- 268. Mr Alistair Wilson
- 269. Mr Cochrane Young
- 270. Mrs Norma Young
- 271. *Place unfilled*

Wales Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers (five places)

- 272. The Revd Adrian Bulley
- 273. Ms Kirsty Mabbot
- 274. The Revd Sally Thomas
- 275. The Revd David Salsbury
- 276. The Revd Dr Philip Wall

Lay representatives (five places)

- 277. Mr Chris Atherton
- 278. Miss Megan Marston-Phipps*
- 279. Mrs Mollie Neate
- 280. Mr Brad Turner
- 281. Miss Victoria Turner*

Scotland Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers (11 places)

- 282. The Revd Jan Adamson
- 283. The Revd Gordon Armstrong
- 284. The Revd Fiona Bennett
- 285. The Revd Mitchell Bunting
- 286. The Revd Catherine McFie
- 287. The Revd Alan McGougan
- 288. The Revd Leslie Morrison
- 289. The Revd Branwen Rees
- 290. The Revd A. Gordon Smith
- 291. The Revd Caro Smyth
- 292. The Revd Jake Tatton

Lay representatives (11 places)

- 293. Mr Bob Christie
- 294. Mr John Collings
- 295. Miss Jessica Danskine*
- 296. Mrs Lynn Danskine
- 297. Miss Victoria Danskine*
- 298. Mr Ben Forsyth
- 299. Dr Ewen Harley
- 300. Ms Morag McLintock
- 301. Dr James Merrilees
- 302. Mrs Lesley Richmond
- 303. Mrs Margaret Sneddon

British and Irish Ecumenical representatives (six places)

- 304. The Rt. Revd Dr Russell Barr (Church of Scotland)
- 305. The Revd Dr Keith Davies (Methodist Church)
- 306. The Revd Paul Davis (Congregational Federation)
- 307. The Rt Revd Robert Freeman (Church of England)
- 308. The Revd Neil Kirkham (Presbyterian Church of Wales)
- 309. The Rt Revd Dr Frank Sellar (Presbyterian Church in Ireland)

International ecumenical representatives (six places)

- 310. The Revd Dr Majid Abel (Presbyterian Church of Pakistan)
- 311. The Revd Chris Ferguson (World Communion of Reformed Churches)
- 312. Pfarrer Martin Henninger (Evangelical Church of the Palatinate)
- 313. The Revd Peggy Kabonde (United Church of Zambia)
- 314. The Revd Dr Karen Georgia Thompson (United Church of Christ, USA)
- 315. The Revd Lyim Hong-Tiong (Presbyterian Church of Taiwan)

Council for World Mission (one place)

- 316. The Revd Wayne Hawkins

Several other ecumenical guests, not members of Assembly, were also present for some or all of Assembly.

**indicates those synod representatives aged 26 or under at the time of their appointment.*

The Moderator introduced the platform party and their roles. The Revd John Macaulay and the Revd Shirley Miller, pastoral listeners, were introduced, and the presence of the intercessors was noted. Assembly was reminded that members had until 8pm this evening to register a wish to move business out of *en bloc*.

The Convenor of the Assembly arrangements committee proposed:

Resolution 39

General Assembly appoints Mrs Claudette Binns, the Revd Geoff Felton, the Revd Helen Mee, the Revd Sarah Moore, the Revd Lis Mullen, Mr Sandy Nunn, the Revd Zaidie Orr, the Revd Professor Stephen Orchard, Miss Victoria Paulding and the Revd Matthew Prevett to serve as the facilitation group for this Assembly.

This was agreed unanimously.

Resolution 40

General Assembly appoints Mr Frank Liddell as Convenor of Tellers for this Assembly.

This was agreed unanimously.

Resolution 41

General Assembly appoints as Tellers for the Election of the Moderators 2018-20, the Revd Janet Calderley, the Revd Dr James Coleman and Mr Colin Ferguson. Dr Coleman to serve as Convenor.

This was agreed unanimously.

Assembly then adjourned until 4.30pm.

Business session two

The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair. Councillor Iain Brodie-Browne, Mayor of the Metropolitan Borough of Sefton, welcomed General Assembly to Southport.

The convenor of the mission committee, the Revd Tracey Lewis, invited the Revd David Tatem to present British and Irish ecumenical guests:

The Rt Revd Dr Russell Barr (Church of Scotland)

The Revd Dr Keith Davies (Methodist Church)

The Revd Paul Davis (Congregational Federation)

The Rt Revd Robert Freeman (Church of England)

The Revd Neil Kirkham (Presbyterian Church of Wales)

The Rt Revd Dr Frank Sellar (Presbyterian Church in Ireland)

Bishop Anba Angaelos (General Bishop of the Coptic Church in Great Britain)

Mr Ultan Russell (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales)

The convenor of the mission committee invited the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar to present international ecumenical guests:

The Revd Wayne Hawkins (CWM)

The Revd Dr Majid Abel (Presbyterian Church of Pakistan)

The Revd Chris Ferguson (World Communion of Reformed Churches)

Pfarrer Martin Henninger (Evangelical Church of the Palatinate)

The Revd Peggy Kabonde (United Church of Zambia)

The Revd Dr Karen Georgia Thompson (United Church of Christ, USA)

The Revd Lyim Hong-Tiong (Presbyterian Church of Taiwan)

The Revd Peggy Kabonde and the Rt Revd Robert Freeman made suitable reply to the Moderator's welcome.

The immediate-past Moderators, the Revd David Grosch-Miller and Mr John Ellis, addressed Assembly.

The Assembly called for emergency business, and the Revd Catherine Lewis-Smith proposed, and Mr Andy Braunston formally seconded:

Resolution 49

General Assembly commends the Christian Aid campaign to 'Change the Story' around refugees and encourages local churches and members to contact local media to tell positive stories of refugees made welcome in our communities. General Assembly encourages support of this campaign on social media (#changethestory).

After brief debate, this was agreed unanimously.

The Assembly called for the report of the United Reformed Church and Church of England Conversations. The co-chair, the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith, presented the report.

The Moderator invited His Grace Anba Angaelos OBE, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Great Britain, to address Assembly. There followed questions and discussion.

Those ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacraments, and commissioned as church related community workers, since the last Assembly were greeted by the Moderators, and the Moderator addressed them:

The Revd Mathew Prevett – St Andrew’s Monkseaton and Interim Ministry
The Revd Catherine Lewis-Smith – Darwen Group
The Revd Pamela Noonan – South Lakes Group
The Revd Jim Williams – St Annes-on-the-sea and Elswick
The Revd Angela Lawson – Spen and Calder Enterprise
The Revd Janine Atkinson – Spen and Calder Enterprise
The Revd Dr Chris Dowd – Hull Area Team
The Revd Zaidie Orr – Sheffield Group
The Revd Elaine Hutchinson – Trinity Hall Green, Birmingham
The Revd Peter Kimberley – Warwick Road, Coventry
The Revd Bruno Boldrini – Norwich Area Team
The Revd Elaine Colechin – Bury St Edmunds, Cheveley, Stetchworth, and Wickhambrook
The Revd Joshua Norris – Bocking, Castle Hedingham, and Halstead
The Revd Bryn Rickards – Sudbury, Hadleigh, and Monk’s Eleigh
The Revd Ruth Wilson – St Luke’s Cambridge, Duxford and Whittlesford
The Revd Henriette Wentink – Bush Hill Park, Christchurch, and Lancaster Road, Enfield
The Revd Martin Belgrove – NE Kent Coastal Group
The Revd Samantha Sheehan (formerly Aspinall) – North Kent Group
The Revd Richard Stein – Bexhill-on-Sea and area ministry
Ms Kirsty Mabbott – church related community worker – Newport
The Revd Dr Philip Wall – Pontypridd St Davids, Castle Square URC
The Revd Catherine McFie – Fraserburgh
The Revd Branwen Rees – Greenock East and Port Glasgow
The Revd Jake Tatton – Giffnock and Mossbank

This was followed by an audio-visual presentation of ministers marking jubilees since their ordinations. The Moderators greeted those who happened to be present: the Revd Arnold Harrison, marking 50 years; the Revd Malcolm Hanson, marking 51 years, and the Revd David Wiseman, marking 50 years.

The Assembly called for the report of the nominations committee. The convenor, Mrs Irene Wren, proposed:

Resolution 44

General Assembly appoints the Revd David Herbert as Moderator of the Northern Synod from 1 October 2016 to 30 September 2023.

This was agreed unanimously.

Resolution 45

General Assembly re-appoints the Revd Clare Downing as Moderator of the Wessex Synod from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2022.

This was agreed unanimously.

Resolution 46

General Assembly re-appoints the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith as Moderator of the Southern Synod from 1 March 2018 to 28 February 2023.

This was agreed unanimously.

The General Secretary reported on the ministerial disciplinary and incapacity processes since the last ordinary meeting of General Assembly in 2014:

1. The West Midlands Synod referred the Revd Neil Eldridge to the disciplinary process. An Assembly commission met on 23 July 2014 and resolved that his name be deleted from the Roll of Ministers. Mr Eldridge appealed, and an appeals commission on 3 December 2014 upheld the decision of the earlier commission. The total cost was £9,380.
2. A synod referred a minister to the disciplinary process. An Assembly commission met on 17 May 2016 and resolved that the minister's name remain on the Roll. There was no appeal and the total cost was £2,173.
3. A synod referred a minister to the disciplinary process. The case was then discontinued by the mandated group, so that it was not eventually necessary for an Assembly commission to meet. There was no cost to the Assembly budget.
4. A synod referred a minister to the incapacity procedure. The minister subsequently proceeded to retire, and the case was discontinued by the commission. The cost was £640.

The Moderators invited their chaplains, the Revd Dr Gwen Collins and the Revd Mark Robinson, to lead closing worship, after which Assembly adjourned until the following morning.



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

Saturday 9 July 2016

At Southport, and within the Floral Hall

Saturday 9 July 2016 9am
Business session three

The Assembly was led in worship by the chaplains, and Bible study was led by the Revd Sohail Ejaz. The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, was in the chair.

The Clerk intimated arrangements for comments on minutes, and that resolutions, 21, 22, 23, and 33 had been removed from en bloc business. Resolutions 21, 22, and 23 would be taken this afternoon with other faith and order committee business, and resolution 33 tomorrow with other mission committee business. The General Secretary addressed Assembly on “the agenda before us”.

The Assembly called for the report of the synod moderators, which was presented by the Revd Paul Whittle, the Revd Ruth Whitehead and the Revd Steve Faber. Assembly was invited to discuss the questions raised in the report around their tables.

Mr Stephen Ball, youth representative, and others, requested that Assembly be given time to discuss the questions raised by children during the opening worship. The Moderator invited Assembly to discuss these questions around their tables.

The Assembly proceeded to elect Moderators of General Assembly 2018-2020. The Clerk explained the voting procedure. The Moderator led Assembly in prayer before voting took place.

The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, took the chair.

The Moderator invited the Revd Dr Susan Durber, Moderator of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, to address Assembly on ecumenical convergence.

The convenor of the Assembly arrangements committee proposed resolutions 47 and 48:

Resolution **47**

General Assembly resolves to increase the financial provision for the 2018 Assembly from £200,000 to £230,000, an increase of 15%.

During debate, the Treasurer informed Assembly that that an increase in budget for one committee would necessitate a decrease in spending elsewhere in the Church's budget, and the convenor confirmed that such an increase in budget would cover the costs that had been borne by synods in 2014 and 2016. After full debate, the resolution was carried by a significant majority.

Resolution 48

General Assembly resolves to appoint a task group to consider the documentation already available, to consult widely, particularly with synods and Assembly committees, and to bring to the General Assembly of 2018 proposals for the form, size, duration, location and funding of the Assembly in subsequent years from 2020 to 2030.

The convenor stated that the task group would consist of five people, including a former Moderator of General Assembly, a current or recent synod clerk, and the Clerk of the General Assembly, nominated by the nominations committee, and appointed by the Assembly officers, to begin work immediately, and report to each meeting of Mission Council. A report to the autumn 2017 meeting of Mission Council should enable that meeting to make decisions that enable a venue to be firmly booked for the 2020 meeting of General Assembly. The resolution was agreed by consensus.

The Assembly called for an interim report from the 20-40 task group, which was given by the convenor, Ms Victoria Paulding.

The Assembly called for the presentation of the Congregational and General Community Projects Awards, which were announced by the Revd David Grosch-Miller. The Moderator presented the awards to representatives of the winners:

Highly Commended:

Trinity Community Church, Manchester – “Melody Memories” – Carol Bodey and Audrey Mayor

Beeston Hill United Free Church – “Charity Shop” – Carol Normanton and Pauline Peacock

Runner Up:

Broadway United Reformed Church – “Look After Yourself” – Joanne Griffin and Mark Pickering

Overall Winner:

Cornerstone, Hythe United Reformed Church – “Families Matter” – the Revd Eddie Boon and Julia Cross

Following the presentation, the Assembly adjourned at 12.20pm.

Business session four

The Assembly reconvened at 1.30pm. The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, was in the chair.

The General Secretary invited the Moderator to greet a jubilee minister who had not been present yesterday: the Revd Margaret Taylor, who was the first woman trained by the Presbyterian Church of England, ordained 52 years ago. The Assembly responded with a standing ovation.

The Revd Gordon Armstrong intimated that Oakshaw Trinity Church, Paisley, a United Reformed Church/Church of Scotland local ecumenical partnership, has been awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

The minutes of Friday's sessions had been tabled, and the Clerk moved their acceptance, which was unanimously agreed.

The Moderator invited the Revd Chris Ferguson, the General Secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, to address Assembly.

The Assembly called for the report of the faith and order committee. The convenor, the Revd Elizabeth Welch, proposed resolutions 21, 22 and 23:

Resolution 21

General Assembly affirms 'What Is the Spirit Saying to the Churches?' and invites local churches, synods and General Assembly, and their committees, to continue prayerfully to ask this question, looking at the points of celebration in their life and the possibilities and challenges in front of the Church.

Resolution 22

General Assembly encourages local churches to be proactive in sharing their good news stories via the communications department, the creative use of social media, synod gatherings and whatever other opportunities present themselves or can be created.

Resolution 23

General Assembly invites the faith and order committee in consultation with other relevant bodies to undertake work arising out of this report and on 'A Statement Concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church', to produce further resources for study and worship, to help churches in their reflection on 'What is the Spirit saying to the churches?'

After extensive discussion, the Moderator ruled that the resolutions be referred to the facilitation group.

The convenor invited the Revd Professor Stephen Orchard to propose resolution 24:

Resolution 24

General Assembly:

- a) **welcomes the principles embodied in the Wider Fold proposals;**
- b) **instructs the faith and order committee to prepare a plan to implement these principles, in consultation with the law and polity advisory group;**
- c) **instructs the faith and order committee to bring proposals for such a plan to the meeting of Mission Council in May 2017.**

After extensive discussion, it was not possible to find consensus, but the resolution was passed recognising disagreement.

The Assembly called for the report of the finance committee. The Treasurer, Mr John Ellis, formally proposed resolution 26 and asked permission for the Venerable Anthony MacRow-Wood, Archdeacon of Dorset, President of Churches' Mutual Credit Union, to speak about the Churches' Mutual Credit Union, which the Moderator granted:

Resolution 26

General Assembly welcomes the participation of the United Reformed Church in the Churches' Mutual Credit Union.

The resolution was passed by consensus.

Assembly adjourned at 4pm.

Business session five

Assembly re-convened at 4.30pm. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair. The Assembly called for the report of the Mission Council. The Revd David Grosch-Miller, immediate-past Moderator, presented the report of the Mission Council, and formally proposed resolutions 3 and 4. The Moderator gave permission to the Revd Professor David Thompson, who was not a member of Assembly, to speak to resolutions 3 and 4. The Assembly gave its permission for resolution 3 to be moved in the form in which it had appeared on the order paper:

Resolution 3

General Assembly adopts the following amendments to the Structure of the URC:

- 5. Appeal, Reference and Constitutional Review**
 - 5.1. Any decision of a Church Meeting within an area of ecumenical experiment may be taken by way of appeal to the area meeting. A decision of any other Church Meeting may be taken by way of appeal to the synod on which the local church concerned is represented. Any decision of an ecumenical area meeting having implications for the United Reformed Church or any part thereof may be taken by way of appeal to the synod on which local churches in the area are represented. Any decision of a synod may be taken by way of appeal to the General Assembly.**
 - 5.2. A Church Meeting may itself refer any dispute or difference arising within the local church for resolution by the synod. An ecumenical area meeting may refer any dispute or difference arising within the area for resolution by the synod. A synod may refer any dispute or difference arising within the province or nation under its oversight for resolution by the General Assembly.**
 - 5.3. The synod may declare any decision of a Church Meeting within the province or nation under its oversight, or any decision of an ecumenical area meeting within that province or nation having implications for the United Reformed Church or any part thereof, which is (or has been reached by a procedure) incompatible with the Basis of Union, the Structure of the URC, the constitution of the ecumenical area (where applicable) or any rule or resolution of Assembly binding on the local church or the ecumenical area to be a nullity. The General Assembly may declare any decision of a Synod to be a nullity on analogous grounds. The review of any decision with a view to declaring it a nullity shall be known as constitutional review.**

- 5.4. Appeals, references and constitutional review under this paragraph shall be subject to conditions and processes laid down by the Assembly in Rules of Procedure. A wider council determining an appeal or reference may either substitute its own decision for that of the more local council, or remit the issue to the more local council for reconsideration. No procedure governed by this paragraph shall be used to review decisions reached under the ministerial disciplinary process or the incapacity procedure.**
- 5.5. The decision of the General Assembly on any matter which has come before it on appeal, reference or constitutional review shall be final and binding.**

After discussion, the resolution was passed unanimously.

The General Secretary moved that the matter be referred to synods in accordance with paragraph 3.1 of Structure with responses to General Secretary by 31 March 2017, which was agreed unanimously.

Resolution 4

General Assembly directs Mission Council to amend the Rules of Procedure, in order that the Structure changes in resolution 3 may be appropriately implemented in practice.

This was passed unanimously

Mr Grosch-Miller formally proposed resolutions 5, 6 and 7. The General Secretary explained the process leading to these resolutions being returned for a further vote, after consultation, and reminded Assembly that the resolutions could be accepted or rejected, but not amended.

Resolution 5

General Assembly resolves to make the following changes to the Structure:

Functions of synods:

2(4)(A)(xvi) Present version:

to give oversight to candidates for the Ministries of Word and Sacraments and church related community work and to candidates for any form of full-time service in the Church at home and abroad, and, in the case of candidates for the above ministries, determine their eligibility for a call

New version:

to consider on the recommendation of local churches applications for recognition as candidates for the ministries of Word and Sacraments and church related community work and to transmit them, if approved, to the Assembly for decision, and, in partnership with the relevant Resource Centre for Learning, to give pastoral care to such candidates during their training.

Functions of Ecumenical United Areas:

2(5)(A)(vi) Present version:

to consider, on the recommendation of Local Churches, applications for recognition as candidates for the Ministries of Word and Sacraments and church related community work and to transmit them, if approved, to the synod for decision.

New version:

to consider, on the recommendation of Local Churches, applications for recognition as candidates for the Ministries of Word and Sacraments and church related community work and to transmit them to the synod.

Functions of General Assembly:

New function [numbering to be determined]:

to consider, on the recommendation of synods, applications for recognition as candidates for the ministries of Word and Sacraments and church related community work, to oversee their training, and to determine their eligibility for a call.

This was passed unanimously.

Resolution 6

General Assembly resolves to make the following changes to Paragraph 2(4) A(xxii) of the Structure.

Present version:

to seek to expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community, and in Scotland and Wales to undertake responsibility for national ecumenical relationships on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church, subject to the final authority of the General Assembly

New version:

- a) **to seek to expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community, and**
- b) **in Scotland and Wales to speak and act on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church in public affairs or the conduct of ecumenical relationships specific to the nation concerned, in the General Assembly's name but without prejudice to the Assembly's right to speak and act in the same field on behalf of the church either in England or throughout Great Britain.**

This was passed unanimously.

Resolution 7

- a) **In keeping with the 2007 commitment on Human Sexuality, General Assembly does not consider it appropriate to express a single view on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church on the matter of the marriage of same-sex couples.**
- b) **General Assembly declares that the Church Meeting of each Local Church of the United Reformed Church in England and Wales is the relevant governing authority for the purpose of giving consent for the trustees of its building to seek the registration of that building for religious marriage ceremonies of same-sex couples, in accordance with the provisions of Section 26A(1) of the Marriage Act 1949 as amended by the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013.**
- c) **In the case of Local Ecumenical Partnerships and Union Churches, where the constitution makes no provision for a Church or Congregational Meeting (including a Special or Extraordinary General Meeting) the relevant governing authority of the United Reformed Church under Section 26A(1) of the Marriage Act 1949 as amended by the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 is the council which represents the widest gathering of members of that Church or Partnership. In case of doubt the council to act in this matter shall be jointly determined, in light of the LEP constitution and any sharing agreement, by the Moderator and Clerk of the synod on which that Church is represented.**

- d) **Noting that Mission Council has already recognised, on behalf of General Assembly, 'that if a future Assembly were to allow for ministers and members of the United Reformed Church to solemnise same-sex marriages under Scots Law, the Synod of Scotland would be the appropriate council of the URC to approach the Registrar General for Scotland', the General Assembly confirms that it now lies within the competence of the National Synod of Scotland to nominate under Section 9(1A) of the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 as amended by the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014 members of the United Reformed Church who have indicated their willingness in writing to the synod to be approved celebrants for the marriages of same-sex couples in Scotland.)**
- e) **The General Assembly recalls that the trusts on which Local Church buildings are commonly held empower the Church Meeting to direct in what ways such a building is or is not to be used for public worship and ancillary purposes.**
- f) **The General Assembly authorises the General Secretary, the Clerk, or any Deputy General Secretary to sign and furnish a copy of this resolution (or a relevant extract) in the name of the Assembly, whenever such a copy may be required by law.**

It was proposed by Mr Ron Sweeney and seconded by Mr Tony Obi-Ezekpazu that the resolution be not put. Upon being put to the vote, it was overwhelmingly lost, and debate continued.

It was proposed by the Revd John Mackerness, and seconded by Ms Anna Ouston, that the resolution be now put. Upon being put the vote, this was carried by an overwhelming majority, with only a few votes against.

The chaplain offered prayer before the vote was taken.

The Moderator called for tellers, and there voted for the resolution, 240, and there voted against the resolution, 21. This represented a percentage in favour of 91.92%, in excess of the two-thirds required. There were four abstentions.

The chaplain offered prayers.

The following members of General Assembly recorded their dissent:

The Revd Heather Cadoux

Ms Ruth Dixon

The Revd Sohail Ejaz

The Revd Brian Harley

The Revd Joshua Norris

Ms Marguerite Sobol

The Revd Paul Stokes

The Moderator invited Mr Steve Summers, Church Related Community Work Development Officer, to report on planned URC activity at Greenbelt.

Mr Grosch-Miller presented the remainder of the Mission Council report, and there were no questions.

The Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship), the Revd Richard Church, reported on the past case review.

Mr Church and the Deputy General Secretary (Mission), proposed resolution 1:

Resolution **1**

General Assembly welcomes the work of the Walking the Way steering group and commends it to the wider Church.

After discussion, the resolution was passed recognising disagreement.

The session closed at 7pm.



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

Sunday 9 July 2016

At Southport, and within the Floral Hall

Sunday 10 July 2016 9am
Business session six

The Assembly was led in worship by the chaplains, and Bible study was led by several members of Assembly. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair.

The Assembly called for the emergency report of the mission committee on the Church's response to the European Union referendum. The convenor, the Revd Tracey Lewis gave a verbal report, which Assembly discussed around tables, and then in plenary. Assembly then decided to send their thoughts to a facilitation group, who were to consider the views expressed in Assembly and return to a later session with a draft resolution.

The Assembly then met in parallel sessions, following which the Moderators and their chaplains led Assembly in worship. Assembly was joined in worship by churches from the Mersey Synod. During the act of worship the General Secretary led a commemoration of those ministers and missionaries who had died since the last Assembly, and whose deaths he had been notified of:

William Kenneth Aitchison
Garth Anders
Lionel George Anderson
John Arthur
Ian David Hunter Baillie
Nelson William Bainbridge
Peter Geoffrey Blake Barker
Geoffrey Bending
Albert Oliver Bourne
Gerald Edwin Fergus Bowerman
Robert Turnbull Brown
Stephen Leonard Brown
Reginald Arthur Burton
David John Cassidy
Alan Odian Cassingham
Jean Challand
Joyce Childs
Arthur Franklyn Climpson
Peter William Couch
John David Cox
Richard Perry Cox

Charles Ernest Burland Cranfield
Jean Patricia Crawshaw
John Bridson Cribb
Douglas Harvey Cummins
Kenneth Frank Davies
Donald Dennison
David Dones
Edward Philip Eastman
Derek Arthur Fitch
Walter Ford
Christopher Keith Forecast
Barbara Mary Gates
David Stanton Goodall
James Graham
Cyril Handel Grant
Leslie Craven Green
Isabel Hathaway
Thomas Leslie Haywood
Michael John Hensman
Frederick Leon Hill
Stanley Hodges
Stanley Horner Hodgson
James Joseph Horne
Maurice James Husselbee
Phyllis Hutchison
Bryan William Imbush
Charles John Alexander Innes
Robert Andrew Irving
Muriel Anne Jeffrey
David Arthur Leonard Jenkins
Catherine Jones
Norman Barry Jones
Thomas Glanville Jones
Hugh Kember
Kenneth Frank James Knight
Andrew Lorimer
Murdoch MacKenzie
Andrew John Mackereth
David Murray Main
David Hurlstone Mason
Myrtle McKelvey
Robert McVey
Colin John Meynell
Kathleen Moody
Bernard Leslie Morrell
Godfrey Shaw Nichols
Frederick Adams Noden
Gertrude Hanna Maria Stephanie Norris
John Edward Parry
Walter Phillips
Brian Godfrey Prior
Helen Mary Pullin
Derek Norman Richmond
Alvinza Riddoch
Victor George Ridgewell
John Rutherford
Sheila Mary Scarr
Donald Schofield

Alan Philip Frederick Sell
 Jean Simpkin
 Dora Helen Smith
 Hubert John Smith
 Kenneth Maltus Smith
 Nellie Smith
 Norman Harold Smith
 Lawrence S Squires
 Derek Hugh Stockwell
 Ronald William George Talmey
 John Frederick Waghorn
 Zamantha Claire Walker
 Alfred Bentley Webster
 David Alexander Welbrock
 Stanley James Whiffen
 Alan Christopher White
 Edward Glyn Williams
 Frances Williams
 Robert James Woods
 George Neilson Wotherspoon

The Assembly adjourned until 2pm.

Business session seven

The Assembly reconvened at 2pm. The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, was in the chair. Worship was led by the chaplain.

The General Secretary made a statement, being a postscript to the debate on marriage of same-sex couples the previous day:

1. Advice on the legal processes for churches in England and Wales wishing to register their buildings will be on the URC website within about a week.
2. Anyone in Scotland requiring advice on the legal requirements in that jurisdiction should contact the office of the Synod of Scotland.
3. Legislation was under preparation in the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, and it might be appropriate for Mission Council to deal with any URC response to that legislation.
4. There are rare but not unknown occurrences of a minister being asked to conduct a wedding in unregistered premises, such as a hospital ward, and it might be appropriate for Mission Council to deal with any URC response to such situations.
5. Ministers should not constrain the decision of a Church Meeting on whether or not to apply for registration of their buildings. Church Meetings cannot compel a minister to conduct the marriage of a same-sex couple against their conscience, but could arrange for another minister to conduct such a service, in a very similar fashion to our baptismal policy.

No one objected to the General Secretary's suggestions.

The Moderator invited the Revd Dr Majid Abel, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Pakistan, to address Assembly. Dr Abel spoke about the situation of the Church in Pakistan.

The convenor of the Mission Committee, the Revd Tracey Lewis, proposed resolutions 31 and 32 and asked the permission of Assembly to amend the report as detailed on the order paper. The Assembly declined the deletion of words in paragraph 2.5 but accepted the addition of a new paragraph 2.6:

2.6

We recognise the significance of the December 2015 Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). One of its outcomes is to aim to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels recognising that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.

Resolution 31

General Assembly adopts the Environmental Policy, and encourages all committees, synods and local churches to do their best to implement it.

The resolution was agreed by consensus.

Resolution 32

General Assembly resolves to appoint a task group until 31 July 2022 in the first instance, of four persons, to be appointed by the nominations committee and funded from the mission committee budget, to monitor the United Reformed Church's progress toward meeting its commitment to reduce its carbon footprint, reporting to the mission committee.

The task group's specific remit shall be to:

- a) **compile, produce or commission resources for worship and teaching related to themes contained in the Environmental Policy;**
- b) **consider the budgetary implications of implementing the Environmental Policy;**
- c) **commission a suitable individual or body to calculate the Church's carbon footprint, enabling a benchmark to be set against which future reductions in this footprint may be made; and**
- d) **liaise with the United Reformed Church investment committee, and to assist the relevant bodies within the United Reformed Church regarding decisions relating to the investment of Church funds in fossil fuels.**

After discussion, the resolution was passed recognising disagreement.

Mrs Lewis then proposed resolution 33:

Resolution 33

General Assembly, recalling the resolution on Trident adopted by Mission Council in 2006:

- a) **Welcomes the current international focus on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons;**
- b) **Remains opposed to the costly replacement of Trident and calls for the negotiation of a Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty to bring about the elimination of all nuclear weapons;**
- c) **Mandates the mission committee to make this call widely known, working where possible with partner churches and organisations to achieve it;**
- d) **Urges church members to engage with their Member of Parliament on this issue.**

Following discussion, this business was remaindered.

The Assembly called for synod resolutions and the Revd Paul Whittle, the Revd Jane Weedon, and the Revd Nigel Appleton moved resolutions 37A, 37B, and 37C.

Resolution **37A**

General Assembly resolves to:

- a) **commend the Church of Scotland Report ‘The Inheritance of Abraham’ (revised version) for study by United Reformed churches;**
- b) **endorse the conclusion of ‘The Inheritance of Abraham’ and reject claims that scripture offers any peoples a privileged claim for possession of a particular territory;**
- c) **commend ‘A Moment of Truth, a word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering, Kairos Palestine 2009’ for study by United Reformed churches and encourage the formation of Kairos communities, either within individual congregations or ecumenically;**
- d) **urge the UK government and the European Union to do all that is within their power to ensure that human rights are respected and international law is upheld in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories;**
- e) **urge the UK Government and the European Union to exert, through sanctions or other effective means that address the inequality of power between the parties, international pressure on Israel to end the occupation of Palestinian territory and the blockade of Gaza and allow a just peace to be achieved.**

Resolution **37B** is identical to paragraphs c), d) and e) of 37A.

Resolution **37C**

General Assembly resolves to:

- a) **commend the Church of Scotland Report ‘The Inheritance of Abraham’ (revised version) and ‘A Moment of Truth, a word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering, Kairos Palestine 2009’ for study by United Reformed churches and synods.**
- b) **urge the UK government and the European Union to do all that is within their power to ensure that human rights are respected and international law is upheld by all parties in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.**
- c) **develop and deepen our existing work around these issues so as to enable the United Reformed Church to adopt a programme of dialogue and action with partner churches, interfaith partners and public authorities.**

Under standing order 4.10, Assembly voted, and resolution 37C received significantly more than 50% of the votes cast and became the substantive motion.

Mr John Ellis proposed that standing order 2.5.9 be implemented but the Moderator ruled that there had not been enough discussion to know this.

After extensive discussion and a variety of suggested courses of action, the Assembly agreed to ask a facilitation group to work on part c.

The moderator invited the Revd Dr James Coleman to announce the results of the election for the Moderators of the General Assembly 2018-2020. Dr Coleman intimated that the Revd Nigel Uden and Mr Derek Estill had been elected. They were present in the hall and were greeted by the Moderator.

The Assembly adjourned at 4.25pm.

Business session eight

The Assembly resumed at 4.40pm. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair. The Assembly called for the report of the education and learning committee, and the convenor, the Revd Professor Neil Messer, invited Assembly to thank Mrs Heather Skidmore, retiring after many years of service with TLS. The Moderator greeted her and expressed the thanks of the Assembly.

Professor Messer intimated that Mr Lawrence Moore had resigned from the post of Director of the Windermere Centre after 14 years, to explore a vocation as a non-stipendiary minister and to offer his time to support missional discipleship on a freelance basis. The Moderator expressed the thanks of the Assembly to Mr Moore.

Dr Messer proposed resolution 13:

Resolution 13

In the light of the discussion of the papers on expectations of ministers, General Assembly:

- a) **directs Mission Council to agree a statement on the expectations of ministers of Word and Sacraments;**
- b) **instructs the ministries and education and learning committees to carry out the necessary consultation and drafting work to enable Mission Council to fulfil this task.**

After extensive discussion, the resolution was passed recognising disagreement.

The en bloc resolutions were moved by the General Secretary:

Resolution 2

General Assembly appoints Mr Ian Hardie as Treasurer of the Church from 1 July 2017 for six years.

Resolution 8

General Assembly notes the closures listed, with praise to God for the worship and witness offered by these fellowships across the years.

Resolution 9

In order that the *Book of Reports* should be as accessible as possible, General Assembly requests that every report on which a decision is invited should include a summary of its main points in not more than 250 words on a cover sheet. Assembly gives to the General Secretary, as editor, authority to vary this guideline in appropriately exceptional cases.

Resolution 10

Assembly agrees that the General Assembly in 2018 will meet in the Albert Hall, Nottingham from 6 to 9 July 2018 or at such other place or on such other date as may be necessary.

Resolution 11

General Assembly changes the name of the communication and editorial committee to the communications committee with immediate effect, and authorises any consequent changes.

Resolution 12

General Assembly commends iChurch, as its preferred website supplier, to local churches, affiliated groups and the synods.

Resolution 20

General Assembly commends the document 'The Church: Towards a Common Vision' for ongoing reflection in the church; takes note of the faith and order committee response and invites comments on that response by the end of October for consideration for inclusion in the submission to the World Council.

Resolution 25

Assembly welcomes the report of the Church of England/ United Reformed Church conversations, agrees the recommendations and instructs the nominations committee, having consulted with the faith and order committee and any other relevant parties, to nominate members for the proposed steering group.

Resolution 27

General Assembly notes the trustees' report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2015.

Resolution 30

General Assembly confirms the procedure shown on pages 164-166 of the *Book of Reports* to General Assembly 2016 for applications for candidacy for the ministry of Word and Sacraments and the ministry of church related community work within the United Reformed Church, and delegates to the ministries and education and learning committees' authority to make such minor amendments to the administration of this procedure as may from time to time be required, while reserving the right to make major changes of substance.

Resolution 34

- a) **The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church welcomes the statement produced by the Ecumenical Forum on Peace in North East Asia meeting in Seoul on 12 September 2015.**
- b) **The General Assembly faithfully joins its ecumenical partners, especially the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK),**
 - i) **in affirming the 'Statement on Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula' that was adopted by the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches;**
 - ii) **in supporting the communiqué that was issued by the WCC International Consultation on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula at the Ecumenical Institute in 2014.**
- c) **The General Assembly dedicates itself to accompany its Korean partners, the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) and the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) as they seek the reconciliation and restoration of families and communities long divided by conflict and hostility, so that social, spiritual and psychological healing can occur between the people of Korea.**

- d) **The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church continues to support ecumenical engagements towards peace and reconciliation of the Korean Peninsula. These actions include promoting the campaign to finally replace the Armistice Agreement of 1953 with a Peace Treaty, joining with Christians around the globe in recognising and providing worship resources and actively raising these initiatives with ecumenical partners in the UK.**

Resolution 35

General Assembly appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pages 202-214 of the *Book of Reports*, subject to the additions and corrections contained in the supplementary report to Assembly.

Resolution 36

- a) **General Assembly appoints Mr Ian Hardie as Deputy Treasurer of the Church with immediate effect until 30 June 2017.**
 b) **General Assembly appoints the Revd John Piper as Deputy Treasurer of the Church from 1 July 2017 for four years.**

These were all agreed unanimously.

The Moderator greeted Mr Ian Hardie and the Revd John Piper as incoming Deputy Treasurers.

The Assembly met in parallel sessions.

The Moderator invited the Revd Dr Alan Spence and the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith to propose resolution 38:

Resolution 38

General Assembly resolves that at its future meetings it will, as part of its regular business, receive the budget of the Church for the next financial year for adoption. In years when General Assembly does not meet, Mission Council, acting on behalf of Assembly, will receive the annual budget for approval.

After the Treasurer responded, Mr Stephen Ball proposed, and the Revd Elaine Colechin seconded, that the resolution be now put. This was carried, Mrs Furley-Smith responded, and the resolution was put to the vote.

The resolution was lost.

The Assembly returned to the business of the faith and order committee. Resolutions 21, 22, and 23 had been revised by the facilitation group, and the Revd Matthew Prevett proposed a revised resolution 21:

Resolution 21

General Assembly:

- a) reaffirms the work of the Faith and Order Committee on 'What the Spirit is Saying to the Churches?'
- b) welcomes the celebratory statements and affirmations on pages 123-127 of the *Book of Reports* and commends them to local churches, encouraging them to share good news stories with the wider Church.
- c) instructs the Faith and Order Committee and the Walking the Way steering group to work closely together on the production of materials that focus on and deepen the URC's understanding of its distinctive identity.

The resolution was agreed by consensus.

The Assembly returned to the business of the mission committee. On behalf of the facilitation group, the Revd Sarah Moore proposed resolution 50:

Resolution 50:

On the 23 June a referendum took place within the United Kingdom regarding the question of European Union membership. The majority of those who participated within this referendum voted for the UK to leave this union. In the light of the UK's 2016 European Union membership vote, General Assembly:

- **Recalls that the Gospel mandates us to respect all people, love our neighbour and offer hospitality to strangers. In light of the decision to leave the EU, and the hurt and anxiety that many people across our nations feel, it believes that the Church's responsibility now is to be a voice of love, hope, inclusion and compassion;**
- **Affirms the value of being a diverse and multicultural society and calls on local churches to continue to build bridges of understanding and trust with all parts of their communities;**
- **Celebrates the URC's Reformed European heritage and identity, and commits to ongoing ecumenical relationships with partner churches across Europe;**
- **Celebrates the contributions that nationals of other European countries make to the UK and commits to stand in solidarity with them at a time of uncertainty;**
- **Calls on local churches and members of the URC to challenge incidences of racism and hate crime and report them through the appropriate channels;**
- **Expresses concern and sadness about the deep inequalities within British society and calls upon URC members to lobby their elected representatives calling for a fairer society;**
- **Calls on all those in the URC to pray for wisdom and honesty for those involved in negotiating the terms of the UK's exit from the EU and for those who currently feel marginalised by the decision;**
- **Recognises that the URC is a Church in three nations and so calls upon the Synod of Scotland to engage in and contribute to the public processes and ecumenical responses specific to Scotland which may emerge;**
- **Encourages members of the URC to continue to engage with the ongoing political and social debate on this topic and to challenge misinformation.**

The resolution was agreed by consensus.

Closing worship was led by the chaplain, the Revd Dr Gwen Collins.

Assembly adjourned at 7.20pm.



The
United
Reformed
Church

At Southport, and within the Floral Hall

Monday 11 July 2016 9am
Business session nine

The Assembly was led in the worship by the chaplains, and Bible study was led by Ms Karen Campbell.

The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair.

The Moderator offered the thanks of the Assembly to committee convenors who were standing down, and to the Revd Lis Mullen, retiring as Moderator of Northern Synod, and Mr Andrew Grimwade, retiring as Chief Finance Officer.

The Assembly called for the report of the ministries committee. The Deputy General Secretary, the Revd Richard Church (Discipleship), intimated that he had been asked by the General Secretary to convene the committee since the resignation of the Revd Gethin Rhys in March 2016, and thanked Mr Rhys for his work.

Mr Church apologised that the Revd Alison Micklem's name had not been included with the newly ordained Ministers in the list on page 146.

The Secretary for Ministries, the Revd Craig Bowman, read a statement from the Revd David Bedford, retiring as convenor of the Retired Ministers Housing sub-committee.

Mr Church proposed resolutions 28 and 29:

Resolution **28**

General Assembly notes the projections for numbers of stipendiary ministers likely to be available and stipendiary posts likely to be fundable through the Ministry and Mission Fund until 2025, and urges synods to use the principles outlined in 'Challenge to the Church' in deploying the stipendiary posts allocated to them, alongside non-stipendiary ministers, elders, local church leaders and other lay ministries.

This was agreed by consensus.

Resolution 29

- a) Assembly reaffirms its aim of funding at least 26 stipendiary CRCWs across the URC with a minimum of two CRCWs per synod. While the total number of CRCW stipends paid remains below 26, synods may have three stipendiary CRCWs in their synod for a limited period without it affecting their overall deployment numbers or number of stipends allocated for the ministry of Word and Sacraments. Each CRCW post shall require approval by the church related community work programme subcommittee on the basis of an application by the relevant synod.
- b) Up to 8% of the available stipendiary posts for ministers of Word and Sacraments shall be allocated as special category ministry posts, each post to be approved by the accreditation subcommittee on the basis of an application by the relevant synod.
- c) All remaining stipendiary posts for both ministries shall be allocated to synods on the basis of a formula with a weighting of 60% for the number of members in each synod and 40% for the number of congregations in each synod. This formula shall be reapplied annually on the basis of the latest information available.
- d) Each synod shall remain responsible for making its own allocation of stipendiary posts across the synod.

The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith, seconded by the Revd Steve Faber, proposed a different form of words for paragraph c):

- c) All remaining stipendiary posts for both ministries shall be allocated to synods on the current basis until more work has been done on deployment at Mission Council.

On behalf of the committee, Mr Church accepted the amendment, however members of Assembly raised concerns about the amendment. After discussion, the amendment was passed recognising disagreement and became part of the substantive resolution:

Resolution **29**

- a) **Assembly reaffirms its aim of funding at least 26 stipendiary CRCWs across the URC with a minimum of two CRCWs per synod. While the total number of CRCW stipends paid remains below 26, synods may have three stipendiary CRCWs in their synod for a limited period without it affecting their overall deployment numbers or number of stipends allocated for the ministry of Word and Sacraments. Each CRCW post shall require approval by the church related community work programme subcommittee on the basis of an application by the relevant synod.**
- b) **Up to 8% of the available stipendiary posts for ministers of Word and Sacraments shall be allocated as special category ministry posts, each post to be approved by the accreditation subcommittee on the basis of an application by the relevant synod.**
- c) **All remaining stipendiary posts for both ministries shall be allocated to synods on the current basis until more work has been done on deployment at Mission Council.**
- d) **Each synod shall remain responsible for making its own allocation of stipendiary posts across the synod.**

After further discussion, in which particular concern was expressed about rural churches and geographically isolated churches, the revised resolution was agreed by consensus.

The Assembly returned to the business of the faith and order committee. The convenor formally proposed resolution 14 and invited the Revd Professor David Thompson to speak:

Resolution 14

General Assembly agrees that the existing guidance on Presidency at the Sacraments (The Manual, Section F) be amended to read:

The pattern of presidency at the sacraments if the minister in pastoral charge is not available should be as follows:

- a) **the Church Meeting may invite another Minister of Word and Sacraments (including a retired minister who has expressed willingness to do so);**
- b) **if such a minister is not available, the Church Meeting may invite an elder (or accredited lay preacher) authorised by the synod, in accordance with the provisions of §25 of the Basis of Union: elders of the local church and accredited lay preachers regularly conducting worship there should be considered first;**
- c) **authorisation for such presidency by the synod, normally of members from within the congregation concerned, should be for an initial period of three to five years (according to synod judgement), including a probationary year on first appointment, with the possibility of renewal. Before renewal there should be consultation by the synod with the congregation, and a review of its needs.**

In response to questions raised in the debate, the convenor agreed to converse with the ministries committee on the question of the authorisation of church related community workers.

The resolution was passed recognising disagreement.

The convenor formally proposed resolutions 15 to 19 together:

Resolution 15

General Assembly agrees that synods are recommended to provide regular support and guidance for each church without an authorised elder within its membership; and also for authorised elders, for example by holding an annual meeting where experiences can be shared.

Resolution 16

General Assembly agrees that the ministries committee be invited to develop a specific code of conduct for authorised elders and lay preachers; and that those concerned agree to be bound by it before embarking on their ministry.

Resolution 17

General Assembly agrees that a list of those authorised elders and lay preachers whose authority to serve has been withdrawn be maintained by the General Secretariat, to avoid the possibility of any individual exercising this ministry unhelpfully in one place and then moving elsewhere without the previous difficulty being addressed to try again.

Resolution 18

General Assembly agrees that the education and learning committee be invited to prepare an Assembly syllabus for the preparation of authorised elders and lay preachers, drawing on existing synod resources.

Resolution 19

General Assembly agrees that further attention be given by the ministries and education and learning committees to the possibility of expanding the concept of non-stipendiary ministry to include once more the original pattern of team non-stipendiary ministry.

After discussion, resolutions 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 were all passed recognising disagreement.

The Revd Alison Micklem registered her dissent from Resolutions 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19.

The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, took the chair.

The Assembly returned to consideration of the synod resolutions on Israel and Palestine. The Moderator invited the Revd Matthew Prevett to present the report from the facilitation group. Mr Prevett moved a revised form of words for resolution 37:

Resolution 37

General Assembly instructs mission committee to explore and develop further our existing work around the issues of the Israel/Palestine situation with indigenous churches, interfaith and ecumenical partners and public authorities, including:

- **dialogue and action;**
- **peacebuilding;**
- **justice and security for all;**

in order to enable synods, local churches and individuals to become more aware and to respond with informed prayer, grace and solidarity.

After discussion, this was passed recognising disagreement.

The Assembly returned to consideration of the mission committee's business, returning to the debate on resolution 33. The Revd Michael Meachin proposed that the resolution be amended by the insertion of a new clause a):

- a) commends the service of those required to maintain and operate the current Nuclear Deterrent;
and delete the word 'costly' in the clause numbered b) as printed.

After discussion, the proposed inserted clause a) was lost, and the deletion of the word 'costly' was agreed.

The substantive resolution became:

Resolution 33

General Assembly, recalling the resolution on Trident adopted by Mission Council in 2006:

- a) **Welcomes the current international focus on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons;**
- b) **Remains opposed to the replacement of Trident and calls for the negotiation of a Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty to bring about the elimination of all nuclear weapons;**
- c) **Mandates the mission committee to make this call widely known, working where possible with partner churches and organisations to achieve it;**
- d) **Urges church members to engage with their Member of Parliament on this issue.**

The amended resolution was passed recognising disagreement.

The chaplain offered prayer for our armed forces.

The Clerk proposed resolutions 42 and 43, unfinished business from the 2014 General Assembly, which had been agreed between representatives of URC Youth and the law and polity advisory group as a way of recognising that young people who were fully involved in the life of the United Reformed Church might not yet be Church members, but which prevented a widespread introduction of non-members onto governance bodies. The resolutions also correct an anomaly over the age defining youth. Mr Hopkins sought the permission of Assembly to move the resolutions in an amended form to that presented on the order paper, which was agreed.

Resolution 42

General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church as described:

a) Membership of Synods:

Current wording:

2(4)(i) Two young people, being members of the United Reformed Church, nominated by the Synod's youth forum, committee or equivalent;

Proposed wording:

2(4)(i) Two young people, *actively involved and engaged with the United Reformed Church at local, synod or assembly level, who have the confidence of their local church or the confidence of the Synod's youth forum, committee or equivalent;*

b) Membership of General Assembly

Current wording:

2(6)(b) Among the representatives of Synods shall be included at least two from each Synod aged 26 or under, at the date of appointment. Should a Synod prove unable to make such an appointment it may appoint from another Synod but these persons must be 26 or under at the date of appointment;

2(6)(k) Such number of representatives of the Fellowship of United Reformed Youth, being members of the United Reformed Church, as the Assembly shall from time to time determine (at present three);

Proposed wording:

2(6)(b) Among the representatives of Synods shall be included at least two from each Synod aged 25 or under, at the date of appointment. *These representatives need not be members of the United Reformed Church, but must be actively involved and engaged with the United Reformed Church at local, synod or assembly level, and have the confidence of their local church or the confidence of the Synod's youth forum, committee or equivalent;* should a Synod prove unable to make such an appointment it may appoint from another Synod but these persons must be 25 or under at the date of appointment;

2(6)(k) Such number of representatives of *United Reformed Church Youth, associated with a young people's group in a local church or United Reformed Youth groups at Synod or Assembly level, who have the confidence of their local church or the confidence of URC Youth,* as the Assembly shall from time to time determine (at present three);

This resolution was passed unanimously, meeting the requirement for a two-thirds majority.

The General Secretary proposed that in accordance with paragraph 3.1 of the Structure, resolution 42 be referred to synods, with responses to reach him by 31 March 2017. This was agreed.

Resolution 43

General Assembly resolves to amend the membership of Mission Council agreed in Resolution 19F of General Assembly 2014, such that the United Reformed Church Youth representatives on Mission Council shall be people who are actively involved and engaged with the church at local, synod or assembly level, and have the confidence of their local church or the confidence of either United Reformed Church Youth or their synod's youth forum, committee or equivalent.

This was passed unanimously.

The Assembly called for the Address to the Throne, which was presented by the immediate past Moderator, Mr John Ellis:

To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty.

The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church meeting in Southport sends Your Majesty its warmest wishes and congratulations on the occasion of Your Majesty's 90th birthday celebrations. We express our thanks to Your Majesty for your unrelenting and steadfast service to the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth over the 64 years of your reign, and pray for the continued health of the Royal Family in the year to come.

Among the many ways in which your birthday will be celebrated this year, we particularly appreciate the reminders that you have sought to live your life as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. We join with many others in expressing our gratitude for a life lived in total dedication to the needs of others. Your Majesty's profound commitment and diligence to the call placed upon your life continues to inspire those who share your Christian faith.

Your Majesty's constancy has undoubtedly helped to bring calm and confidence to the nation at a time of continuing political change. The desire of the majority of those who voted in the recent referendum for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union presents Your Majesty's United Kingdom with one of the most significant changes to its political constitution during your long reign. At this time of uncertainty about what the political future of the United Kingdom may hold, we pray for wisdom; for those who now find their livelihood in question; for those of your ministers who must now plan and implement the United Kingdom's departure from the Union; and for us as individuals, that we might be gracious with those from whom we hold differing political views. As Christians, we will still be seeking to build bridges not barriers between peoples, whatever the political structures in operation.

The General Assembly affirmed the importance of our relationships with Christians across the continent of Europe. It also affirmed the value of being a diverse and multicultural society, and particularly the value and contribution to the United Kingdom made by European Union nationals who are now experiencing a time of uncertainty. The United Reformed Church is deeply concerned about the political and humanitarian catastrophe taking place across the Middle East and Europe that has seen millions of Syrian, Iraqi and Jordanian people displaced as a result of conflict and civil unrest. We are distressed by the rising death toll caused by the Syrian Civil War and have called on your ministers to use their influence and wisdom to bring an end to the hostilities in that country. Our Church is mindful that this is a crisis that has both international and domestic dimensions, and that the United Kingdom can and must do far more to welcome and relocate those fleeing violence and persecution. Christ's call to love our neighbour has never felt so relevant.

We share with His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales a growing concern for the plight of religious minorities who face discrimination on the grounds of their faith in places such as Pakistan, Nigeria, Iraq and China. As Nonconformists, we are aware of the precious privilege of tolerance of religious minorities in this country, of which this Address is itself a longstanding symbol. This makes us acutely aware of the limits placed upon religious freedom by extreme interpretations of Islam, which are not

representative of the Muslim faith. Some of those who are suffering are also members of the Reformed Church family from whom we hear directly. We join with other Christians and those of other faiths in condemnation of religious attacks. We are a diverse denomination, and believe that faith manifests itself in heterogeneous ways, but we also believe it is possible for there to be unity within such diversity. At this General Assembly, the United Reformed Church has adopted a new Environmental Policy, which builds upon our long standing commitment to care for God's creation. The international summit in Paris last December was a remarkable coming together of the global north and south with the shared purpose of limiting our carbon dioxide emissions. United Reformed Church congregations throughout England, Wales and Scotland already do much to reduce their impact on the environment, but in the coming months these churches will spend time in Synods reflecting on what more may be done in the future. Amidst the many complexities of contemporary life in a plural society, the General Assembly prays that the generous God whom we all serve may continue to bless, sustain and guide Your Majesty through whatever the future holds.

This was carried overwhelmingly.

The Moderator invited the Moderators-elect, the Revd Nigel Uden and Mr Derek Estill, to address Assembly.

The clerk of the East Midlands Synod, Mrs Helen Lidgett, offered thanks to the Mersey Synod for their hospitality, and extended a welcome to the Assembly to Nottingham in 2018. The Moderator thanked the many people involved in the smooth running of Assembly. The General Secretary offered thanks of Assembly to the Moderators for their wisdom, guidance and careful leadership throughout Assembly.

The Clerk presented the minutes of the sessions on Saturday and Sunday, which were accepted subject to minor corrections. He proposed that the minutes of Monday's session be taken as read, and inserted into the Record of Assembly after review and any necessary corrections by the officers of Assembly. This was agreed.

The General Secretary moved 'Moderator the General Assembly has completed its business and now adjourns with worship to meet at The Albert Hall, Nottingham from 6 to 9 July 2018 or at such other place or such other date as may be necessary'.

The Assembly was led in worship by the chaplains, after which it stood adjourned.

Report of an Appeal to the General Assembly by Mr Lisandro Caffaratto, against a decision of the Thames North Synod

1. Mr Lisandro Caffaratto, a member of Queen's Park United Reformed Church, appealed against the following decision of the Thames North Synod:
On 12 March 2016 Thames North Synod agreed to the closure of Queen's Park United Reformed Church on 20 March 2016.
2. In his letter giving reasons for making his appeal, Mr Caffaratto expressed concern that:
 - 'There have been a breach of URC policies and procedures during the closing process lead by synod's representatives.
 - A number of members of Queen's Park United Reformed Church have expressed their opposition to this closure on 9 March 2016.
 - There have been a breach of URC policies and procedures during the exposition and discussion of this matter at synod's meeting held on 12 March 2016.'

(Letter to General Secretary dated 17 March 2016).
3. The appeal followed the procedure laid down under the Structure of the United Reformed Church paragraph 5 and the Rules of Procedure paragraph 9.
4. Both the appellant and the synod agreed that the appeal should be heard by a specially appointed Commission of the General Assembly, which would act on its behalf.
5. The officers of the Assembly appointed the following to serve as members of the Commission. Neither the appellant nor the synod objected to any of the names:
 - The Reverend Dr David Peel, former Moderator of General Assembly, to convene the Commission
 - Mrs Wilma Frew, Elder West Midlands Synod, also a former Moderator of General Assembly
 - Mrs Helen Lidgett, Clerk of East Midlands Synod
 - The Reverend Roy Lowes, formerly Moderator of West Midlands Synod
 - The Reverend Kathryn Taylor, minister, Eastern Synod.
6. The Clerk of the Assembly was present to advise both the Commission and the two parties. The Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources) was also present to facilitate the process, record the decision, and prepare the report for Assembly.
7. Mr Caffaratto presented his own case. Although given the opportunity to bring a companion, he was unaccompanied, as his companion chose not to attend just before the hearing began. Thames North Synod was represented by the Reverend James Fields, who had been convenor of the West London Area Committee at the time of the events subject to appeal, and the Synod Clerk, Mr Simon Fairnington.
8. Papers, submitted by both parties, were circulated in advance. The convenor ruled that additional papers submitted by Mr Caffaratto after the final date for submission would not be admitted, although Mr Caffaratto was free to refer to them in his oral submission to the panel.

9. The hearing took place at the London Welsh Centre, 157-163 Grays Inn Road, on 22 June 2016. The Commission began at 12.30 pm and completed its business at 4.30 pm. Before the applicant was invited to make his statement the convenor explained the process, including the fact that the panel was acting on behalf of General Assembly and there was no right of appeal against the decision. The convenor invited all present to join in saying the Lord's Prayer together.
10. Mr Caffaratto presented his case, adding to his written statement with some additional background information which was included in the papers which had not been admitted.
11. The Reverend James Fields responded on behalf of the synod, occasionally seeking confirmation of facts from Mr Simon Fairnington.
12. Members of the Commission questioned both parties. The convenor thanked the parties for their time and submissions. Mr Caffaratto, Mr Fields, and Mr Fairnington were asked to leave the room while the panel considered the submissions of the parties.
13. After discussion, the parties were recalled, and the convenor read out the decision:
 14. *Opening remark*
 - 14.1 *Our task has not been made easy by the lack of reliable minutes for Church Meetings leading up to the decision to close Queen's Park United Reformed Church. The Commission would have been helped had a complete set of approved minutes been available. We note that there were problems at the Queen's Park church in the minuting of meetings, and we believe that the synod could have done more to ensure that minutes were taken appropriately. We regard appropriate administrative support as an equally important part of the process as any other of helping a struggling church to move forward.*
 15. *Decision on the appeal*
 - 15.1 *We find no evidence to substantiate Mr Caffaratto's first claim. We are not persuaded, on the evidence we have seen, of a clear indication that there was an example of the synod leading the church into making a decision against its will. According to the evidence presented, the church followed due process in making the decision to close. Therefore we conclude there has not been a breach of URC policies and procedures during the closing process led by the synod representatives.*
 - 15.2 *The Commission has taken due note of the role that the Church Meeting plays in the life of the United Reformed Church. Given the understanding of the status of the Church Meeting in the United Reformed Church we are very reluctant to question any decision made by any Church Meeting duly constituted to seek the guidance of God in fellowship together. We do believe that members had the opportunity to voice concerns about the closure at meetings, both formal and informal, leading up to the meeting on 10 January 2016, and thereafter through the accompaniment process that the synod was offering as Queen's Park United Reformed Church moved to the point of closure. We find that the reliability of the petition dated 9 March 2016, particularly its date, is disputed, and it therefore cannot be relied upon as hard evidence. The Commission recognises that there was opposition to the closure, as recorded in the results of the secret ballot at the Church Meeting on 10 January 2016, but has not seen any evidence to challenge the validity of that ballot.*

- 15.3 *The Commission has been offered no evidence to support the claim that there has been a breach of URC policies and procedures during the exposition and discussion of this matter at the Thames North Synod meeting held on 12 March 2016.*
- 15.4 *The Assembly Commission, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, therefore unanimously dismisses the appeal of Mr Caffaratto against the decision of the Thames North Synod on 12 March 2016, regarding the closure of Queen's Park United Reformed Church, on all counts.*
16. All those present stood, joined hands, and concluded the meeting by saying the Grace.

22 June 2016



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

Church Closures

Northern Synod

Chatton United Reformed Church

A house was registered for Nonconformist worship in the village of Chatton, North Northumberland, as early as 1698; however, the first church building (now an art gallery) was not completed until 1850. The Old Manse, now beautifully restored, is adjacent to the old church building.

After moving out of the church building due to structural issues, the congregation of Chatton United Reformed Church continued to meet for about 20 years in the village parish church. Owing to a lack of facilities and basic comforts in the parish church, they moved out in 2013 and continued to meet in Chatton's village hall.

In early 2014 it became apparent that the congregation could not provide either a secretary or treasurer; consequently, having weighed up several options, the Church Meeting on 17 March 2015 unanimously voted to close. The decision was taken with clarity and, whilst members felt sad, there was no regret.

Through the years, Chatton URC had strong ecumenical links, played its part in the wider life of the URC's North Northumberland Mission Partnership and served a local farming community in the small village of Chatton faithfully, being firmly rooted in the life of the local community.

Some of the remaining members now worship locally in the parish church, while others have transferred their membership to Erskine URC in Belford or Wooler URC – their nearest United Reformed churches.

Chatton URC held its last service on Sunday 3 May 2015 at 9.30am.

Felton United Reformed Church

Felton United Reformed Church was a member of the Mid Northumberland Rural Churches Pastorate, made up of Felton, Longframlington, Rothbury and Glanton.

The church was founded in 1817 in a building near the existing church. The present church was built in 1924 by locally-raised public subscription. The church is a stone building, with a beautiful stained glass window. In the 1940s, the then small village school used the premises prior to a new larger school being built in Felton. The church has a small hall attached which over the years has been used by the junior church, church meetings, clubs and the parish council. It has also been used as a polling station.

The church is situated in West Thirston, which is a small village, and served Felton, West and East Thirston and other smaller surrounding villages. The area is largely made up of farming communities and in the past many of the congregation were from farming families. There is a local Anglican church in the village with which Felton URC's congregation has, on many occasions, shared worship. The minister has shared in leading assemblies at the local C of E school. The church met the rest of its pastorate churches at cluster services on occasions when there were five Sundays in the month. The cluster churches included Warkworth, Alnwick and Amble.

Felton URC closed on 28 February 2016.

Lingdale United Reformed Church

Lingdale Congregational Church came into being within a few years of the village of Lingdale being established as the residence for the miners who arrived at that time from all over the country to work at the newly-opened ironstone mine. The miners had to build their own village and community, and, with the gift of land from the mine owners for a church, they planned to build a church on the crossroads that was at the heart of the village. Church members then raised the £500 needed to build the church, which opened in April 1881. The church remained at the heart of the community over subsequent generations, and for more than 100 years of ministry in the village of Lingdale.

Over the last two decades, the church began to more seriously struggle to attract members. Twenty years ago the church also reached a point where they found themselves seeking God about whether the church should remain open. The reply was ‘carry on!’ and so the church did – a Pilots group was started to help revive the struggling church.

The church continued to seek a purpose in the village, and in more recent years the members felt called to open a foodbank distribution point at its community cafe, a craft and conversation group, a book club and a Boys Brigade battalion, to which village children flocked.

However, sadly, the promised volunteers were few or non-existent, and, other than the children at the Boys Brigade, people did not come in numbers great enough to warrant the effort put in. In effect, the church found itself running on empty, including empty of worshippers. Without viable finances or worshippers, the faithful few were led by God to make the difficult decision to close on the Friday before Christmas in 2014.

The church magnificently celebrated their closure with a beautiful service on Easter Sunday 2015. At the service, Bibles were presented to the local school and candles presented to representatives of local churches, to symbolise the faith continuing on.

Winlaton Church

A conversation between the minister and senior steward of Winlaton Church – which was part of the Gateshead Group, Tyne and Wear – performed during closing thanksgiving, is recounted here:

‘How do we sum up 200 years of witness by the churches that formed this present LEP?’

‘Well, I’ve five significant dates...

1821	The Surtees pioneered Winlaton’s Primitive Methodism, meeting in a warehouse.
1836	Wesleyans built Tin Mission
1868	new chapel
1895-1924	burned down, restored, extended.
1963	Primitive Methodists joined Litchfield Lane forming Winlaton Methodist Church.’

‘And there’s my five dates...

Mid 1800s	Stone Chapel built in Rev Tebb’s garden.
1906	Congregational Church built on Front Street, aka Tebb’s Chapel.
1972	The United Reformed Church formed
1983	New sanctuary
2005	Tebb’s descendants, and others, formed LEP with Winlaton Methodists.’

‘But what about the people?’

‘Well... there’s a family did great things for Methodism countrywide, all begun by “the kindly act of a teacher inviting a lad to Sunday school in a village which has few attractions” and when Methodists met in the Oak Tree Pub – oh it was above, and reached by an outside staircase! Revd Hodgson Casson famously paraphrased Jesus for Winlatoners: “It would be easier for a pig to flee up an apple tree and whistle like a blackbird than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.”’

‘That’s better.’

‘My story of the first chapel’s beginnings is sad but the ending’s happy: in the mid 1800s, Winlaton and Swalwell people walked to Horsley to worship in a farmer’s loft. One Sunday, returning across the Tyne, a young boy fell in and drowned. That incident determined that a place of worship nearer home be built.’

‘And so we give thanks for Winlaton’s 200 years of witness and worship.’

North Western Synod

Jollies Memorial Chapel, Barrow United Reformed Church

Barrow United Reformed Church was named Jollies Memorial Chapel after its founding father Thomas Jolley. Thomas Jolley was an Anglican vicar in the nearby village of Altham. When he refused to accept the 1662 Common Prayer book, he took to preaching from the steps of a farmhouse at Wymmondhouses on the slopes of Pendle Hill.

Later, enough money was raised to build a chapel in the tiny hamlet of Wiswell, and then in 1876, when more room was needed, the Memorial Chapel and school were built in Barrow – Barrow and Wiswell being two adjacent villages sharing the same parish council.

The school still exists and is one of very few United Reformed Church voluntary controlled primary schools in the country.

The church closed on 21 June 2015.

Haslingden United Reformed Church

Weaving families who lived around the Grane Valley, Lancashire, and from other outlying settlements, before the three reservoirs were formed, came together to form a church in the Congregational way and built it in Haslingden, at the top of the Grane Road, in 1785. They later built school rooms in Lower Deardengate.

The church was large and never attained the membership that it was built to accommodate. Eventually the building became too unwieldy for the church and it was sold to a local garage in 1961.

The premises in Lower Deardengate were redeveloped to form a church and hall; there was also a graveyard. The church worshipped there until 1985 when it too became unmanageable for the size of the congregation and they again sought another home. By this time the church was in a joint pastorate with the United Reformed churches in Accrington and in Great Harwood.

The Swedenborg Church worshipped on a Sunday afternoon in the building and shared use of the hall for social functions. After varying arrangements in 1995, the Swedenborg Church advised that they were to close, and so again the search for a new home began. Permission was obtained to use the community centre, which kept the congregation together while the church searched for a new home.

It came to the church's attention that premises were available in Regent Street – three shop units that had been in use by a local undertaker. The premises were small, but fitted the size of the congregation; the necessary alterations were deemed feasible and within the church's financial limitations. The building was surveyed and the decision taken to purchase. Plans were drawn up; the necessary approvals obtained and work began to convert it into a worship area, a smaller room and kitchen facilities.

The congregation started worshipping in the building on 8 December 1996; the theme for the service that morning was 'Turn the key and come into the light.'

Since that time, unfortunately, the congregation continued to reduce in size. With only a few new attendees the church reached the end of the road, closing on Sunday 5 October 2014.

Lytham

Lytham church in Lancashire opened for worship on Sunday 31 July 1862. It changed from Lytham Congregational Church to Lytham United Reformed Church.

Over the years, the church that was based at Bannister Street's influence in the town promoted and progressed the ecumenical movement.

At least three members of Lytham's congregation went into full time ministry.

For most of its 150 years, the church enjoyed a thriving congregational life, but latterly, the worshipping community became quite small and, despite valiant efforts, the decision was taken to close in September 2014.

Since then, members have found a welcome at Fairhaven URC, a church which owes its own beginnings to an earlier generation of Bannister Street elders and members who decided, in the last years of the 19th Century to take the Word of God to the newly emerging community there.

Metropolitan Church Mission Project

General Assembly 2014 adopted the Metropolitan Church as a mission project. The then-independent congregation had previously been part of the Metropolitan Community Church – an American denomination with a particular ministry to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

The congregation was established in 1992 and, following Andy Braunston becoming its pastor in 1996 became very active in the city's LGBT community. It had a strong campaigning edge, hosting mass blessings at the annual Pride festival and showing the demand that LGBT people had to celebrate, affirm and bring before God their relationships.

The church submitted evidence to parliament about the need for civil partnerships and the Gender Recognition Bill. It offered a place for LGBT people to find a way of living out Christian discipleship. Since 2005 it has developed a vibrant ministry with asylum seekers and 20 people have been granted leave to remain in the UK thanks to the support the church offered, including practical support through its foodbank. A 2020 mission grant has particularly helped with this work.

The church, which met in Wilbraham St Ninian's United Reformed Church in South Manchester, and Mr Braunston, were drawn to the URC and left the Metropolitan Community Church in 2013. Following Mr Braunston's acceptance to train for URC ministry, the congregation formally united with their hosts, doubling their membership and elders' meeting. Wilbraham St Ninian's now has two congregations – a more traditional morning service and the LGBT-focused afternoon congregation which is called the Metropolitan Congregation. The mission project designation helped the congregation to become part of the URC and was seen as a betrothal which led to marriage with their hosts.

Mersey Synod

Beechwood West Church

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Hallwood Parish – in Runcorn, Cheshire, consisting of St Mark's and Bethesda churches – was a thriving United Reformed/Anglican/Methodist LEP with a team of three full-time clergy and several lay preachers from the three denominations.

Beechwood West Church, having met for a monthly family service in the local school for several years, was set up by members of St Mark's in 1996 as a church plant meeting weekly with the particular aim of developing relationships with the school and uniformed organisations meeting there. Some good work with young people was done through these links, and the annual Christingle services, held in the local community centre, were always well attended – probably the highlight of their ministry. Beechwood West members have also been involved over the years in parish-based activities such as the weekly lunch club, monthly Messy Tuesday and summer prayer visiting alongside members from the other two churches.

However, the hoped-for growth did not materialise and, along with so many other churches, the membership of all three congregations in the parish has declined.

An ecumenical review of the LEP was carried out, beginning in November 2013. This was conducted by the ecumenical officers of the three constituent denominations (URC, Anglican, Methodist) who consulted widely across the three congregations and with denominational clergy. The outcome of this review was that Beechwood West would be closed.

The final service was held on 30 March 2014. We give thanks for all those who were touched by the ministry of the church and we pray that the seeds that have been planted will be fruitful.

Upton United Reformed Church

Upton United Reformed Church was founded as Upton Presbyterian Church in 1899 by members of West Kirby Presbyterian Church. The congregation grew with the growth of Upton village and surrounding neighbourhoods in mid-Wirral, and was at its most vibrant during the 33-year ministry of the Revd Victor Logan (1936-69) especially after the Second World War, which saw a large influx of migrants, especially from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, to the booming industries of Birkenhead. This was a time of large Boys' and Girls' Brigades companies, of a full range of church organisations and a broad range of leadership experience and enthusiasm to support them.

The URC years since 1972 have seen fairly continuous decline in church and organisations' membership from a peak in the early 1970s, as family social habits have changed, the boom generation of the 1950s was not sufficiently replenished with younger families to retain congregational vigour, and members moved away to new neighbourhoods.

However, witness has continued, with continuing activity in worship and outreach, and with a Women's Fellowship and Youth Club (until 2013) complemented by thriving denominational and ecumenical partnerships.

The church's closure in July 2015 was joyfully celebrated with a service in a full church; the remaining 20 members of the congregation will continue their witness in a range of other churches, within and outside the denomination.

Yorkshire Synod

Brotherton United Reformed Church

The church at Brotherton has been in existence since 1838 and the building that was in use when it closed on 27 March 2016 was erected soon afterwards.

Brotherton United Reformed Church, which has stood in the heart of Brotherton for more than 170 years and which was better known as Brotherton Chapel, took the decision to close because of dwindling membership and the need for repairs to the building. The membership felt it was impossible to carry on.

The village of Brotherton itself has also dwindled in size over the years. After the war, the village was virtually demolished when a new estate was built in the adjoining village of Byramm, three quarters of a mile away. The two villages which are divided by the old A1 trunk road are joined by a pedestrian footbridge.

The final service at Brotherton took place on Easter Sunday 2016 and was led by the Revd Kevin Watson, Moderator of Yorkshire Synod. The congregation of around 50 included friends from the village and from the Airevale Group of URCs.

Holderness Road

The first Presbyterian services were held in East Hull in 1872. Shortly after that, they shared a minister with a church in Edinburgh!

The church on the Holderness Road was well supported but the premises were bombed in 1940 and severely damaged by a land mine in 1941. The church moved to new premises in 1949 and has been an effective witness to the Gospel for many years.

The church has had various joint pastorates – the most recent being with St Ninian's and St Andrew's – and then has enjoyed its role in the Hull Area Team Ministry. The church has been faithful in its worship and witness, and its support of team ministry events. The church will be a loss to the team, but it rejoices in the very effective Christian witness it has given over many years.

Holderness Road, Hull, held its final service on 28 September 2014.

Wadsley United Reformed Church

Wadsley United Reformed Church, Sheffield, closed on 19 July 2014 after 105 years because of a declining membership. At the time of the final service there were only six members in regular attendance; two of those were in their 90s, the church treasurer was 85.

The church, formerly known as Hillsborough Congregational, housed several community groups including a Scout group, which had been running for 80 years, two parent and toddler groups and a Kumon school. Fortunately, these groups were able to be accommodated at Hillsborough Trinity Methodist Church where the Wadsley congregation is now worshipping.

East Midlands Synod

Chaddesden United Reformed Church

Chaddesden United Reformed Church used to be one of the Churches of Christ. When it first opened, meetings were held at Reginald Street School in Derby. The opening service was on Sunday 9 May 1920 with 17 members. In June 1924, the church moved to the cooperative hall on Nightingale Road.

The current building in Chaddesden began being built in July 1936 with the foundation stone being laid on 16 January 1937 and the dedication taking place on 1 May 1937. Worship was held weekly until December 2014 when members decided to close. A final service was held on 29 March 2015.

Over the years several baptisms took place in the baptistery. Infant baptisms and weddings were also held. Each year saw the congregation coming together for social events and flower festivals. One of the highlights was the building of the school room in September 1955.

The church closed due to a lack of members and the fact that they were running out of money. There was much sadness over this closure.

Hill Top United Reformed Church

Although this church's history starts in 1896, we know that small groups met together for some time before that date. Groups met as The Band of Hope and the Family Hour, which must have been the seeds from which Hill Top Mission, which it was first known, came into being. A regular meeting place was set up in the Brickfields Cottages and was used continuously until the church was built and opened in 1914.

An important date is recorded in the minute book of the Dronfield Congregation Church, viz: 'That we heartily agree to the affiliation of the Mission with our Church; The affiliation to date from 1 January 1910'. This minute is followed three months later by a resolution to open an account with the object of building a suitable place of worship. Church members were rewarded for their efforts when Mrs HG Rhodes opened the new church on 20 May 1914. The final account for the building amounted to £280. The name of Mr John Dawson Cook is specially recalled, because the site on Hill Top Road was his gift and a legacy from him enabled the church to add a vestry and refurnish the interior in 1932.

During the Second World War, the service of the church was maintained by a faithful few, although at times the Sunday school scholars outnumbered the membership. After the war in 1948, Hill Top became a developing district and a piece of land was acquired with a view to extending the use of the church. At first it had a sectional building from RAF Cosford, which proved invaluable. In May 1971 the foundation stone was laid for the Sunday school – which included a kitchen, toilets, a meeting room, a hall and a stage – and was completed later that year at a cost of £12,000.

In 1996, the church celebrated its centenary with a large number of events throughout the year. In 1998 the hall roof was replaced and the hall extension had a sloping roof built to replace its flat roof.

Over the years the church has hosted or organised: Sunday school queens and captains, floats down to Barlow carnival where prizes were won, Spring and Christmas ‘fayres’, flower festivals, concerts, guilds, mother and toddler groups, parents associations, children’s parties, keep fit classes, jumble sales, church services of all types, ‘coffee, carols and candlelight’ events, baptisms, weddings, funerals, a church bus for 24-hour prayer and many more events.

Over the past 20 years membership declined and the church building deteriorated – the extension roof developed leaks. The last service in the church was held on Easter Sunday, 12 April 2009, after which the premises were demolished. The fellowship continued to worship in Guideacre, just up the road, and some groups still met in people’s homes.

It was decided in December 2014 that the congregation would not continue with worship at Hill Top and would transfer membership to St Andrews LEP Church at Pentand Road. Hill Top’s last service was on Sunday 8 March 2015 at a member’s house on Longacre Road, which was the nearest we could get to where it all started 119 years earlier. The building at Hill Top may have closed, but the members will carry on the work.

Thurnby and Bushby United Reformed Church

This church was planted by Melbourne Hall in 1908 as a means of bringing a Nonconformist worship centre to the people of East Leicestershire. Preachers would travel from Leicester by train from Humberstone Road to Thurnby to conduct services. The church was built at the point where numerous footpaths met, allowing people to walk to the church from their village. It was from one of these villages, Scraftoft, that the church received its hall – one of the huts from the Second World War prisoners of war camp!

The first preacher at the opening was WY Fullerton – the writer of the hymn ‘I cannot tell’ (*Rejoice and Sing* 265). One member, Linda Neale, is a relative of the translator, John Mason Neale. The church flourished over the years under the influence of various families.

A great friend and servant of the church was the Revd Dr Arthur H Kirkby, who was a Baptist minister and the second President of the Leicester Theological Society serving that group alongside the Revd James Gray of Evington Road United Reformed Church. Over the years there has been a large and lively Sunday school and the church often had ‘standing room only’. Past ministers included: the Revd Bernard Uffen – who cared for the congregation after he retired from Market Harborough Congregational Church, the Revd Norman Rogers DFC, the Revd Vaughan Skinner, the Revd Brian Russell, the Revd Pam Smith, the Revd Pauline Rate and the Revd John Potter.

There were weddings of note too, like when two brothers married two sisters. The sisters were the daughters of Anstey URC's minister, the Revd Ellis Bell, and his wife, Alice, who was former matron of the Vista Kathleen Rutland Home and who duly became a member at Thurnby and Bushby URC.

Up to its closure, the church's Bible Society Action Group was still working through 'Bibles for Children'. The church merged with Abbots Road URC, Leicester on 1 February 2015.

West Midlands Synod

No closures to report in this period.

Eastern Synod

Eastwood United Reformed Church

The life of Eastwood Church began in 1927, in a wooden hut on a sizeable piece of land. The opening service was held on 14 December.

The foundation stones for a new church building were laid on 12 July 1939 and the wooden hut became the church hall. Most of the land was sold for house building and one of the houses in what became the Close, became the property of the church, thus providing the church with an income.

The church was originally a member of the Congregational Union but became United Reformed in 1972. The organ came from an East End church that was bombed during the war.

In the early 1960s, the wooden hall was leaning and considered to be unsafe. A legacy from the will of Miss Emily Granger, a former member, financed a new hall, which was opened in 1968 and named Granger Hall.

Another name linked with the church was Ellen Buckley, a relative of the first secretary. The small hall was named the Buckley Room and the church's Bible and lectern were dedicated to her.

Since 1990, the membership of the church has slowly declined through death and relocation. For the last four years, membership has been down to four – aged between 78 and 90 – and the church members reluctantly decided the time had come to close.

On 9 August 2015, a sad occasion was turned into a happier one when well over 100 people attended a celebration service to mark the closure of Eastwood URC after 88 years.

The Independent Chapel

During the early part of the 17th Century, the Revd Stephen Marshall was the Vicar of Finchingfield, Essex, and his Curate was the Revd Hugh Glover. In 1636, Stephen was reported for 'want of conformity'. Even so, he stayed as vicar and went on to become important to national affairs in Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth.

Hugh refused to sign the Act of Uniformity in 1662, and, after being ejected from his living, he continued to lead a group of like-minded people from the parish; they met at night in local barns and this was the beginning of the Independent Chapel.

By 1700 the 'Independents' were worshipping openly and had the first Nonconformist building in the parish. By 1779, with a membership exceeding 400, the first stage of the present building opened.

A day school was opened in 1848 at the back of the chapel and, after concerted fundraising during of the Revd TB Sainsbury's ministry, the school moved into a new building next door. Older children were now accepted, although only attended when not required to gather the harvest or plait straw. This provision of education for village children continued for nearly 100 years until just before the Second World War, when the pupils were transferred to the newer C of E-assisted school in the village, or to the senior school in Panfield Lane, Braintree.

The school room was used by the army during the Second World War, when an X-Ray unit was installed for their use. The Congregational Chapel also had its first female minister in 1941 when the Revd Hilda Pettman BA was inducted on 27 February.

The year 1948 saw another change in ministry for the church when they began to share a minister with Wethersfield Congregational Church, which continued until 1967. From then until 1988, the church had a local leader, the previous minister's widow, following which Finchingfield and Wethersfield became part of a wider group of Braintree churches.

During the late 1980s, under the ministry of the Revd David Bending, much work was done to see how the building could be altered to become more adaptable and comfortable. David moved to a new pastorate in 1990 but the alterations he planned for were completed in 1991 and 1992, when he and his wife Barbara were able to return for the reopening service.

In 1997, Finchingfield transferred to the Dunmow-Thaxted Group. For several years now the church has held services only on the second and fourth Sundays of each month.

With the congregation reducing to 15 people on Sundays, the church came to the stage where they had nobody able to carry out the day-to-day things that are necessary to keep the church open. Because of this, and because of the increasing difficulty in finding people to lead worship, the church members reluctantly and sadly decided it was time for the church to close, and to give thanks for its 352 years of worship and witness in Finchingfield, 235 of which have been in the present building.

The Independent Chapel church closed on 20 September 2014.

Trent Road United Reformed Church

The Trent Road Church was built in the mid-1950s as a multi-purpose hall, mainly for church activities. It was the result of many hardworking people at Baddow Road and London Road Congregational churches in Chelmsford.

The first minister was the Revd Smith who, along with his wife, were missionaries returning from Africa. The Revd AE Gould signed the covenant on opening the church. The manse was built brick by brick by members and friends of Trent Road.

The church flourished from the beginning, with two services on Sundays and an active junior church. There were two fellowships, prayer meetings, social gatherings, Christian Aid lunches and Lent groups, with events being well supported by other churches.

A playgroup and a mother and toddler group were run for local families and their children. The church hosted Brownies, Cubs, Pilots and a variety of other children's activities. An active Friday night drama group provided entertainment.

A very large and successful Bible holiday club was held at the church until it outgrew the premises and transferred to the three churches in the area – the numbers requiring the use of all three premises.

Good ecumenical relationships with both Blessed Sacrament and St Andrews saw shared Christian Aid lunches and healing services.

Like many churches, numbers dropped, in this case to the point where it found itself unable to continue. It was with sadness that the Church Meeting made the decision to close the church.

On behalf of Trent Road United Reformed Church, thanks were given to all who attended the service of thanksgiving on 11 January 2014 to support members and elders.

South Western Synod Avebury Chapel Centre

Avebury Chapel, Wiltshire, was built within the prehistoric stone circle of Avebury. After the Five Mile Act (1665) was enforced, congregations and ministers from Marlborough, Calne and Devizes decided to meet in Avebury, which was central to all three; so, in 1670 the Congregational Chapel was formed, meeting first in a house until the present building was erected around 1707.

The building was altered and added to over the next 200 years as the congregation grew. Although never very large, it flourished until the early 1900s.

In 1972, the chapel became a United Reformed church and, under the Revd Bert Jones, widened its horizons to look more ecumenically. For a while, the church flourished again; however, the building began to deteriorate and in the 1990s two separate grants from English Heritage enabled restoration work to be done on the understanding that the building would continue as a place of worship for 10 years. The chapel was soon in trouble again with dwindling numbers. Help was at hand when Kennet and Avon District Council established a Tourist Information Centre in the building in 2002, paying for structural improvements and changes. The congregation continued to meet monthly with the help of visiting preachers until the Tourist Information Centre closed in 2012.

It was not long before the building started to deteriorate again and the congregation ceased to meet. A committee was formed to develop ideas about how best to restore and use the chapel, and in 2014 the members passed a resolution to close and hand the building over to the synod.

In 2015, the South Western Synod executive took the decision that, since the chapel could not continue as it had been, it should be sold. This is not quite the end of the story, as the people of Avebury Village are now exploring ways of using the chapel, building on its history as a place of Christian worship and its position within the Avebury stone circle.

The church closed on 21 July 2014.

Bishopsworth United Reformed Church

The church at Bishopsworth, now a suburb of Bristol, began in 1828 and was built on a piece of land purchased for £3. It was dedicated to God under the Congregational Church. The earliest member of the church was Miss Sarah Crew, aged 19, in 1845. Two of the stained glass windows were dedicated to Mr Ayson (a lay preacher at the church) and Mr Iliffe (an elder) who were instrumental in the establishment of a small sister church in Felton, which was supported by lay preachers from Bishopsworth for many years. Members of Bishopsworth regularly hiked over to Felton on Good Friday for a special tea and service.

After building the Sunday school premises in Grange Road in 1924, it was felt a new chapel was needed and one was built in 1930.

In 1938, the church's first full-time minister, the Revd Norman Elliott, was appointed. He was the minister for nine years and led the church throughout the hardships of war. In those years, the church flourished – 90 children attended Sunday school and there were 78 members of the church.

In 1972, Bishopsworth, with its daughter church at Felton, became part of a group of three churches with West Street United Reformed Church and Zion, Bedminster Bridge, under the ministry of the Revd Lambourne.

Over the years there were many organisations at Bishopsworth, including: the Ladies Guild, Christian Endeavour, Bible class, "Three C's", Barnardo Helpers' League, junior church, Brownies, Guides, Scouts, Cubs and a nursery school. Unfortunately, the number of members gradually decreased with the work of the church being carried out by the faithful few.

Bishopsworth URC held its last service on Sunday 30 December 2012. The service was led by the Synod Moderator, the Revd David Grosch-Miller, and was followed by tea. At the final service, the church was full of people with links to the church, some coming from France, Belgium and Cornwall together with members of the Iliffe, Ayson and Kew families. There is nothing like a church full to the brim and singing to the Lord with a pipe organ peeling out its song. The church remembered times gone by when it was like this most Sundays. The Bishopsworth church building held so much love and kept people secure, safe and comfortable but it was the people within that made that feeling possible by the love, kindness, generosity, the sharing of their faith and love they had for our Lord.

Tabernacle United Reformed Church

Tabernacle United Reformed Church, Chippenham, began in 1770 under the preaching ministry of George Whitefield and the establishment of Calvinistic Methodist Societies at Chippenham, Calne, Castle Coombe and Christian Malford.

The new church was built on a plot of land, 33 feet by 23 feet, purchased for £31-16s. There were 14 trustees with George Whitefield being one of them.

In 1794, Samuel Clift became the first minister; by the end of the century the church became an independent chapel, increasingly occupying a central place in the religious life of the town.

Although the original Tabernacle building was demolished in the early 19th Century, the arrival of Benjamin Rees in 1822 saw a new church built, on the original site, which opened in 1826 and still stands today. Mr Rees was ordained at Chippenham and remained the minister for 40 years until he died in 1864, aged 82.

In the years since Benjamin Rees, Tabernacle has been faithfully served by a further 20 ministers. We give thanks that the church, and its people, in its 246 years of witness and mission, has served God with love and dedication through the preaching of the Gospel, responding to the spiritual and social needs of the local community and world missions.

All the historical archives and documents for Tabernacle, up to the day of closure, are now with the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, in Chippenham. The centre was delighted to have them and it is good to know that even though the building is closed, the history of the church will remain for anyone wishing to see and research it. Tabernacle URC closed on 23 March 2016.

Lawrence Hill Church

Church life in Redfield and Barton Hill in the early 1960s was not easy. Some of the smaller churches had already closed, whilst at Russell Town Congregational Church there was a reasonable congregation and large Sunday school but an old Victorian building, which seated in excess of 1,000 people. It was becoming a hopeless struggle to maintain the building.

The Methodist Church had the money to redevelop a new church in the area; the Circuit had money from various sums of compensation but not many people to occupy the new church. The only congregation left was Hebron Methodist on Barrow Road. To put it bluntly, the Methodists had the money and the Congregationalists at Russell Town had the people. It was in this context that the vision of a new united church at Lawrence Hill was born.

The church opened in August 1968. Some thought it was too small and it is true that chairs needed to be brought in and put in the aisle for special services. Lawrence Hill was a lively church with activities and groups for all ages, two services on a Sunday plus Sunday school and a Sunday afternoon class. There were regular concerts and pantomimes, coffee mornings, sales, Bright Hour and Contact Clubs, toddlers, Cubs and Brownies – something for everyone.

In 1993, a happy church celebrated 25 years of worship and service. But things were changing. Some people had moved out of the area, others had died and the church was not as popular as it had been at first.

In the early 2000s, the circuit appointed Ian Joyner as a Resources Development Officer based at Lawrence Hill. Ian negotiated with Bristol City Council for the church hall to be used by Lawrence Link, a day centre for adults with learning difficulties.

As well as giving the church the opportunity to serve this vulnerable group of people, it provided a valuable income stream to finance the continued outreach of the church. Ian and his wife Rita enabled new work to develop particularly among children and youth including Agape, a talented worship band. The work they began among the youth of Lawrence Hill and Barton Hill has continued thanks to volunteer leaders from Woodlands Church.

In 2012, Bristol City Council announced that Lawrence Link would be closed. For the small, mainly elderly congregation who were already struggling to maintain the worshipping life of the church, this was a serious setback. In February 2013, the church decided it could no longer continue and took the difficult decision to close. The final service was held in June 2013, completing 45 years of worship and service in the area.

Morcombelake United Reformed Church

In 1830, two members of Charmouth Congregational Church, Dorset, hearing of the splendid work of the Home Missionary Society, offered to provide a portion of the necessary cost if the Society would send a missionary to work in and around the neighbourhood of the adjoining village of Morcombelake. The Revd James Hargreaves was called to this work and the chapel at Morcombelake was opened on New Year's Day 1832. Subsequently it was enlarged in 1840 and a school room added in 1863.

The Revd Hargreaves died in November 1869 and the next minister, the Revd Samuel Giblett served the church for 33 years. A succession of ministers followed, often shared with the church at Charmouth but with frequent gaps during which the church relied on the support of the Dorset Congregational Association.

The church and school room were renovated between 1963 and 1965, during the ministry of the Revd HEJ Vickery. However, by the time the church became part of the Axminster pastorate in 1996, the church building was giving cause for concern and the decision was taken to worship at the Anglican church of Stanton St Gabriel in the village. It was hoped that this would lead to a relationship which developed into more than just the sharing of a building, but for various reasons these hopes were not realised. The church building was subsequently demolished but the school room was sold to the local community and renamed the James Hargreaves Hall.

Membership had dwindled to two by 2006, and, despite efforts to attract more worshippers by varying the times of services, the decision was taken to close in March 2014. The final service was held on 1 June 2014, attended by the Synod Moderator.

Penhill United Reformed Church

The Swindon housing estate of Penhill was built in the 1950s to house London overspill. Members of the Immanuel Congregational Church, Swindon, set up this 'daughter church' that met initially in the loft space of a nearby farm house. Land was allocated on the estate for a church building and hall. The hall was built in the mid 1950s and has always been used for all church activities including Sunday worship; a church building as such was never built.

The fledgling church soon built up strong Scout and Guide groups which ran successfully for many years. Regular parade services were held and there was also a well attended Saturday evening youth club. For some time the church was officially called Penhill Free Church. This apparently confused some neighbours who seemed to think you did not need to put anything in the collection!

A succession of ministers lived in the manse attached to the hall, including Fred Kaan. This 'living above the shop' arrangement proved very demanding as there were many needy people in the area. The church played a big part in the annual street carnival in the 1970s and 1980s. However, as the elders aged, they had less energy to try new things and a negative perception grew that newcomers only came to see what they could get from the church and didn't stay if they got a better offer elsewhere.

In 1999, a church-related community worker was appointed to work with the church to serve the local neighbourhood. This proved difficult because of the low number of members, but over the next 13 years quite a lot of community development took place over the estate as a whole. In 2014, the decision was taken to close the church. The few remaining members opted to either worship at Immanuel United Reformed Church or at the local parish church.

Penhill URC closed on 30 March 2014.

Wessex Synod

St Peter's Shared Church

In 1981, a Sharing of Church Buildings agreement was enacted in order that the United Free Church of Chertsey (Methodist and United Reformed) might find a home within the Parish Church of Chertsey, Surrey, known as St Peter's. When the Local Ecumenical Project and Sharing of Church Buildings agreements were enacted and signed, there were identifiable members from all three denominations – Methodist, United Reformed and Church of England – worshipping and working together.

Since that time, denominational distinctions have disappeared resulting in the church fellowship devolving into a very broad church based on the Anglican system with the worship offered becoming Anglican in form and practice. In 2013, the Church Council at St Peter's decided that in order to be realistic, coupled with their decision to adopt the new Model Constitution, it was now time to end the LEP and cancel the Sharing of Church Buildings agreement thus reverting to being a parish church without any other ecumenical involvement. Permission to bring the LEP to an end was sought from the sponsoring body, Churches Together in Surrey, which, with regret, acceded to the request.

A thanksgiving service celebrating over 30 years of united witness and marking the end of the LEP was held on Sunday March 9 2014, at which the URC Moderator of Wessex Synod and the Chair of the South East Methodist District took part.

Wessex Synod prays God's blessing on St Peter's Parish Church in its continued witness to the town and community of Chertsey.

Newbury United Reformed Church

From 1662, the ejected Rector, Benjamin Woodbridge, led a peripatetic church in Newbury. In 1687, the congregation, with Presbyterian support, leased a barn and refitted it as a chapel. The Presbyterians left in 1697 but Independents continued on site. Following floods and congregational growth (to 164 in 1710) a three-galleried meeting house some 40 feet square was built in 1717.

In the early 19th Century, a group of evangelists founded churches in East Woodhay, Hamstead Marshall, Ecchinswell, Wash Water, and Weston. Newbury provided pastoral oversight to these village congregations well into the 20th Century.

In 1801, the first denominational Sunday school in Newbury was created. Many of the teachers had names still well known in the town. By 1841, almost 600 scholars taxed the capacity of the chapel; girls were educated downstairs and the boys in the galleries. New Congregational school rooms opened in 1857. In 1865, the Ragged School became a branch of the Congregational Sunday school and both provided elementary education until the 1900s.

Membership continued to grow and the meeting house was extended in 1872. Serious floods in 1947 caused structural damage that forced its closure in 1955. Worship moved to the school rooms while members raised funds. The latest building was opened in December 1960. Numbers remained high until the 1980s when, along with many others, the effects of changes to Sunday opening hours were felt and the increase in children's Sunday activities. The church failed to react quickly enough and, with no one of the ilk of the 19th Century evangelists to show the way, became an ageing and failing congregation.

After much consideration, the church determined that the best way forward was to close and put the remaining energy, talents and material resources to work in other fellowships. And so we go, to love and serve the Lord.

Newbury United Reformed Church closed on 11 April 2015.

Thames North Synod

St Mark's Church

In 1952, plans started for a Presbyterian Church plant on the new estate being built in Aylesbury. Mrs Adamson laid the foundation stone for St Mark's in 1959. It was conveniently a few minutes' walk from Aylesbury Station and the main shopping centre.

The early ministers were: the Revd AE Dalton (from 1950 to 1954), the Revd JR Alexander Crossan (from 1955 to 1962), the Revd GA Bannister (from 1963 to 1968) and the Revd IGJ Kardos (from 1969 to 1971). The next minister recorded is the Revd Dennis Ferguson, who came from the Church of Scotland and was at St Mark's from 1973 to 1987. (He died in 2013 at the age of 89.) The church was then part of the newly formed United Reformed Church.

Mr Ferguson was followed in 1989 by the Revd Alex Jacob. According to Mr Jacob, St Mark's was a lively church at that time. The membership consisted of Presbyterian Scots and a large number of second generation Bangladeshis; Mr Jacob was surprised to find that the church was so cross-cultural. At the beginning of the 90s, a large extension was built on the back to provide a hall. An outside wall of the church contains memorial plaques to many of St Mark's elders and members.

Good relationships were formed with the Anglican Church of the Good Shepherd and Southcourt Baptist Church. Mr Jacob moved to another ministry in 1997 and the church was left in vacancy. Ian Walker and his wife Christine led the church, but Ian had a full time job and they didn't live near, so the church became less active. By 2005, the Aylesbury Vale Community Church (AVCC) had set up and was looking for more permanent premises in which to meet; they started meeting at St Mark's.

When Ian Walker left, the leadership of AVCC, Alan Woodhouse and his wife, agreed to become elders of St Mark's and to help them to continue having their own services and church life. Others from AVCC also had joint membership at St Mark's. Gradually, the numbers attending St Mark's decreased and in 2013 Mr Woodhouse suggested that all services were shared with AVCC. This led to the end of St Mark's as a separate church. Some of the remaining members continued with AVCC, but most moved to the Church of the Good Shepherd. AVCC purchased the church building and manse through the Thames North Trust in 2012. The AVCC is now a thriving church on the St Mark's site.

The St Mark's accounts were closed, and, at a special Church Meeting on 9 March 2014, it was agreed that St Mark's URC had closed.

Southern Synod

Ash

In 1807, it was decided by members of the Independent Church in Sandwich, Kent, that members living in and about the village of Ash should have their own church. It would be an Independent church but Sandwich would have a guiding hand in the calling of a minister and the purchase or sale of property.

The Ash church grew in numbers and they wanted to be a church in their own right. Sandwich was not happy with this but in 1859, the declaration of faith was signed and the reorganised church was formed with the Revd John Barton Dadd becoming the minister. In 1869, the church building was enlarged to the building that now exists. The date for commencement of the building of the hall is 1882.

During its lifetime, Ash was linked with many local churches including Sandwich and Deal. In the year 2000, Ash came under the pastorate of St Andrews United Reformed Church, Canterbury. When the minister moved on, the link with Canterbury ended and Ash was offered the opportunity to join the Thanet Group. Members felt that Thanet was too distant and the Church remained independent within the East Kent Synod Area.

With in depth preaching and teaching, prayer and Bible study plus outreach into the village, members tried to grow the congregation; sadly this did not happen. With the increasing cost of repairs to old buildings, the small congregation decided they could no longer continue. A closing service was held on the 19 September 2015.

Ashburnham

Ashburnham United Reformed Church in East Sussex closed on 31 December 2013.

Robertson Street

Robertson Street United Reformed Church held its final service on 30 December 2012, where two people in particular whose families had significant impact on the life of the church were present.

The church was founded by Daniel Smith in 1856 and in the 19th century much evangelistic work was undertaken.

The old church was demolished and a new one erected in 1884 to seat up to 1,000 people. The Sunday school and other groups were housed in the Institute in Priory Street.

Robertson Street had a long history of church planting and many churches in the surrounding villages owed their origins to Robertson Street.

By 1943, membership had fallen to 238. When the Revd AE Gould came to preach with a view in December 1944, there were 65 people present at the morning service and 42 at the evening service. Accepting a call to become minister and being inducted in March 1945, in nine and a half years he attracted nearly 400 new members, causing the membership roll to rise from 224 in 1945 to 410 in 1955. He was succeeded in 1955 by the Revd Charles A Haig. In the years that followed, the church became a centre of evangelism, with particular credit being given to the quality of its youth and children's work, under the guidance of Kay Mozely.

In 1978, the Revd Brian Bowyer came to the church and was able to see the church through difficult days when major faults were discovered in the roof. For a long while, the sanctuary was closed, with the congregation worshipping in the church hall below. An amazing fundraising effort saw the roof repaired in time for a wedding within the church family to take place in the sanctuary as planned.

A ministry team was then developed for the area and different ministries developed. However, the local churches reflected the national trend of declining numbers, and new patterns of providing ministry for the area were constantly being sought. The membership of Robertson Street fell from 42 in January 2010 to 28 at the time of closure in December 2012, mainly as a result of deaths.

From January 2012, the congregation began exploring its future, ahead of the Local Mission & Ministry Review (LMMR) process due to take place later in the year. Given that the prospects of receiving a minister were slim (due to demands on URC ministry at this time), that there were major problems with the building which would be expensive to make good, and that there were three other URCs in the town as well as churches of other denominations – all of whom would welcome new faces, the congregation began to question whether the best move might well be to disperse as a fellowship and enrich the lives of other churches through the injection of new members. The path towards closure was first chosen on 21 September 2012 and confirmed on 30 November of the same year.

In its time, Robertson Street URC was an engine for evangelism; it hosted meetings of the local committee of the London Missionary Society as well as the Hastings Council of Churches, and minute books from these organisations will be among those sent to archives. The church was also a spiritual home for so many.

What is its legacy? Time will tell... but there have been many whose lives have been touched by the vision of James Notcutt and his companions, including Daniel Smith, who had the courage to plant a church back in 1856.

Robertson Street URC closed on 30 December 2012.

Pratts Bottom Free Church

The Fellowship of Pratts Bottom first met in 1885; by 1925 there was an average attendance of 40 people each Sunday. The church met in an old skittle alley belonging to the Bull's Head Public House. Money was raised, a site was purchased, and the church was built and opened in 1928, free of debt. It was at that time a Congregational Church. The Presbyterians and Congregational Church united to create the United Reformed Church in 1972.

Gradually, the congregation dwindled and it was decided that Pratts Bottom URC should join with the Anglicans. An emotional closing service was held on 6 April 2013, attended by many of those who had worshipped at the church and had fond memories of the building and its ministry. The organ, originally from France, went to Limerick Cathedral. The church is now being used by a Montessori play group and is still serving the community as well as giving a whole new generation happy memories.

Richmond Green

Richmond Green was initially a Presbyterian church which started as a preaching station in 1876. Its first minister, Mr Mauchlin, was ordained and inducted in January 1879. A hall was constructed by the end of 1881, followed by a new church building, which opened on 19 May 1885.

Following the premature death of Mr Mauchlin, there was a series of ministries by distinguished Scotsmen when the congregation slowly, but steadily, grew. During the First World War, the church was fortunate to have a leader able to take them through those dark days when they lost members in the conflict.

In the following years, the life of the congregation continued very much the same with peaks and troughs. After a period of decline in 1935, another young Scotsman accepted the call. The Revd John Kennedy proved to be the man for the job, setting about rebuilding the congregation, and was well suited to see the congregation through war years when again members were lost on active service.

Regrettably in 1944, Mr Kennedy died, but during successive ministries the congregation's membership grew and, as well taking a lead part in the formation of the Richmond Club for the Housebound – a precursor of day care centres for the elderly, the church extended its hall premises. Subsequently, the congregation was guided into the new United Reformed Church, having embraced this change without hesitation. In 1980, with reducing numbers and high repair costs, the congregation sought a solution; after 25 years this was achieved in August 2006 when the congregation moved into a new building.

Unfortunately, the congregation continued to decline, and in 2014, when the minister announced her retirement, the few remaining members decided to close and seek fellowship elsewhere.

Richmond Green church closed on 30 August 2015.

Robertsbridge

The decision to close the church was taken at the Church Meeting on 2 June 2013. The elders shared John 12:24 with the Meeting, which had been given to them as a challenge following much prayer. After prayer, discussion and consideration it was concluded that the church should close.

However, within two days, the minister of Hawkhurst Baptist Church in Kent, the Revd Bob Kirby, met to see if there was any way forward and at the members meeting of 14 July 2013, the previous decision was rescinded. Talks began with the Baptist Union and the end result was a decision to close as a United Reformed Church and become affiliated with the Baptist Union. Our closing service was led by the Moderator, the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith who spoke from Haggai and 1 Peter 2:1-9. The church congregation continued to meet and worship in new premises, under a different umbrella.

It is interesting to note the history of the church which opened in October 1881. Mr Edwin Piper a local builder, having left the Wesleyan Methodist Society, began a Sabbath school and service in a cottage room rented for the purpose. Twice each Sunday and once during the week, Mr Piper taught the Word of God, but realising his increasing age, and wanting to put his work on a permanent footing, he applied for Robertsbridge to be included in the group of villages under the evangelistic care of Mr Morris, Robertson Street Congregational Church, Hastings.

Mr Piper purchased land and undertook the building contract, without profit; each stone in the front was laid by him. The church opened in October 1881, and at the opening service Mr Piper shared Luke 2:29-32. His joy was complete and he died two weeks later.

An interesting fact to note about the building is that the side door is larger than normal. This was to allow the itinerant preacher who rode to the village to stable his horse in the back while the service was in progress.

A further interesting point to note about the church (people) is that it began under a Wesleyan, continued as Congregational, then URC and is now under the oversight of the Baptist Union. The witness in the village has never stopped but instead moved forward each time as the Lord led. As we focus on prayer and the Word, God will always lead and direct; we are called to obey.

Robertsbridge church closed as a URC on 5 September 2015.

Sittingbourne and Milton Regis

The Sittingbourne church traces its origin to the Great Revival and the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield. Initially, a Wesleyan Methodist Church was founded in the town but a split developed when a group began to favour the teachings of Whitefield. The latter formed a separate congregation in 1835 and eventually associated themselves with the Congregational Union.

In 1814, the chapel had to be enlarged and as numbers continued to grow. In 1860, a new building was erected. Church life continued to flourish during the last century and famous preachers such as C H Spurgeon were welcomed into the pulpit to preach. In 1972, Crescent Hall was added to the rear of the church after the local authority acquired the Sunday school site. It was also in 1972 that the Congregational Church and Presbyterians joined together to become the United Reformed Church.

The name of the church, Sittingbourne and Milton Regis, is a reminder that it originally worshipped in two separate locations. The older site was in Milton Regis, where a small meeting came into being in 1789 following the preaching of the Revd Thomas Wills. It was in 1974 that Sittingbourne and Milton Regis joined together. The Paradise Chapel Milton Regis was sold. In 1991, when a major fire destroyed the main body of the building it was deemed unsafe and an order to demolish was made.

Having been without a full time minister for many years and because the church had a dwindling membership, the Church Meeting decided to close. The final service was held on 25 July 2015.

South Norwood United Reformed Church

South Norwood Congregational Church was established in 1870, growing from a Sunday school initiated by Anerley Congregational Church. On 23 April 1907, the church building in Enmore Road, South Norwood, was opened. The church seemed to have thrived, as, by 1926, all debts had been paid and a manse purchased in 1927. By 1938 there were 102 members and over 100 adherents.

The building was designed in the then-popular Arts and Craft style. During the Second World War, the church buildings suffered extensive bomb damage; the hall was completely destroyed by an incendiary bomb in 1941. Undeterred, worship continued throughout the war years.

The 1950s saw a period of repairs to the church and the rebuilding of the hall. The Revd Donald Hilton became the minister and in the late 1950s and early 1960s the church became a hive of worship and witness.

From 1970 into the 1990s saw the beginning and development of the community association funded by Croydon Council. For a while, the church shared a minister with the local Methodist Church.

During the 1990s, plans were made for a complete redevelopment of the church and buildings, but in the end, the costs were too prohibitive. The church continued to worship and witness, bringing a very distinctive mix to the other local churches' witness.

In 2012 the worship moved to the hall, the church building being deemed dangerous and repairs being way beyond available resources.

Finally, and with great sadness, it was decided in 2014 to cease worship and hand the church over to synod. The building has since been purchased by a Pentecostal church and is being given new life. The majority of the former members have been received into the local Methodist church.

Throughout its long history, South Norwood has always shown an active care for the local community, from which many individuals and groups have benefited. The closure of the church reminds us of the words of a former minister: '... the people were there before the building and the faith will continue long after the life of its bricks and mortar.'

South Norwood church closed on 25 January 2015.

St Mary's Island Ecumenical Church

St Mary's Island church in Chatham ceased to be a local ecumenical project 30 November 2012.

Synod of Wales

Carmel United Reformed Church

Carmel chapel was erected in 1831, in very simple style to suit the locality, deep within rural mid Wales. It housed four rows of pews facing the pulpit and was described as 'an outpost of Congregationalism'.

The church's first minister was the Revd Thomas Evans, who was elected to the pastorate, being one of the founder members. Mr Evans' ordination took place on 8 June 1831, and the union formed that day proved to be long and fruitful. Mr Evans died on 21 February 1869, having been minister of the church for 38 years; he was a kind and unassuming man who gave unstinting service to the church.

Carmel continued serving a small congregation until the Revd Bill Sewell left the area in 1989. Bill was Ecumenical Officer and the minister of Tabernacle, Rhayader, a few miles from Nantmel. The chapel continued holding one service a month during the summer months, up until 2010. These services were conducted by the Revd Roydn Thomas, a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Wales.

Rural depopulation contributed to the decline of the chapel until, there being no members and no elders, the chapel stopped offering services to the community. There

was no final act of worship. Mr John Abberley continued to keep the redundant chapel and graveyard in good order over many years. The year 2015 marked the formal closure of Carmel United Reformed Church, Nantmel.

Christchurch United Reformed Church

In 1904, Christchurch was first established as a church, meeting in a local school. However, a spirit of faith, hope and dedication prevailed and a plot of land, in Belle Vue Crescent, was purchased on which to build a church. It was opened in 1905, and gradually the membership grew until, in 1915, the building was extended to accommodate the rapidly-growing Sunday school.

In 1919 things were looking good; the membership grew and the church looked to expand further. Mr Claude Hailey, a local businessman and landowner, gave the church a plot of land directly opposite the existing church for a new church to be built. A magnificent church was built that could accommodate a congregation of at least 500. This opened in 1922 and the original building used as a school room for the Sunday school and social activities.

Sadly, after the war, the membership began to decrease as young men and women moved away. Despite enjoying exceptional ministry from a number of dedicated ministers, things became very difficult when, from 1968, the church had no minister. In 1970, The Congregational Union proposed a completely new venture. It was suggested that Christchurch combine with the Cardiff Methodist Circuit. This was a lifeline for Christchurch and it was agreed. From 1970, ministry was shared with Llandaff North Methodist. This proved a very successful arrangement but Christchurch still struggled with the upkeep of their building. And so, in 1972, it was decided to sell 'the big church', as it was called, and move back into the school room, which was, of course, the original church.

In 1974 the congregation moved back into a refurbished building. It was a good decision, and from then until 2015 Christchurch continued to meet there. During that time, ministry continued to be provided by The Cardiff and Caerphilly Methodist Circuit. The church was very fortunate to have a succession of Methodist ministers all bringing their own special gifts with them. However, by this time, sickness, age and death among the members had taken its toll on the congregation, and the future seemed bleak. Reluctantly, after many hours of prayer and soul searching, the decision was made to close.

On Sunday 31 January 2016, Christchurch closed its doors, after 111 years, for the last time. A thanksgiving service was held and the church was overflowing with friends – from across the Methodist circuit, members of other United Reformed churches, past members and ministers – as well as the present members and their families. Although sad and emotional, the service, led by the Moderator of the United Reformed Church Wales Synod, the Revd Simon Walkling, was a true celebration of the past, providing hope and inspiring trust in God for the future.

Christchurch's former members are now ready to move on but wherever they choose to worship, and whatever happens to the building, Christchurch will remain in their memories and always have a place in their hearts.

Synod of Scotland

No closures to report in this period.

Nominations committee report

This committee nominates to Assembly the names of people to serve as convenors and secretaries of all Assembly committees, and as members of those committees. It also suggests names of United Reformed Church representatives on other bodies. It recommends the people to make up appointment groups for moderators of synods and Assembly appointed staff.

Convenor: Irene Wren

Secretary: Carol Rogers

Synod representatives:

1 Melanie Campbell	6 Margaret Marshall	11 Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor
2 Martin Smith	7 Paul Whittle	12 Shelagh Pollard
3 Robert Shallcross	8 George Faris	13 Morag Donaldson
4 Chris Reed	9 Sue Brown	
5 Helen Lidgett	10 Simon Fairnington	

The General Secretary and a representative from the Assembly Moderators' group are also members of the nominations committee.

Current work

1.1 The main activity of the committee is routine, but in its own way demanding. The committee depends on the gifts and the goodwill of members of the Church to maintain the work of all Assembly committees and working groups; but the nomination committee have the responsibility of ensuring that invitations are issued that may result in balanced committees where every member contributes to the work of the whole.

1.2 Synod representative members encourage the churches and committees of their own synods to respond to the annual letter (sent out in early summer) which lists forthcoming vacancies, and asks for suggested nominees. Other committees are welcome to make suggestions where appropriate, recognising that often they have the clearest understanding of their own needs. To keep a healthy balance between continuity and 'new blood', and between established expertise and untested enthusiasm, is not always easy; and there is also the more obvious balance to be achieved between lay and ordained, and male and female, but this can be lost through the refusal of first choice nominees. However, the committee remains deeply grateful for the number of names that are received, and for the extent to which members of local churches still feel able to accept invitations and contribute in this way to the life of the Church.

1.3 As well as nominating committee members there is also the responsibility for the membership of General Assembly panels, and for ensuring that United Reformed Church representation on outside bodies is maintained. The last section of this report indicates the scope of the task: and even where the responsibility for some of these appointments lies with others, the committee is keen to maintain an up-to-date database of all who serve in this way, in order that the load may be seen to be fairly shared.

Monitoring

2.1 To help in maintaining balance in all the Church's committees and working groups the responses of all those who receive invitations continue to be monitored and this information is shared with the equalities committee. Important as this monitoring process is, there is a warning to be heeded against reading too much into trends detected in so small a sample.

2.2 In fact most of these observations closely follow those made in the 2014 report: no new trends are apparent.

Across those committees whose members are appointed through the involvement of nominations committee, at September 2015 membership was 56% male ordained and 44% female ordained and 47% lay male and 53% lay female.

2.3 We have again been grateful to the Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries for helping to identify a number of BME (black and minority ethnic) members, four of whom have accepted invitations.

2.4 From those who accepted invitations and indicated their age bracket it is clear that there is a need for concern about the age profile of those who are invited. It appears that there are many more who are over 55 years, reflecting our lack of success in even identifying younger people who might be approached.

2.5 All this information is dependent on invitees completing a monitoring form. In order that the figures given are as accurate as possible the secretary is grateful that the majority do, but a invariably a number fail to – often it seems because a thoughtful letter of refusal appears kinder than an impersonal form and does not include the relevant information.

Committee membership

3. Each synod is represented on the committee, some by synod clerks and others by individuals with a good knowledge of their own people. The committee benefits from a gradual change in membership.

Deputy Treasurer

4. The committee brought to Mission Council last November the name of Mr Ian Hardie, to serve as the next Treasurer of the Church from 1 July 2017. Should Assembly accept Mission Council's commendation of Mr Hardie for this role, the nominations committee will move Resolution 36, which will allow Ian Hardie to work closely with John Ellis in the next year, and will then provide him with able cover and support in his own work as Treasurer.

Thanks to all who serve

5. The Church continues to receive richly from its many willing members who are part of its committee structure, or who serve on panels and working groups, or represent it on outside bodies. The formal acceptance of this report and the long list of names that follows will surely include a real sense of gratitude for all who serve in this way.

6. Assembly committees and other appointments

Notes:

1. The moderators, the moderators elect, the immediate past moderators and the general secretary are members *ex officio* of every standing committee.
2. Symbols have been used as follows:
 ** denotes those whom General Assembly is invited to appoint for the first time;
 † denotes those who have been invited to extend their periods of service;
3. The number in round brackets following the name indicates the member's synod: (1) Northern, (2) North Western, (3) Mersey, (4) Yorkshire, (5) East Midlands, (6) West Midlands, (7) Eastern, (8) South Western, (9) Wessex, (10) Thames North, (11) Southern, (12) Wales, (13) Scotland. This numbering is not shown where it is not relevant.
4. When a member of a committee is there as a representative of another body or a particular category this is indicated in round brackets following the name.
5. Committee membership is normally for a period of four years, though this may sometimes exceptionally be renewable. Committee convenors serve an additional preliminary year as convenor elect. In sections 1-4 of the report, appointments with a different term are noted.
6. The date in square brackets following the name indicates the date of retirement, assuming a full term.
7. In accordance with the decision of General Assembly 2000 some nominations are made directly by the National Synods of Wales and Scotland.
8. In years when General Assembly meets, new committee members normally take up their roles at the conclusion of Assembly. In years when General Assembly does not meet, they normally begin on 1 July.

1. Mission Council

Mission Council acts on behalf of General Assembly. It consists of the officers of Assembly, the Synod Moderators and three representatives from each synod, one of whom is usually, but not necessarily, the Synod Clerk, together with the convenors of Assembly committees, the Chair of the United Reformed Church Trust and three members for URC Youth, including the URC Youth Moderator, together with staff secretaries, Moderators' chaplains and others as appropriate.

1.1 Mission Council advisory group

Convenor: The Moderators of General Assembly

Secretary: The General Secretary

Elected by Mission Council: The Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor [2019],
 The Revd Ruth Whitehead [2020], Mrs Helen Lidgett [2020], and one vacancy
 Moderators-elect and immediate past Moderators of General Assembly
ex officio: The Treasurer]

1.2 Human Resources advisory group

Convenor: Mr Keith Webster [2017]

Secretary: The Deputy General Secretary (Admin and Resources)

Mr Mike Gould [2017]

Mr Peter Pay [2017]

Mr Alistair Forsyth [2017]

1 vacancy

Mrs Bridget Fosten [2019]

General Secretary

1.3 Law and Polity advisory group

Convenor: The Revd Prof David Thompson [2018]

Secretary: Mr Neil Mackenzie [2020]

Ms Morag McLintock [2020]

Ms Denise Fitzpatrick [2017]

Mr George Faris [2020] (Synod Clerk)

Mrs Kath Fowler (PLATO)

[*ex officio*: Clerk to General Assembly, General Secretary, legal adviser]

1.4 Listed buildings advisory group

Convenor: Mr Peter West [2019]

Secretary: The Revd James Mather

The Revd Ray Angelsea (1)

Mr Michael Williams (2)

Ms Alison Lee (3)

The Revd David Figures (4)

Mrs Judith Booth (5)

Mrs Rachel Wakeman (6)

Mr Peter West (7)

Mr Roger James (8)

Mr Gerry Prosser (9)

Mr Christopher Buckwell (10)

Mr Guy Morfett (11)

Mrs Sue Cole (12)

1.5 Resource Sharing task group

Convenor: The Revd Paul Whittle [2017]

Secretary: Mr Chris Atherton

Treasurer: The Revd Dick Gray

Miss Margaret Atkinson

Mr Mike Gould

Mrs Rachel Wakeman

[*ex officio*: The Treasurer]

1.6 Human Sexuality task group

Convenor: The Revd Elizabeth Caswell

Dr Jacob Addo

Ms Karen Campbell

The Revd John Hardaker

Mrs Val Morrison

The Revd Neil Riches

The Revd Justine Wyatt

1.7 The Church's engagement with 20-40 year olds task group

Mr Stewart Cutler

The Revd David Downing

Ms Sabrina Groeschel

Ms Victoria Paulding

Ms Emma Pugh

The Revd Mike Walsh

The General Secretary

1.8 Methodist/United Reformed Church faith and order conversations:

The Revd Sarah Moore

The Revd Paul Whittle

The Revd Dr Stephen Orchard

2. General Secretariat**2.1 Faith and order committee**

(Members normally serve for six years)

Convenor: The Revd Elizabeth Welch [2017]

Convenor-elect: The Revd Dr Alan Spence [2016 and, as convenor, 2017-2023]

Secretary: Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

The Revd Dr Malachie Muneyeza (6) [2018]

The Revd Tim Meadows (3) [2018]

The Revd Dr Catherine Ball (7) [2020]

Ms Anna Briggs (13) [2020]

1 vacancy

2.2 Nominations committee

(The synods appoint and decide terms for their representation)

Convenor: Mrs Irene Wren [2018]

Secretary: Mrs Carol Rogers [2017]

Mrs Melanie Campbell (1)

The Revd Martin Smith (2)

The Revd Robert Shallcross (3)

Mr Chris Reed (4)

Mrs Helen Lidgett (5)

Mrs Margaret Marshall (6)

The Revd Paul Whittle (7)

Mr George Faris (8)

Mrs Sue Brown (9)

Mr Simon Fairnington (10)

The Revd Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor (11)
 The Revd Shelagh Pollard (12)
 Representative of the GA Moderators' group
 The General Secretary

Ms Morag Donaldson (13)

2.2.1 Panel for General Assembly appointments

(Members usually serve for five years as training is required)

Retiring 2017

The Revd Stuart Brock (1)
 The Revd Linda Elliott (12)

The Revd Dr Jim Coleman (4)
 The Revd Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor (11)

Dr Tony Jeans (6)
 The Revd Peter Rand (1)

Mrs Hilary Miles (11)
 Mr David Clarkson (12)

Retiring 2018

The Revd Viv Randles (10)
 Mr Bill Robson (13)
 The Revd Liz Shaw (10)
 The Revd Martin Smith (2)

Mrs Helen Renner (3)
 Mrs Lesley Richmond (13)
 The Revd Mike Shrubsole (9)
 The Revd Geoffrey Clarke (5)

Retiring 2019

Mrs Sue Brown (9)
 The Revd Paul Bedford (9)
 The Revd Raymond Singh (11)

The Revd Nick Adlem (9)
 The Revd Sohail Ejaz (7)
 The Revd Reginald Mudenda (11)

Retiring 2020

Mrs Sheana Dudley (4)
 Mrs Gwen Jennings (8)
 The Revd Samuel Silungwe (5)

Mr Clive Curtis (12)
 The Revd Dick Gray (8)
 The Revd Bill Young (6)

Retiring 2021

The Revd David Sebley (7)
 Mrs Kate Yates (10)

Mrs Val Morrison (4)

2.3 MIND (ministerial incapacity and discipline) advisory group

Convenor: The Revd John Durrell [2020]

Secretary: Dr Jim Merrilees [2018]

Convenor of the Assembly commission: Miss Judith Haughton

Secretary of the Assembly commission: Mrs Gwen Jennings

Convenor of the review commission of the incapacity procedure: Mr Donald Swift

Secretary of the review commission of the incapacity procedure: The Revd Ray Adams

Consultant for ministers and CRCWs: The Revd Ken Chippindale

Consultant for mandated groups: The Revd Alison Davis

Training Coordinator: Mr Keith Webster Co-opted: Mr Hartley Oldham

General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly, Secretary for Ministries, legal adviser

2.4 Disciplinary Process – commission panel

(Members serve for five years as regular training is required. They may be invited to continue serving beyond this as experience is especially valuable on this panel)

Convenor: Ms Judith Haughton BEM

Deputy convenor: The Revd Dr Janet Tollington

Secretary: Mrs Gwen Jennings [2017]

Members:

Retiring 2017

The Revd Colin Offor (1)
 The Revd Carolyn Smyth (13)
 Mr Douglas Hay (13)
 The Revd Craig Muir (6)
 Mr David Rice (13)

The Revd Jane Campbell (5)
 Mr Keith Webster (10)
 The Revd Ian Kirby (8)
 Mr Alastair Forsyth (4)
 The Revd John Bremner (13)

Retiring 2018

The Revd Pauline Calderwood (4)
 Mr Peter Campbell-Smith (11)
 Mrs Wendy Dunnett (9)

The Revd Bill Bowman (11)
 Mr Roger Tucker (1)

Retiring 2019

The Revd Debbie Brown (3)
 Mrs Mary Cummings (6)
 The Revd Peter Flint (11)
 The Revd Naison Hove (10)
 The Revd Deborah McVey (7)
 The Revd Sarah Moore (2)
 The Revd Wendy Swan (9)

Mrs Sue Bush (1)
 Mr Peter Etwell (1)
 Mr Andrew Harvey (8)
 The Revd Graham Maskery (2)
 The Revd Sue McCoan (6)
 Mrs Pat Poinen (1)

Retiring 2020

Mr Andy Braunston (2)
 The Revd Martha McInnes (6)
 Mr Patrick Smyth (13)

The Revd Hilary Collinson (1)
 The Revd Rachel Poolman (1)
 The Revd Peter Stevenson (10)

Retiring 2021

The Revd Nigel Adkinson (2)
 Mr David Jones (5)
 Mrs Diane Moverley (12)
 Mrs Janet Virr (4)

Mr Ian Corless (9)
 The Revd David M Miller (6)
 The Revd Kirsty Thorpe (2)

2.5 Standing panel for the incapacity procedure

(This panel is normally convened by the member with legal experience)

Secretary: The Revd Ray Adams [2017]

The Revd Ruth Whitehead (Synod Moderator) [2018]

The Revd John Marsh (Past Moderator of General Assembly) [2017]

Mr David Nash (legal experience) [2018]

Dr Ewen Harley (GP) [2018]

Commission officer for the incapacity procedure: Dr David Westwood [2018]

2.6 Pastoral reference and welfare committee

Convenor: Mrs Wilma Frew [2019]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)

The Revd Clare Downing (Synod Moderator) [2018]

Mr Douglas Hay (13) [2017]

Mrs Pam Sharp (9) [2019]

The Revd Camilla Veitch (6) [2020]

[*ex officio*: The Treasurer; General Secretary, Secretary for Welfare]

3. Mission department**3.1 Mission committee**

Convenor: The Revd Tracey Lewis [2016]

Convenor-elect: The Revd Bernie Collins [2020]

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Mission)

The Revd Ron Forster (1) [2019]

The Revd Stuart Nixon (2) [2018]

vacant (3)

Mr John Cornell (4) [2019]

The Revd Leslie Moseley (5) [2019]

Mr John Davey (6) [2018]

The Revd David Sebley (7) [2019]**

The Revd Stephen Newell (8) [2018]

Mrs Sheila Thatcher (9) [2018]

Ms Vivian Andrews (10) [2019]

Mr Martin Hayward (11) [2018]

vacant (12)**

Mr John Collins (13) [2019]

3.1.1 International exchange reference group

Convenor: Mrs Judith North (5) [2020]

Members: The Revd Paul Whittle (Synod Moderator) Ms Angela Bogg [2019]

Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries

3.1.2 Commitment for Life reference group

Convenor: The Revd Alan McGougan [2020]

At least two Commitment for Life Advocates

Representative from Mission Team

Representative from Mission Committee

Representative from Christian Aid

Representative of the World Development Movement

Mrs Linda Mead (Programme Coordinator, Commitment for Life)

3.1.3 Methodist/URC Interfaith reference group

(Members normally serve for six years in parallel with Methodist terms)

Co-Convenor: The Revd Clare Downing [2019]

Mr John Mellor (4) [2020]

The Revd Ann Jack (10) [2021]

The Revd Bob Day (2) [2021]

Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

3.1.4 Joint Public Issues Team strategy and policy group

Ms Marie Trubic (spokesperson on Public Issues for the United Reformed Church)

Deputy General Secretary (Mission)

(Other members are appointed by the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Church of Scotland)

3.1.5 Rural Strategy group (United Reformed Church/Methodist)

Co-Chair: The Revd Ruth Whitehead; the Revd Ron Forster

4. Discipleship department**4.1 Ministries committee**

Convenor: The Revd Paul Whittle (2020)

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

The Revd Dr James Coleman (4) [2017]

Mrs Jane Woods-Scawen (6) [2017]

The Revd Dr Martin Camroux (7) [2017]

Mr Stuart Dew (9) [2018]

The Revd Sally Thomas (12) [2018]

The Revd Allison Claxton (3) [2020]

Mr Andrew Buxton (Leadership in Worship Advocate) [2019]

The Revd Peter Meek (Synod Moderator) [2018]

Convenor, assessment board

4.1.1 Ministries – accreditation subcommittee

Convenor: The Revd Fran Ruthven [2017]

Convenor-elect: The Revd Russell Furley-Smith [2017-2018] as convenor [2018-2022]

Secretary: Secretary for Ministries

The Revd Naison Hove (10) [2017]

The Revd Mark Robinson (4) [2018]

Mr Keith Reading (3) [2020]**

The Revd Andrew Prasad (Synod Moderator) [2020]

1 vacancy

4.1.2 Ministries – CRCW programme subcommittee

Convenor: Mr Simon Loveitt [2020]

Secretary: CRCW Development Worker

Mrs Rosie Buxton (12) [2018]

Mr Derek Estill (2) [2019]

The Revd Ruth Maxey (5) [2020]**

3 vacancies

The Revd Simon Walkling (Synod Moderator) [2018]

4.1.3 Ministries – maintenance of ministry subcommittee

Convenor: The Revd Pamela Ward [2017]

The Revd Sue Kirkbride (13) [2018]

Mr David Black (6) [2018]

Mr Keith Berry (7) [2019]

1 vacancy

4.1.4 Ministries – retired ministers' housing subcommittee

(Members will normally serve for four years, but appointments may be extended for a further two years)

Convenor: The Revd Anne Bedford [2020]

Secretary: Secretary of Retired Ministers' Housing Society

Mr Peter West (7) [2019]

Malcolm Lindo (10) [2018]

The Revd Ken Summers (3) [2020]**

The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith (Synod Moderator) [2018]

[*ex-officio*: Treasurer]

(*Properties are managed by a company viz: Retired Ministers' Housing Society Ltd, Details of the members of the board etc may be obtained from the secretary, Mr Andy Bottomley at Church House.*)

4.1.5 Assessment board

(Members usually serve for five years as training is required)

Convenor: Dr Ewan Harley [2019]

Retiring 2017

Ms Alex Bediako (10) Mr Bill Gould (3)

The Revd Peter Henderson (8)

The Revd Shahbaz Javed (10)

Retiring 2018

The Revd Kim Plumpton (11)

The Revd Mary Thomas (9)

The Revd Ruth Allen (5)

Retiring 2019

The Revd Stuart Radcliffe (2)

The Revd Sohail Ejaz (7)

The Revd Peter Rand (1)

Ms Pat Oliver (9)

Retiring 2020

The Revd Lesley Charlton (11)

Mrs Jill Shelton (12)

Retiring 2021

Ms Karen Campbell (10)

The Revd Sue McCoan (6)

2 vacancies

4.2 Education and learning committee

Convenor: The Revd Prof Neil Messer [2020]

Secretary: Secretary for Education and Learning

Mrs Sheila Telfer (4) [2018]

The Revd Ros Lyle (10) [2018]

Mr Robert Pettigrew (3) [2020]

The Revd Dr Jill Thornton (2020)

The Revd Dr Jack Dyce (Resource Centre for learning)

The Revd David Salisbury (Synod Development Officer)

1 vacancy

4.2.1 Windermere management committee

Convenor: The Revd Mitchell Bunting [2018]

Minute Secretary: The Revd Tony Haws [2020]

Miss Margery Pitcher (2) [2018]

Mr Andrew Guthrie (2) [2018]

Mr Clifford Patten (7) [2019]

Mr Kevin Mantle (5) [2018]

Ms Sandra Wellington (Training and Development Officer)

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

4.2.2 Education for Ministry Phase 2 and 3 (EM2/3) subcommittee

Convenor: The Revd Dr Robert Pope

Programme Officer: The Revd Elizabeth Gray-King

The Revd Phil Wall (EM2 Minister)

Ms Marie Trubic (CRCW)

The Revd David Downing (EM3 Minister)

The Revd Anne Sardeson (Training and Development Officer)

The Revd Dr James Coleman (Training and Development Officer)

Secretary for Education and Learning

4.2.3 Education and learning finance subcommittee

Chair: Professor Tim Rowland

Minute Secretary: Secretary for Education and Learning

Members:

[*Ex-officio*: The Treasurer]

Staff in attendance: Chief Finance Officer

4.3 Children's and youth work committee

Convenor: The Revd Tim Meachin [2017]

Convenor-elect: The Revd Jenny Mills [2016-2017 and, as convenor, 2017-2021]

Secretary: Head of Children's and Youth Work

Mrs Lorraine Downer-Mattis (10) [2017]

Mrs Ruth Roddison (4) [2018]

The Revd Heather Cadoux (9) [2018]

Mrs Alison Tansom (12) [2018]

Mr Alan Kendall (4) [2018]

Mr Adam Woodhouse (4) [2019]

Mr Sam Brown (11) [2019]

The Revd Jake Tatton (13) [2020] **

1 vacancy

URC Youth Moderator

URC Youth Moderator-elect

4.3.1 Pilots management subcommittee

Convenor: vacant

Members: vacant

(Other members of the subcommittee are appointed by the children's and youth work committee.)

5. Administration and Resources department

5.1 Assembly arrangements committee

Convenor: The Revd James Breslin [2020]

Secretary: Facilities Manager

Assembly Moderators

Moderators-elect

General Secretary

Clerk to General Assembly

Convenor, local arrangements committee

5.2 Communications and editorial committee

Convenor: Mr Peter Knowles [2019]

Secretary: Head of Communications

Mrs Andrea Varnavides (4) [2017]

The Revd Peter Cooper (10) [2017]

The Revd Kevin Snyman (12) [2017]

Mr Andy Jeens (3) [2017]

The Revd Kate Gray (2) [2018]

The Revd Ashley Evans (10) [2018]

Ms Rebecca Gudgeon (2) [2019]

Mrs Heather Carr (1) [2019]

Mr Tim Llewelyn (9) [2019]

5.3 Equalities committee

Convenor: The Revd Helen Mee [2018]

Secretary: The Revd Adrian Bulley [2017]

The Revd Susan Flynn (3) [2017]

Ms Maria Mills (8) [2017]

Mr Clive Curtis (12) [2018]

Mrs Ruth Clarke (2) [2018]

Ms Rosie Martin (9) [2020]

Ms Alex Bediako (10) [2020]

5.4 Finance committee

Convenor: The Treasurer

Secretary: Chief Finance Officer

The Revd Kate Gartside (3) [2017]

Mr Ian Simpson (9) [2017]

The Revd Richard Turnbull (5) [2017]

The Revd David Walton (6) [2018]

The Revd Iain McClaren (11) [2019]

Mr Brian Hosier (10) [2019]

Mr Gordon Wanless (1) [2020]

[ex-officio: Chair of URC Trust]

5.4.1 Stewardship subcommittee

Convenor: Mr Keith Berry [2017]

Mr Bob Christie (13) [2020]

Mr David Greatorex (5) [2020]

Ms Lis Sharples [2020]

The Revd Colin Bones (5) [2020]

5.5 United Reformed Church Trust

(Members normally serve for six years. The directors of the Trust appoint new directors from those appointed as members. The members of the Trust elect the chair from among their own number and appoint a secretary and deputy secretary.)

Chair: The Revd Richard Gray [2018]

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Deputy Secretary: Mr Andy Bottomley

Members:

Group 1 (Synods 1, 2, 3, 13)

Mr Neil Mackenzie (3) [2016]

Group 2 (Synods 6, 8, 9, 12)

Mr Peter Pay (9) [2018]

Dr Ian Harrison (8) [2017]

The Revd Richard Gray (8) [2018]

Group 3 (Synods 4, 5, 7, 10, 11)

Mr Alastair Forsyth (4) [2018]

The Revd Michael Davies (11) [2018]

Mr Andrew Summers (10) [2018]

Mrs Margaret Thompson (7) [2018]

URC Youth Appointee: vacant

Mission Council nominated members: (to be appointed if necessary)

Mr Emmanuel Osae

Mrs Val Morrison [2018]

[*ex officio*: Moderators of General Assembly,

General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources),

Treasurer, Clerk to General Assembly]

In attendance: Convenor, investment committee

5.5.1 Church House management group

Convenor: Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources)

Mr Mike Gould

Mr Derek Jones

Mr Doug Maxwell

Mr Robert Buss

[*ex officio*: General Secretary; Chief Finance Officer]

In attendance: Facilities Manager, IT Manager, Records Manager

5.5.2 Remuneration subcommittee

Convenor: Mr William McVey

Secretary: Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources)

Ms Sushila Jethra (Methodist HR)

Mr William McVey (elder)

Church House staff representative

Treasurer

Chief Finance Officer

5.6 The United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd

(Members normally serve for six years. Terms run until the AGM in September. The directors of the Trust appoint new directors from those appointed as members. The board members appoint the company secretary, and elect the chair from among their own number.)

Chair: Mr Richard Nunn

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Members of URC:

Miss Margaret Atkinson [2020]

Mr Andrew Perkins [2021]

Mrs Bridget Micklem [2022]

Members of Fund:

The Revd James Breslin [2021]

The Revd Dr Janet Tollington [2021]

The Revd Paul Bedford [2022]

The Revd Derek Wales [2023]

[*ex officio*: Treasurer, convenor, pensions executive, convenor, maintenance of ministry subcommittee]

In attendance: convenor, investment committee

5.7 Pensions executive

Convenor: Dr Chris Evans [2017]

Secretary: Pension Fund Manager

Members:

Mrs Madeleine Brand (9) [2020]** The Revd Steven Manders (13) [2020]

[*ex officio*: Convenor, maintenance of ministry subcommittee; convenor, investment committee; Treasurer]

(*The pensions executive reports to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pensions Trust Board, the maintenance of ministry subcommittee and to the finance Committee.*)

5.8 Investment committee

Convenor: Mr David Martin [2018]

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Members: Mr Andrew Perkins [2017] Mr Brian Hosier [2019]
The Revd Dick Gray [2018] The Revd Julian Macro [2020]

[*ex officio*: Treasurer, convenor, Pensions Executive

chair of United Reformed Church Trust or another director

chair of United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Trust or another director

treasurer, Westminster College]

Staff in attendance: Chief Finance Officer

6. Representatives to meetings of sister Churches

6.1	Presbyterian Church in Ireland	
6.2	General Synod of Church of England	The Revd Graham Maskery [2016]
6.3	Methodist Conference	Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
6.4	Congregational Federation	Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
6.5	General Assembly of Church of Scotland [note 7]	Moderator, Chaplain, and synod representative
6.6	United Free Church of Scotland [note 7]	synod nomination
6.7	Scottish Assembly of the Congregational Federation [note 7]	synod nomination
6.8	Scottish Episcopal Church [note 7]	synod nomination
6.9	Methodist Church in Scotland [note 7]	synod nomination
6.10	Baptist Union of Scotland [note 7]	synod nomination
6.11	Presbyterian Church of Wales [note 7]	synod nomination
6.12	Union of Welsh Independents [note 7]	synod nomination
6.13	Covenanted Baptists	synod nomination
6.14	Church in Wales Governing Board [note 7]	synod nomination
6.15	Provincial Synod of the Moravian Church	The Revd Edward Sanniez

7. Representatives on ecumenical church bodies

The following have been nominated as URC representatives at the major gatherings of the Ecumenical Bodies listed.

7.1 Council for World Mission (CWM)

The Revd Peter Ball

Mr Stephen Ball

The Revd Zaidie Orr

Mr John Ellis

7.1.1 CWM European Region Meeting

The Revd Peter Ball

Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries

7.2 World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) General Council

Ms Camilla Quartey

Programme Officer Global and Intercultural Ministries

The Revd Dr Phil Wall

- 7.3 Conference of European Churches Assembly**
Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations and one other
- 7.4 The Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council**
The Revd Rowena Francis The Revd Prof David Thompson
Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries
- 7.5 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) Church Leaders' Meeting**
General Secretary
- 7.5.1 CTBI Senior Representatives' Forum**
General Secretary Secretary for Ecumenical and
Interfaith Relations
- 7.5.2 CTBI Environmental Issues Network**
The Revd Dr David Pickering The Revd Mike Shrubsole
- 7.5.3 CTBI Stewardship Network**
Mrs Faith Paulding
- 7.5.4 CTBI Consultative Group on Ministry amongst Children (CGMC)**
Head of Children's and Youth Work and one other
- 7.5.5 CTBI Inter-Religious Network**
Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
- 7.5.6 CTBI China Forum**
The Revd John Scott
- 7.6.1 CTE Enabling Group**
Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
- 7.6.2 CTE Coordinating Group for Local Unity**
The Revd Kevin Watson, Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
- 7.6.3 CTE Churches Together for Healing**
The Revd Deborah McVey
- 7.6.4 CTE Churches' Theology and Unity Group**
Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
- 7.6.5 CTE Group for Evangelisation**
Deputy General Secretary (Mission)
- 7.6.6 CTE Spirituality Coordinating Group**
The Revd Sue Henderson
- 7.6.7 CTE Minority Ethnic Affairs Group**
Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries
- 7.6.8 CTE Joint Liturgical Group**
Vacant
- 7.7 Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) Members Meeting**
[see note 7] Appointed by synod
- 7.8 National Sponsoring Body for Scotland** [see note 7]
Appointed by synod

- 7.9 Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN)** [see note 7]
Appointed by synod
- 7.10 Commission of Covenanted Churches** [see note 7]
2 vacancies
- 7.11 Free Church Education Committee**
Mr Graham Handscombe Mrs Gillian Kingston
- 7.12 European Churches' Environmental Network**
Mr Charles Jolly
- 7.13 Churches' Refugee Network**
The Revd Fleur Houston
- 7.14 Churches' Committee on Funerals and Crematoria**
The Revd Sally Thomas The Revd Kate Hackett
- 7.15 Churches' Forum for Safeguarding**
Safeguarding Officer
- 7.16 Churches' Network for Non-Violence**
Head of Children's and Youth Work
- 7.17 Fresh Expressions**
Deputy General Secretary (Mission)
- 7.18 Churches Visitor and Tourism Association**
Mrs Valerie Jenkins
- 8. Representatives on formal bi-lateral and multi-lateral committees**
- 8.1 Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Group**
Co-Convenor: The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith (Synod Moderator) [2020]
The Revd Kay Alberg The Revd Roy Fowler
The Revd Sally Thomas Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
- 8.1.1 Methodist/ United Reformed Church Strategic Oversight Group**
General Secretary An Assembly Moderator
Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
- 8.2 Church of England/United Reformed Church/ Church of England Bilateral Dialogue**
The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith The Revd Elizabeth Welch
The Revd Tim Meadows The Revd Dr Julian Templeton
- 8.3 EMU Partnership (Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church in Scotland and the United Reformed Church Synod of Scotland)** [see note 7]
Appointed by synod
- 8.4 Conversations between the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe and the Anglican Communion** The Revd Dr Julian Templeton

9. Representatives on governing bodies of theological colleges, etc

9.1 Northern College

The Revd Dr Robert Pope	The Revd David Jenkins
Mrs Sheila Davies	Mr Steve Wood
The Revd Brian Jolly	
In attendance: The Secretary for Education and Learning	

9.1.1 Luther King House Educational Trust

Secretary for Education and Learning

9.2 Westminster College: Board of Governors

Convenor: The Revd Nigel Uden*

Clerk: Mr Chris Wright*

Honorary College Treasurer: Mr Andrew Grimwade

Members:

Dr Jean Stevenson*

The Revd Craig Muir

The Revd Nigel Appleton*

Canon Brian Long MBE

The Revd Dr Rick Mearkle*

Mr Mark Hayes*

The Revd Dr Jane Leach (representing Cambridge Theological Federation)

The Revd Prof David Thompson* (representing the University of Cambridge)

Dr Andrew Salmon (representing Anglia Ruskin University)

The Revd Neil Thorogood* (Principal)

Mr William McVey* (representing the Cheshunt Foundation)

To be confirmed (representing the Senatus)

Mr Jacob Bali (representing the students for unreserved business)

** Members of the United Reformed Church who are Trustees*

In attendance but not governors: Mr John Ellis (United Reformed Church Honorary Treasurer), The Revd Fiona Thomas (United Reformed Church Secretary for Education and Learning) Mrs Magalie Cooper (Bursar), Mrs Penny Flynn (Minutes Secretary)

9.2.1 Cheshunt Foundation

Mr Guy Morfett

9.2.2 Cambridge Theological Federation Governing Council

Convenor, Westminster College governors

10. Governors of colleges and schools with which the united reformed church is associated

10.1 Caterham School

The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith

10.2 Eltham College

The Revd Martin Foster

10.3 Walthamstow Hall

Mrs Isabel Heald

10.4 Milton Mount Foundation

The Revd Val Towler

The Revd Derek Lindfield

The Revd Richard Wells

The Revd Kevin Swaine [2019]

Mr Ray Dunnett

10.5 Silcoates School

Dr Moira Gallagher

The Revd Dr Janet Lees

The Revd Steven Knapton

Mrs Sue Lee

Mrs Tessa Henry-Robinson

- 10.6 Taunton School** The Revd Ruth Whitehead
- 10.7 Bishops Stortford College** Mr Anthony Trigg

11 Miscellaneous

The United Reformed Church is represented on a variety of other national organisations and committees as follows:

- 11.1 Arthur Rank Centre**
The Revd Elizabeth Caswell
- 11.2 Churches Legislation Advisory Service**
Mrs Sheila Duncan
General Secretary
- 11.3 Congregational Fund Board**
Mr Anthony Bayley The Revd Geoffrey Roper
The Revd Eric Allen Mrs Jackie Haws
The Revd Kate Hackett
- 11.4 Congregational Memorial Hall Trust**
The Revd Derek Wales Mrs Margaret Thompson
Mr Graham Stacy Dr John Thompson
Dr Brian Woodhall Mr John Ellis
Mr Simon Fairnington
- 11.6 English Heritage's Places of Worship Forum**
Mr Peter West (Convenor of the Listed Buildings Advisory Group)
- 11.7 Lord Wharton's Charity**
The Revd Derek Lindfield
- 11.8 Methodist faith and order committee**
Dr Augur Pearce
- 11.9 Retired Ministers' and Widows' Fund**
Mr Ken Meekison The Revd Julian Macro
Mr Anthony Bayley
- 11.10 Samuel Robinson's Charities**
Mr Tony Alderman
- 11.11 Scout Association – URC Faith Adviser**
The Revd David Marshall-Jones
- 11.12 United Reformed Church History Society Council**
The Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar



Resolutions Index

Resolution number		Report page/s	Record page/s
1	Walking the Way	11-14	20
2	Nomination of Treasurer	18-19	26
3 & 4	Appeal, reference and constitutional review	20-23	16-17
5	Ministerial candidacy	27-28	17-18
6	National Synods	29-31	18
7	Marriage of same-sex couples	32-34	18-19,23
8	Church changes	47-48	26,41-62
9	Contributions to the Book of Reports	50, 52	26
10	Arrangements for 2018 Assembly	50-52	26
11	Communications committee: change of name	60, 62	26
12	iChurch	60, 63	27
13	Expectations for ministry	78-82	26
14-19	Authorised elders	90-107	31-33
20	'The Church: Towards a common Vision'	108-118	27
21-23	What Is the Spirit Saying to the Churches?	119-127	15,28-29
24	The Wider Fold	128-130	15
25	'Unity, Identity and Mission'	131-134	27
26	Churches' Mutual Credit Union	138-140	15-16
27	Annual accounts	141	27
28 & 29	Stipendiary minister numbers and deployment	154-161	30-31
30	Ministries committee: Assessment procedure	162-166	27
31 & 32	Environmental Policy	185-190	24
33	Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty	191-195	24-25,33-34
34	Peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula	196-198	27-28
35	Nominations committee	199-214	28,63-77
36	Nomination of deputy treasurers	199, 201	28
37A, B and C	The Palestinian situation	218-221	25,33
38	The budget of the Church	222-223	28
39	Facilitation group		9
40 & 41	Appointment of tellers		9
42 & 43	Youth representation in councils of the Church		34-35
44-46	Moderators in Northern, Wessex and Southern Synods		11
47	Budget for 2018 Assembly		13-14
48	Task Group to consider Assembly 2020-2030		14
49	'Change the Story' around refugees		10
50	The European Union Referendum		29

Index of items not subject to formal resolution

	Record page/s
Greeting of new ministers	10-11
Jubilee ministers	11,14
Ministerial Discipline and Incapacity processes	11-12
Community Awards	14
Commemoration of deceased ministers and missionaries	21-23
Moderators of Assembly 2018-2020	25,36
Loyal Address	35-36
Invitation to Nottingham in 2018, and Adjournment	36
Appeal hearing	37-39









