

To: Members of Mission Council, staff in attendance and observers

Dear Colleagues,

June 2020

**Mission Council
Friday 10 July – on Zoom (codes to be advised nearer the time)**

I look forward warmly to seeing you at Mission Council and write now to mention several practical matters as we prepare for the meeting.

1. Mission Council will meet online on Friday 10 July. There will be three business sessions of an hour each, starting at 10.30, 11.45 and 2.00. Thus there will be a short mid-morning break and a full hour for lunch.
2. This is the first time we have held a central council of our Church online. This arrangement is the best we can manage at the moment, and we mean to use it well. Warm thanks to our URC Communications team and to Affinity, who have helped us at many General Assemblies and will be handling the technology on this occasion.
3. At the moment we are planning practice sessions on Monday 6 and Wednesday 8 July. Times will be announced. This will be a chance to test such skills as logging in, muting your microphone, participating in discussion, and voting. Try to be there, even if you are familiar with Zoom. If you want help with Zoom, have a look at the three Zoom guides at the top of this webpage: www.urb.org.uk/information-guides
4. The list of resolutions for the meeting is at the foot of this letter. You will see that these are many. We shall try to deal with much of the business that would have come to Assembly, and with those items that we remaindered when the March Mission Council was cancelled. The resolutions therefore come from three sources:

1 to 31	Business that was prepared for General Assembly
32 and 33	New Rules and Standing Orders for virtual meetings
34 to 41	Matters remaindered from Mission Council in March

The Moderators will classify the resolutions initially as follows:

32, 33	These will be considered at the start of the meeting
20, 22, 25, 29	These will definitely be assigned agenda time
1-9, 24	These will need to be left until General Assembly can meet
Everything else	10-19, 21, 23, 26-28, 30-31, 34-41 have been placed <i>En Bloc</i> .

5. When business is placed *En Bloc*, the Moderators think that decisions might be reached responsibly without further discussion. So the agenda will include a slot when these items will be voted on – as a single lump of business (*En Bloc*).

However, it is up to you whether all of these papers remain *En Bloc*. So when you read

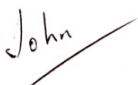
the *En Bloc* papers, I strongly encourage you to contact the author of a paper if you have questions or concerns. Authors' names and email addresses are noted at the head of each paper. This is not to stifle debate on the day, but to clear up any matters that can easily be resolved by conversation in advance, so that we can use our time on the day to discuss the substance of proposals, rather than procedure or meaning.

If you think any of these papers needs discussion at Mission Council, 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 48 hours before we meet (12 noon on Wednesday 8 July). If three people ask to remove an item, it will be withdrawn from *En Bloc* and added to our agenda.

So you can remove anything from *En Bloc*. But we cannot remove everything from *En Bloc* and still have time to discuss it all in the meeting. Time will not allow. So there is an element of risk in removing items – if there are too many of these, some might get remaindered and left to another meeting. Nonetheless there will be time to add some of the *En Bloc* business to the agenda, if people so wish.

6. When we deal with an item on the agenda, the Moderators will always seek consensus. However, decisions about the new Standing Orders (Resolutions 32 and 33) are clearly urgent, and the Moderators have classified these as requiring a simple majority. If the new Standing Orders are agreed, the other resolutions presently listed (20, 22, 25, 29) will require a two-thirds majority rather than a simple majority (as set out in new SO 8.3).
7. Observers and URC staff who are not members of Mission Council do not participate in decision-making. Staff members are, however, welcome to speak.
8. We ought not to post on social media during business sessions. This restriction only applies when Council is in session; members may join in online debates during breaks, about completed business (although not on business that has been adjourned until later in 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.
9. Do remember that we rely on every Mission Council member to take information back to synods. That goes for all the business at the meeting – what we discuss, and anything we simply decide. Do let the people you represent know what the Church is doing.
10. On the pages below is the wording of all the resolutions for the meeting. Each of them is referenced to the Book of Reports or to one of the March Mission Council papers, and these are on the URC website <https://urc.org.uk/july-2020.html>
11. Finally, thank you, for your commitment to Mission Council, and for offering time and care to the Church, so that we can take our decisions as wisely as possible. As always, please come to share, listen, reflect and discern together, and to support each other in seeking the guidance of God.

With best wishes,
Yours sincerely,

John

Resolutions for Mission Council, July 2020

Resolutions that would have been brought to General Assembly

The page numbers below refer to the Book of Reports.

Resolutions 1-3 (pages 4 and 12)

These deal with regulatory matters that are beyond the powers of Mission Council. They must therefore be deferred until Assembly can meet.

Resolutions 4-9 (pages 15 and 40)

These resolutions propose major revisions to the Ministerial Disciplinary Process and Incapacity Procedure. Because of their extent, and because a change of this nature would require very wide consultation and assent, the Moderators have decided to defer these matters until Assembly can meet.

Church changes – closures and new causes

Resolution 10 (page 45)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council notes the closures, with praise to God for the worship and witness offered by these fellowships across the years.

Resolution 11 (page 46)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council celebrates Church Without Walls as a new ecumenical worshipping congregation within Walton Churches Partnership, Milton Keynes, and therefore celebrates it as a new worshipping congregation within the United Reformed Church.

Resolution 12 (page 47)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council receives the ecumenical New Lubbesthorpe Project as a Mission Project of United Reformed Church.

Resolution 13 (page 47)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council receives the new pieces of mission work at Love's Farm, St Neots, and at North Avenue, Chelmsford, as Mission Projects of the United Reformed Church.

Children's and Youth Work Committee

Resolution 14 (page 58)

Mission Council urges all United Reformed Churches (especially those near universities and colleges) to use Fusion's Student Linkup and SCM Connect, enabling students to explore a wider range of churches and have more opportunity to commit to a place of worship that they feel is appropriate.

Resolution 15 (page 58)

Mission Council recognises the climate emergency and challenges all councils, committees and local churches to do everything possible to make URC events and activities eco-friendly, as urged by URC Youth Assembly.

Communications Committee

Resolution 16 (page 65)

Mission Council encourages all churches without websites to set one up as a matter of urgency, and to consider using the URC's iChurch initiative.

Resolution 17 (page 65)

Mission Council welcomes the new look and feel of print publications used since 2019, and encourages all Synods, committees and departments to use the design and digital visual identity guidance from the communications team, so that all materials produced by the Church can share the same quality and consistency.

Resolution 18 (page 65)

Mission Council encourages all members and friends of the Church to read *Reform*, the magazine of the United Reformed Church, and to subscribe to it so that, as it also approaches its 50th anniversary, it can continue to challenge, debate, refresh, enrich and inform.

Education and Learning Committee

Resolution 19 (page 91)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council endorses the direction for the Education and Learning Committee described in the Way Forward paper on pp91-98 of the Book of Reports.

Finance Committee and Pensions Committee

Resolution 20 (page 114)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council, being representative of Local Churches, Synods and the whole Church, confirms the Church's commitment to the pensions promises already made, and wishes any consideration of future pension arrangements for the Church's Ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers, missionaries and staff to keep clearly in mind:

- a) The Church's warm gratitude for the commitment, gifts and service of those who work among us and serve in our name;
- b) The Church's desire to deal with these people honourably in their retirement;
- c) The Church's desire to act as a responsible employer, for the people we employ and for our stipendiary office-holders.

Resolution 21 (page 114)

Mission Council thanks Dr Chris Evans, on his retirement as Convener of the Pensions Committee, for his conscientious and careful service in this role and thanks all those across the Church who are involved in the current Integrated Risk Management Project for their hard work and their willingness to work towards a resolution of the significant pensions challenges that face the Church.

Resolution 22 (page 114)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council authorises the directors of the URC Trust to amend its guarantee of the Ministers' Pension Fund provided to the URC Ministers' Pension Trust in response to the changing regulatory environment, but limited to the available resources of the URC Trust.

Ministries Committee

Resolution 23 (page 156)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council adopts the Gift Policy contained on pp157-8 of the Book of Reports.

Resolution 24 (page 159)

This proposes a change to the Basis of Union, which is beyond the powers of Mission Council. The matter must therefore be deferred until Assembly can meet.

Resolution 25 page 162

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council adopts the policy for pastoral supervision set out on pp162-7 of the Book of Reports.

Mission Committee: Environmental Task Group

Resolution 26 (page 188)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council directs the Environmental Task Group to consult on a travel and expenses policy for the URC which (i) encourages consideration of the purpose of travel and its environmental impact, (ii) introduces a carbon budget for international travel on URC business, and (iii) incentivises low-carbon travel modes, with a view that proposals should be brought to a future General Assembly, or to the Assembly Executive if necessary.

Mission and Discipleship: Walking the Way Steering Group

Resolution 27 (page 195)

Mission Council, in affirming the work of the Walking the Way Steering Group, encourages those who plan the Church's budget to seek ways of funding its continuing work at the level indicated on p202 of the Book of Reports, according to the priorities set out on pp195-201.

Nominations committee

Resolution 28 (page 203)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pp204-223 of the Book of Reports, subject to the additions, amendments and corrections contained in the supplementary report to Assembly.

Safeguarding Advisory Group

Resolution 29 (page 227)

- a) Having already endorsed the safeguarding strategic plan 2020-2025, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, acknowledges that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility in the United Reformed Church.

- b) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council directs all local churches and synods and those who oversee safeguarding arrangements in the Church to implement the safeguarding strategic plan in ways that promote the welfare of the URC and the well-being of the community in which the Church is placed.

Wessex Synod

Resolution 30 (page 255)

- a) Mission Council encourages Elders Meetings and/or Church Meetings to install 'public-access defibrillators' on an external wall of their Church buildings, wherever possible.
- b) Mission Council encourages Synods to offer financial support where possible to help churches purchase and install these defibrillators.
- c) Mission Council resolves that, if successful, this initiative be used to mount national and local press campaigns to promote the profile of our churches as safe, caring and compassionate communities.

Resolution from the Assembly Clerk: Ministerial Disciplinary Process

Resolution 31 (not in Book of Reports)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appoints Morag McLintock as General Assembly Representative in the Ministerial Disciplinary Process from 11 July 2020 until the close of General Assembly 2021.

Explanatory text for Resolution 31:

The responsibility of General Assembly Representative in the Ministerial Disciplinary Process is presently carried by the Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship). In order to avoid a gap when the Revd Richard Church retires in July, the incoming Convenor of the Law and Polity Advisory Group is willing to cover this responsibility for the coming year. During that year consideration can be given to a longer-term arrangement.

From the Assembly Clerk: Virtual meetings and Standing Orders

Supporting paper is on the URC website, under 'Mission Council papers, July 2020'.

Resolution 32

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves to make the addition to the Rules of Procedure covering Virtual Attendance at Physical Meetings and Virtual Meetings, with immediate effect.

Resolution 33

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council:

- a) re-designates the Standing Orders as "Standing Orders for Physical Meetings", with immediate effect;
- b) adopts the "Standing Orders for Virtual Meetings", with immediate effect;
- c) declares, for the avoidance of doubt, that where a majority of those present at a meeting are physically gathered, it shall be a physical meeting conducted according to the Standing Orders for Physical Meetings, and where a majority of those present at a meeting are not physically gathered, it shall be a Virtual Meeting, conducted according to the Standing Orders for Virtual Meetings;
- d) reminds the whole United Reformed Church of the longstanding provision in the Rules of Procedure: "1.3 ...The Standing Orders which are printed in the Book of Reports to General Assembly shall apply to all meetings of the Assembly and the Mission Council and, in so far as they are applicable, to meetings of Synods, district councils and their committees."

Resolutions remaindered from the cancelled Mission Council in March

From Paper B1 at Mission Council: Children's and Youth Work

Resolution 34:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council welcomes the review of the United Reformed Church's Child Friendly Church Award and commends the new Children and Youth Friendly Church scheme to replace this from 2020 as an award to be made by children's and youth work committee on behalf of the denomination to churches completing the approval process.

From Paper C2 at Mission Council: Communications

Resolution 35:

- a) Mission Council recognises the contribution of Reform to the life and work of the United Reformed Church and notes the commitment of the Communications Committee and staff team to continue its growth and development over the five-year period from January 2021 to December 2025, a period that includes the 50th anniversary of the URC and the magazine.
- b) Mission Council acknowledges with thanks the work of the Reform team and the wider Communications Team in making savings and reducing the financial cost to the Church, and endorses the further changes outlined in the report.
- c) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, and noting the decision in March 2020 by the Officers of Assembly to support Reform in 2021, Mission Council resolves to support Reform over the subsequent four year period to December 2025 by continuing with a reduced annual subsidy, not to exceed £50,000 annually, and asks the Communications Committee to make regular reports to Mission Council.

From Paper D1 at Mission Council: Education and Learning

Resolution 36:

- a) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves that from 2021 the normal route to becoming a Synod-Recognised Lay Preacher in the United Reformed Church will be based on Stepwise, in accordance with the proposals given in Appendix A of this paper;
- b) Mission Council requests the Education and Learning Committee, in consultation with the Ministries Committee and appropriate committees and officers of the Synods, to develop and publish detailed guidance by the end of 2020 for implementing the resolution above.

From Paper I2 at Mission Council: Mission Committee

Resolution 37:

Mission Council accepts the plan to develop the Legacies of Slavery recommendations presented to MC in November 2019 and to consult with synods and local churches between the General Assemblies of 2020 and 2021, with the aim of bringing refined resolutions to General Assembly in 2021 or 2022.

From Paper I4 at Mission Council: Walking the Way

Resolution 38:

Mission Council instructs the Walking the Way Steering Group to establish a small task group to bring forward detailed proposals for the celebration of the URC's upcoming 50th anniversary.

From Paper J3 at Mission Council: Nominations

Resolution 39:

Mission Council approves the proposals for synod nominations to the Mission Committee.

From Paper R3 at Mission Council: Safeguarding Advisory Group

Resolution 40:

Mission Council expects a standardised approach to safeguarding training across the United Reformed Church and strongly encourages all those who are working with children, young people and adults at risk in the life of the Church to access the new basic safeguarding training.

From Paper U1 at Mission Council: Mission Council Advisory Group

Resolution 41:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council, approves the pattern for the routine reporting of Assembly Committees as set out in Paper U1.