

Address to the Throne

URC Mission Council, July 2020

To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty:

The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church, acting on behalf of its General Assembly, sends loyal greetings to Your Majesty. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are meeting by video conference on the day when our General Assembly should have convened at the University of Aston. As with so many events this year, the coronavirus pandemic has forced a change of plan. We are finding new ways to gather, worship, confer and serve together, while staying safely apart – just as our church congregations have done while our buildings have been in lockdown. The doors may have been shut, but the church has been far from closed.

Your Majesty's broadcast address at the height of the crisis was hugely appreciated. In it, you noted that coronavirus was "a disruption that has brought grief to some, financial difficulties to many, and enormous changes to the daily lives of us all." Like you, we mourn the lost lives and the missed opportunities. Like you, we applaud the selfless devotion shown by health service staff, carers and key workers – and rejoice in the many acts of compassion and creativity that the crisis has prompted.

The pandemic has also drawn attention to some significant inequalities in British society. Mortality rates have been much higher in deprived areas and among people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, who are more likely to live in overcrowded housing and work in frontline roles with higher risks of exposure. Asylum seekers and other migrants have missed out on much of the available government support. The lockdown increased pressure on families living in poverty, with foodbanks telling us that more children are going hungry, and parents of young children experiencing the biggest impact on their mental health. Debt and unemployment levels look set to rise. In this new reality, our churches will continue to serve and stand alongside their local communities: sharing God's love, calling out injustice, and providing practical support.

We know from our partner Churches around the globe that there are many places where the virus has had an even more severe impact. An additional 60 million people risk falling into extreme poverty this year. As a Church, we urge continued support for agencies such as Christian Aid and for initiatives to release poorer nations from their debt burden. The growing challenges in this country should not diminish our commitment to the world's poorest communities.

As we begin to emerge from lockdown, our society finds itself at a critical moment, when we as a Church pray that the choices made will be guided by values of justice and love. As the rainbows fade, we shall call upon our communities to hold onto the way that they pulled together to help each other. As we rebuild, we shall press for our economy and institutions to be redesigned so they address inequalities and work better for everyone. As the climate crisis remains urgent, we shall join with many others to emphasise the imperative of taking bold collective action for the wellbeing of people and planet.

We hope and pray that through this, the vision Jesus holds out of 'life in all its fullness' for all will be brought closer.

We pray too that God will strengthen, sustain and guide Your Majesty as you continue to lead and serve.