

21 June 2021

To all members of General Assembly and staff in attendance

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I write now as promised to give you further information about next month's online meeting of General Assembly.

1. **Agenda**
Please find a copy of the agenda for General Assembly attached.
2. **Reports to General Assembly**
All the papers for the meeting have now been uploaded to the URC website: www.urc.org.uk/general-assembly. If you have requested a paper or large print copy, it is being posted to you this week.
3. **Registration**
If you have not already done so, it is essential that you register now by using the following link: <https://www.urcassembly.tv>. **Ensure that you have completed registration before Monday 28 June.** The Zoom link will be sent out by e-mail on Monday 28 June. Please watch out for an e-mail from no-reply@zoom.us; don't forget to check your spam or junk folder and please get in touch if no e-mail has been received by Wednesday 30 June.
4. **En Bloc**
At General Assembly we take certain business *En Bloc*. These are items where the Moderators think that decisions might be reached responsibly without further discussion. You will see that the agenda includes a slot in the first session when these items will be voted upon.

I suggest you read the *En Bloc* papers first. This will give you time to contact the author of a paper if you have questions. Authors' names and e-mail addresses are noted on the cover sheets.

If you think any of these papers needs discussion at General Assembly, particularly if you disagree with a proposed resolution, you may ask that a piece of business be removed from *En Bloc*. You must put that request to the Clerk (michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk) **by 9am on Monday 5 July**. If three or more people ask to remove an item, it will be withdrawn from *En Bloc* and added to our agenda.

I need to remind you too that we really rely on every member of Assembly to read the papers and take note of information to relay back to their Synods. In using the *En Bloc* method of decision-making there is no wish to bury information or to avoid discussions

which Assembly ought to have. We must all ensure the appropriate flow of information from General Assembly to the Synods.

Here are the papers and resolutions that the Moderators currently anticipate taking in *En Bloc*:

- A1 Mission Council Advisory Groups** ([resolution 6](#))
- D1 Education and Learning: new URC Learning Hub**
- D2 Education and Learning: The Way Forward - one year on**
- D-H1 E&L/Ministries: Lay Preachers and Worship Leaders**
- H1 Ministries Committee Report**
- H3 Ministries: House for Duty for ministers** ([resolution 24](#))
- H4 Ministries: Changes to Schedule E** ([resolution 25](#))
- J1 Nominations: General Report** ([resolution 37](#))
- J3 Nominations: Supplementary Report** [to follow: web only]
- K1 Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee Report**
- T1 Safeguarding Advisory Group: Annual Safeguarding Report**
- T5 Safeguarding: Safeguarding Training Framework** ([resolution 48](#))
- T6 Safeguarding: URC roles eligible for Criminal Records Bureau checks** ([resolution 49](#))

5. The appendices for the new Section O process are also available on the website at: www.urb.org.uk/general-assembly

6. **Introductory sessions**

Prior to the meeting we are planning three Zoom introductory sessions, at **1pm on Friday 2 July**, **4pm on Monday 5 July** and **9am on Tuesday 6 July**. Each session will last approximately 30 minutes. These sessions are not introductions to Zoom but will be about the ways in which we expect to use Zoom at Assembly, so please plan to attend one of the sessions. Please use the same Zoom link that you will receive by e-mail for these sessions.

The first introductory session will be recorded, and a link will be added to the General Assembly web page (as above) shortly thereafter.

7. **New Members of Assembly**

The General Secretary or Assembly Clerk will lead an introductory session for new members of Assembly on **Friday 9 July (9 – 9.30am)**. Those who have been to Assembly before are also very welcome to attend. Please use the same Zoom link that you will receive by e-mail for this session.

8. **Standing Orders**

A full version of our rules for doing business is in the 'Standing Orders'. Note that we will be using the standing orders for virtual meetings on this occasion; these can be found at www.urb.org.uk/general-assembly.

9. **Election of Moderator of General Assembly 2022-2023**

This election will take place using a dedicated online website. Full details of how to access this site will be given at Assembly.

10. **Buzz Groups**

The Moderators may ask for small 'buzz groups' to be created to discuss something. The technical team running the meeting will create these groups. Please be patient while they are created – they can only work as fast as Zoom allows!

11. **Parallel Sessions**

You will see from the programme that in session 7 on Saturday afternoon you will have the opportunity to choose to join a parallel session. Parallel sessions offer an opportunity for members of Assembly to engage with the work of the Assembly's committees in a more intimate and less formal setting. A parallel session is not a forum for exacting business; neither is it for receiving written reports.

There will be five parallel sessions as follows:

A:	Mission Committee Nominations Committee <i>(moderator: Revd Clare Downing)</i>
B:	Ministries Committee Faith and Order Committee <i>(moderator: Mr Peter Pay)</i>
C:	Equalities Committee Communications Committee <i>(moderator: Professor David Thompson)</i>
D:	Children's and Youth Work Committee Finance Committee <i>(moderator: Mr Derek Estill)</i>
E:	Education and Learning Committee Business Committee <i>(moderator: Revd Nigel Uden)</i>

12. **Zoom Chat Function**

Please adhere to the following guidelines:

- During business sessions:
 - The general chat function should be reserved for points of order only. For any technical issues, please message a member of the technical team directly and someone will endeavour to assist you.
 - Personal chat messages are available.
- Outside business sessions:
 - General chat messaging may be used.

13. **Social time during Assembly**

Alongside the formal business sessions of General Assembly, a social space is available here: <http://bit.ly/GA21-wonder>. Please note that this website will not be moderated and is simply made available for those who would like to gather informally for conversation with other members of Assembly in between the business sessions. A brief guide to using this website will be included in the introductory sessions.

14. **Praying with GEAR**

The Group for Evangelism and Renewal within the United Reformed Church will be facilitating prayers at 8.45am for 20 minutes on Saturday, Sunday and Monday mornings

during Assembly. The prayers will take place within the same space as the social time: <http://bit.ly/GA21-wonder>. For further information, contact Brian Harley.

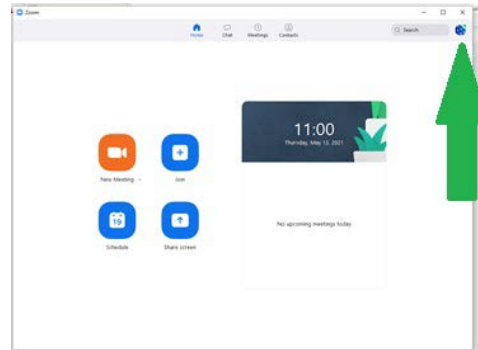
15. **Latest version of Zoom**

A reminder that, to help with the smooth running of the meeting, you should ensure you have downloaded the latest version of Zoom to your computer or device.

To do this on a PC or laptop, open Zoom and log in if needed, then click the small square icon to the right of the Search bar at the top of the Zoom window (see picture).

Select **Check for updates** and Zoom will begin a check. Please be patient – this can take up to a minute.

Click on the Update button when requested. If your program is up to date, Zoom will let you know.



16. **Live streaming**

A reminder that the business sessions of General Assembly, as well as the Sunday morning worship at 11am, will be live streamed on the URC website, YouTube channel and Facebook page.

17. **Social Media**

We should not post on social media sites during business sessions. This restriction only applies when Assembly is in session; members may join in online debates during breaks, about business that is completed (although not on business that has only been adjourned to a later session of the meeting). As ever, everything shared on these sites is the responsibility of the author and subject to the same defamation laws as any other written communication.

The report of the business will appear on the URC website and social media channels throughout the day.

Thank you for your commitment to Assembly. I look forward to seeing you on-line.

Yours in Christ,

John Bradbury
General Secretary