

Assembly resumed at 0930. The Moderator, Mr Peter Pay, was in the Chair.

The Chaplain led Assembly in prayer.

Following announcements, the Convener of the Business Committee, the Revd Adrian Bulley, announced that the Revd Fiona Bennett has been duly elected as Moderator of General Assembly 2022-2023.

The Chaplain led Assembly in prayer.

Mission Council

The General Secretary presented the report of Mission Council, and moved Resolutions 03 and 04:

Resolution 03

General Assembly resolves to create a General Assembly 'Minister for Digital Worship' post, full-time, for an ordained minister of Word and Sacraments under the terms of the Plan for Partnership and to fund appropriate administrative and digital editing support. As a General Assembly post it will be for an initial term of seven years, with the possibility of renewal.

In discussion, the Revd Alex Clare-Young raised a concern about the ongoing funding and ministry provision for Churspacious, which is a digital expression of church. The General Secretary undertook to consult widely, including with the Revd Alex Clare-Young the General Secretariat, the Secretary for Ministries, and the Yorkshire Synod as a matter of urgency, to seek ways to secure the future of the Churspacious before the current funding ends.

Mr Lawrence Moore proposed the amendment:

*General Assembly also directs the General Secretariat to explore the creation of a role within the United Reformed Church that most effectively embraces:
the development of hybrid church;
the incorporation of online congregations into our church structure; and
maximising the opportunities afforded by virtual forms of church for mission, outreach, evangelism, and the development of discipleship.*

This was seconded by the Revd Fran Kissack.

The amendment was *carried*.

Assembly adjourned.

Assembly resumed at 1100.

Sunday Morning Worship was led by the Chaplain. The preacher was the Moderator, the Revd Clare Downing.

Assembly adjourned.

Assembly resumed at 1330. The Moderator, the Revd Clare Downing, was in the Chair.

The Assembly Clerk moved adoption of the minutes of Saturday's sessions.

Assembly *agreed*.

MIND

Because the cancellation of the 2020 General Assembly, and MIND's existing relationship as a creature of Mission Council, the resolutions were all formally proposed and seconded by the Clerk and the General Secretary, who invited the Revd Dr Janet Tollington and Dr Augur Pearce, on behalf of the Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Group, to present the group's Report, responded to a number of questions and comments, and moved Resolutions 39-43:

Resolution 39

1. General Assembly adopts the following amendments to the Basis of Union and Structure of the URC:

Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church

Schedule E, Paragraph 4 – delete the word 'ministerial' before 'rights of membership'.

The Structure of the United Reformed Church

Paragraph 1(4) – Add heading 'Definitions' and reword:

- 1.(4) Unless otherwise expressly stated or clearly excluded by the context, a) the expressions 'minister', 'ministers', 'ministry' and 'ministerial' when used in the Structure shall refer to the ministry of Word and Sacrament;**
- b) the expression 'the Disciplinary Process' shall refer to the Process established by the General Assembly under paragraph 2(6)(xxi), but includes any process so established for similar purposes before the adoption of that provision;**
- c) the expression 'the Incapacity Procedure' shall refer to the Procedure established by the General Assembly under paragraph 2(6)(xxiii), but includes any process so established for similar purposes before the adoption of that provision.**

Paragraph 2(1) – in function (ix), insert '(subject to paragraph 2(7)(ii))' before 'to suspend or remove names'.

In the Functions of Synods, delete the initial 'A' and the words in brackets.

Function (xvii) – delete existing text and replace with the following:

'To discharge the functions required under the Disciplinary Process to be exercised by the synod, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Process may provide'.

Function (xviii) – delete existing text and replace with the following:

'To discharge the functions required under the Incapacity Procedure to be exercised by the synod, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Procedure may provide'.

Function (xxi) after 'Disciplinary Process' delete 'contained in Section O'.

Delete section (B) of the Functions of Synods

Paragraph 2.(5) – In sub-paragraph (A), after 'the following functions', delete the words in brackets.

In the Functions of Ecumenical Area Meetings, Function (viii), delete 'contained In 'Section O' and the cross-reference in brackets.

Function (xviii) - delete existing text and replace with the following:

'To discharge, concurrently with the synod, such of the functions and duties conferred or imposed by the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure upon the synod in respect of a minister or Church Related Community Worker (or former holder of either office) serving or resident within the Ecumenical Area, after proceedings involving that person are concluded, as the synod may from time to time request'.

Paragraph 2.(6) – After 'General Assembly is responsible for exercising the following Functions' delete the words in brackets.

In the Functions of the General Assembly, Function (xviii), delete the words in brackets.

Functions (xxi) to (xxvii) – delete existing text and replace with the following:

(xxi) to establish, and from time to time to review, amend or replace a Process for dealing with cases of Discipline involving ministers or Church Related Community Workers;

(xxii) to discharge the functions required under the Disciplinary Process to be exercised by the Assembly, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Process may provide;

(xxiii) to establish, and from time to time to review, amend or replace a Procedure for dealing with cases of Incapacity involving ministers or Church Related Community Workers;

(xxiv) to discharge the functions required under the Incapacity Procedure to be exercised by the Assembly, either directly, or indirectly through other officers or bodies, as the Procedure may provide.

Renumber the last two functions (xxv) and (xxvi).

Insert new paragraph 2(7) as follows:

'Restriction on exercise of conciliar functions

2(7)(i) As soon as any minister or Church Related Community Worker becomes the subject of a case under the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure, no council of the Church shall exercise any of its functions in respect of that person in such a manner as to affect, compromise or interfere with the conduct of that case, save as provided for by the Process or Procedure itself.

(ii) The function of the Church Meeting to maintain standards of membership shall not be exercised in a disciplinary context in respect of any member of the local church who is at that time a minister or Church Related Community Worker; nor shall any such member be removed from the Roll of Members or the membership of that person be suspended by the Church Meeting for disciplinary reasons.

(iii) The decision reached in any particular case (whether or not on appeal) under the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure shall be made in the name of the General Assembly and shall be final and binding, and once so initiated that case shall be resolved only by the steps for which that Process or Procedure provides.'

Paragraph 5 - delete existing opening text and replace with the following:

5. The procedure for dealing with references and appeals not concerned with the Incapacity Procedure or the Disciplinary Process is as follows:

Paragraph 5.4 – delete final sentence and replace with the following:

No procedure governed by this paragraph shall be used to review or appeal against decisions reached under the Disciplinary Process or the Incapacity Procedure.

Delete paragraphs 6 and 7 in their entirety.

Following questions, Resolution 39 was put:

Assembly agreed.

Resolution 40

General Assembly adopts the 'Process for dealing with cases of discipline involving ministers and church related community workers' ('Disciplinary Process') accompanying this Resolution in place of the existing Process.

Following questions and discussion, Resolution 40 was put:

Assembly agreed.

Resolution 41

General Assembly makes the amendments accompanying this Resolution to the 'Procedure for dealing with cases of incapacity involving ministers and Church Related Community Workers' ('Incapacity Procedure').

Assembly *agreed*.

Revision of Resolution 42 (b)

The proposers offered a slightly revised version of resolution 42 (b). This requests Synods to make their appointments to the new standing panels by 31st March 2022, rather than at the rather vague 'at the earliest opportunity', recognising that until the Nominations Committee has completed its work by November 2021, it may not be fully clear who is in a General Assembly role within the process, for Synods to be able to make appropriate appointments for standing panels. These can then be made at Spring Synods.

Assembly accepted this revision.

Resolution 42

a) The provisions of the new Disciplinary Process concerning appointments to The Assembly and Synod Standing Panels for Discipline, the Disciplinary Investigation and Commission Panels, the Appeal Commissions List and the posts of Assembly Representative for Discipline, Secretary to Assembly Commissions for Discipline and to Disciplinary Appeal Commissions are to come into force at the close of this session of the General Assembly.

b) Assembly instructs Nominations Committee to bring nominations for Assembly appointees under the new Process to the Assembly Executive in November 2021, and synods to make their appointments to Standing Panels by March 31st 2022, so that all those appointed can receive initial training in the new procedures before the remainder of the Process comes into force.

c) The new Process is to come fully into force at the close of the meeting of Assembly in 2022 and govern cases coming to the notice of Moderators of synods or the Assembly Representative for Discipline on or after that date, provided that the amendments to the Basis and Structure mentioned in Resolution 1 have by then been ratified. Cases pending under the current Process at that date are to be dealt with as the transitional provisions of the new Process provide.

d) The amendments to the Incapacity Procedure are to take effect at the close of the meeting of Assembly in 2022, provided that the amendments to the Basis and Structure mentioned in Resolution 39 have by then been ratified.

Following questions, Resolution 42 was put:

Assembly *agreed*.

Resolution 43

The Ministerial Incapacity and Discipline Advisory Group to the Assembly Executive (MIND) is instructed to make arrangements to offer the training mentioned in Resolution 42.

Assembly *agreed*.

The General Secretary moved that ***‘General Assembly refers this constitutional change to synods and asks for response by 31st March 2022’***.

Assembly *agreed*.

Mission Council

The General Secretary, on behalf of Mission Council, moved Resolution 05:

Resolution 05

General Assembly gives final approval to its resolution to add a further question to Schedule B [of the Basis of Union] for elders as follows:

Q: Do you promise as an elder of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, unity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always so far as you are able to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?

A: By the grace of God I do, and all these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Assembly *agreed*. Resolution 5 comes into effect immediately.

Assembly adjourned.

Assembly resumed at 1530. The Moderator, the Revd Clare Downing, was in the Chair.

Listening for the Voices of Children

Dr Sam Richards introduced a video highlighting children's experiences of church during lockdown.

Assembly met in groups to reflect on the content of the video and address the following:

- what most struck you from the video?
- how are children connecting to church and how might we support this going forwards?

Members were invited to send their responses directly to Dr Richards.

Assembly viewed a video: Hearing from Children and Pilots.

Children's and Youth Work Committee: URC Children and the future of Pilots

The Revd Paul Robinson presented the Report of the Children's and Youth Work Committee, and moved Resolutions 7-9:

Resolution 07

General Assembly celebrates the work of Pilots over the past 85 years, its association with URC, and affirms our current local Pilots Companies.

Following discussion, the Resolution was put:

Assembly *agreed*.

Resolution 08

General Assembly approves and encourages Children's and Youth Work Committee in the creation of 'URC Children' as an umbrella to support the rich diversity of Pilots and all other expressions of children's work in local churches.

Following discussion, the Resolution was put:

Assembly *agreed*.

Resolution 09

General Assembly instructs Children's and Youth Work Committee to cease using staff time and funding on work exclusively for Pilots, and instructs the committee to support Pilots sub-committee to explore options for the future, including the care of local Companies and Friends On Faith Adventures Groups, in the light of this.

Following questions the Resolution was put:

Assembly *agreed*.

The Chaplain led Assembly in prayer.

Children's and Youth Work Committee: URC Committees and Online Meetings

Mr Reuben Watt presented the report and moved Resolutions 10-12:

Resolution 10

General Assembly requests all General Assembly committees and task groups to have at least one meeting each year entirely online and not during normal working hours (9-5 Monday to Friday).

Following questions, the Revd Michael Hopkins proposed that the Resolution be now put, which was seconded by the Revd Adrian Bulley.

Assembly *agreed* and the Resolution was put:

Assembly *agreed*.

Resolution 11

General Assembly also encourages all General Assembly committees and task groups to have the ability for people to join online for all meetings, with 50% of meetings each year to be held outside of normal working hours (9-5 Monday to Friday).

Mr Dan Morell proposed an amendment, to substitute 'encourages' with 'requests'
Seconded by Miss Victoria Turner.

The amendment was *carried*.

Resolution 11

General Assembly also requests all General Assembly committees and task groups to have the ability for people to join online for all meetings, with 50% of meetings each year to be held outside of normal working hours (9-5 Monday to Friday).

Following discussion, the Resolution was put:

Assembly *agreed*.

Finance Committee (from Session Two)

Assembly returned to discussion of Resolutions 20 and 21:

Resolution 20

General Assembly, recognising that the significant changes to the legal and regulatory framework for defined benefit pension schemes are making the two current URC pension schemes disproportionately expensive for the benefits they deliver, agrees in principle to the closure to future accruals of both the Ministers' Pension Fund and the Final Salary Pension Scheme.

Following brief discussion, the Revd Ruth Whitehead proposed that the Resolution be now put, and this was seconded by the Revd Dr Romilly Micklem.

Assembly *agreed*, and the Resolution was put:

Assembly *agreed*.

Resolution 21

General Assembly acknowledges the careful work that has already been done on these complex and sensitive matters, authorises further work to be done on developing new pensions arrangements for office holders and staff, and requests that, as a part of this work, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) specialists are consulted, with the aim of presenting detailed options to Assembly Executive in November 2021, and then final proposals to General Assembly 2022, for implementation no sooner than January 2023.

Following questions and discussion, the resolution was put:

Assembly *agreed*

The Chaplain led assembly in worship.

Assembly adjourned.