

**The United Reformed Church**  
**Minutes of a virtual meeting of Mission Council held 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

**FIRST SESSION**

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The meeting of Mission Council began at 1030 with worship led by the Revd David Coaker. The Moderator, Mr Derek Estill, was in the Chair.

**20/01**

The Moderator welcomed everyone, identifying new members and those attending as alternates.

Apologies had been received from the Revd Kevin Watson.

Those attending for the first time or attending in a new capacity were:

The Revd Dr Jason Askew	<i>Synod of Wales Representative</i>
The Revd Martyn Coe	<i>North Western Synod Representative</i>
Ms Lorraine Downer	<i>Thames North Synod Representative</i>
The Revd Gerald England	<i>South Western Synod Representative</i>
Mr Alan Kirby	<i>Southern Synod Representative</i>
Ms Ella Lemon	<i>East Midlands Synod Representative</i>
Mr Tony Obi-Ezekpazu	<i>Thames North Synod Representative</i>
The Revd Geoffrey Clarke	<i>Moderator of East Midlands Synod</i>
The Revd Brian Jolly	<i>Moderator of North Western Synod</i>
The Revd Jamie Kissack	<i>Moderator of Yorkshire Synod</i>
Mr Richard Lockley	<i>West Midlands Synod Representative</i>
The Revd Dr Robert Pope	<i>Convenor-nominate of Faith and Order</i>
Ms Karen Campbell	<i>Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries</i>
Ms Jo Harris	<i>Youth Representative</i>
Ms Victoria Turner	<i>Youth Representative</i>

**20/02**

The Clerk moved Resolutions 32 and 33:

**Resolution 32** **Virtual Meetings**  
**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.**

Mission Council *agreed*.

**Resolution 33** **Standing Orders for Virtual Meetings**  
**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.”

Mission Council *agreed*.

**20/03**

The General Secretary, the Revd John Proctor, proposed *en bloc*, Resolutions:

- 10-13 Church changes – closures and new causes**
- 14-15 Children’s and Youth Work Committee**
- 16-18 Communications Committee**
- 19 Education and Learning Committee**
- 21 Pensions Committee**
- 23 Ministries Committee**
- 26 Environmental Task Group**
- 28 Nominations Committee**
- 31 Ministerial Disciplinary Process**
- 34 Children’s and Youth Work**
- 35 Communications**
- 37 Legacies of slavery**
- 38 URC 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary**
- 39 Synod nominations to the Mission Committee**
- 40 Safeguarding training**
- 41 Pattern of committee reporting to the General Assembly**
- 42 Contingency plans for next meeting of Mission Council**

Mission Council *agreed*.

The Revd Nigel Uden took the Chair

**20/04**

**Resolution 25 Ministries Committee**

**Pastoral Supervision**

The Convenor of the Ministries Committee, the Revd Paul Whittle, outlined the proposed policy for the implementation of Pastoral Supervision, and moved Resolution 25:

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

Following discussion, Mission Council *agreed*.

**20/05**

**Resolution 29 Safeguarding Advisory Group**

**Safeguarding**

The Revd Richard Church reported on the work of the Safeguarding Advisory Group and moved Resolution 29:

*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.*

Mission Council adjourned at 1125

**SECOND SESSION**

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Mission Council resumed at 1140; the Moderator, the Revd Nigel Uden, took the Chair.

The Revd Fran Kissack proposed an amendment to Resolution 29 adding the words '*and of individuals with whom the church comes into contact*'. Seconded by Ms Rita Griffiths.

Following discussion, the amendment was *carried*.

Ms Victoria Turner proposed an amendment to the Resolution, to replace '*the welfare of the URC*' with '*welfare in the URC*'. Seconded by Mr Ian Hardie.

The amendment was *carried*.

The amended Resolution 29 was put:

**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 welfare in the URC, the well-being of the community in which the Church is placed, and of individuals with whom the church comes into contact.**

Mission Council *agreed*.

**20/06**

**Resolution 27 Mission and Discipleship**

**Walking the Way**

Ms Francis Brienens introduced the Resolution:

*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.*

The General Secretary moved the amendment:  
to add the words '*to the end of the calendar year 2021*',  
Seconded by Mrs Jane Baird.

The amendment was *carried*.

The amended Resolution 27 was put:

**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, to the end of the calendar year 2021.**

Mission Council *agreed*.

Mr Derek Estill took the Chair

**20/07**

**Resolutions 20 and 22 Finance Committee**

**Pension Funds**

The Deputy Treasurer, the Revd John Piper, introduced Resolutions 20 and 22. In doing so he outlined current issues facing the URC's pension schemes.

Mission Council adjourned at 1250.

### **THIRD SESSION**

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Mission Council resumed at 1400; the Moderator, Mr Derek Estill, took the Chair.

## **Resolution 20**

**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 22**

**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.**

There being no discussion, Resolutions 20 and 22 were put.

Mission Council *agreed unanimously.*

**20/08**

## **Resolution 30 Wessex Synod**

**Defibrillators**

Mrs Sue Brown, on behalf of Wessex Synod, moved Resolution 30.

- 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.*

In discussion, concern was expressed at the timing of the Resolution, given the difficulties being experienced by local churches during the current coronavirus crisis.

The Revd Jacky Embrey proposed that the Resolution be not put, seconded by the Revd Dr Peter Stevenson.

Mission Council *agreed* that the Resolution *be not put.*

The Moderator, the Revd Nigel Uden, took the Chair.

**20/09**    **Address to the Throne**

The General Secretary presented the Address to the Throne, and sought Mission Council's approval, on behalf of General Assembly, that it be sent.  
Mission Council *agreed*.

**20/10**

The Moderator thanked the General Secretary, the Assembly Clerk and Tasneem Choudhury for arranging the meeting; Andy Jackson and communications team, and the team from Affinity for their technical guidance and expertise. In en bloc we noted new mission projects, and closed churches, and they will be noted by General Assembly, as will the retirement of John Proctor and Richard Church. Thanks to them, and to those for whom this will be their last Mission Council in their current roles:

The Revd James Breslin  
The Revd Dave Coaker  
The Revd Elaine Colechin  
The Revd Jacky Embrey  
The Revd David Grosch-Miller  
Dr Jim Merrilees  
The Revd Jenny Mills  
The Revd Fiona Thomas  
The Revd Kevin Watson  
Mr Alan Yates

**20/11**

Closing worship was led by the Revd Dave Coaker.

Mission Council adjourned at 1435.

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Conflicts of interest around pension funds at the Mission Council and General Assembly**

There are a number of different conflicts of interest around the decision-making relating to pension funds.

Ministers<sup>1</sup> who are members of the Ministers Pension Fund, their spouses or civil partners, and their dependent children, have an obvious interest. This interest takes more than one form: some may wish to support a Defined Benefit scheme to protect the guaranteed nature of their pension; however, some may wish to support a move to a Defined Contribution scheme in order to secure their interests through stabilising the long term health and robustness of the Fund.

People who are members of the Lay Staff Pension Fund, their spouses or civil partners, and their dependent children, also have an obvious interest. This interest takes more than one form: some may wish to support a Defined Benefit scheme to protect the guaranteed nature of their pension; however, some may wish to support a move to a Defined Contribution scheme in order to secure their interests through stabilising the long term health and robustness of the Fund.

Anyone who is a member of a local church of the United Reformed Church, including Local Ecumenical Partnerships and Union Churches, also has an interest because the size of their contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund will change depending upon which decisions are taken. Some may wish to keep such contributions as low as possible, while others may wish to make a larger contribution in order to maintain or secure what they perceive as a benefit to their minister.

It is important that Decisions made by Mission Council and General Assembly, are in the best interests of the Church and reflect the views of its members, acting in their representative capacities. This is only possible after discussion and consultation amongst its members has taken place. If everyone with a conflict of interest in respect of pensions was removed from the decision-making, there would only be a handful of people left. This would not enable effective, representative decision making to take place. It is therefore important that those that have declared and recorded a conflict of interest are included. This will not diminish the decision made.

Decisions made in respect of the Pension funds will be considered by the United Reformed Church Trust (URCT). On its behalf, the Law and Polity Advisory Group have approached the Charity Commission, who have agreed that, in this context, those with a conflict of interest may participate in decision-making. Individual conflicts of interest should be declared and recorded. The Charity Commission have advised that it is prepared to make an order to this effect for the benefit of the United Reformed Church Trust under section 105 of the Charities Act 2011.

This is why you were asked in advance of the meeting to declare your interests. These have been checked, and recorded, and the numbers declaring each interest were:

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, the term 'Ministers' means both Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church-Related Community Workers.

1. Are you a member of the URC Ministers' Pension Fund, or a spouse or civil partner of a member of the Fund? 51 out of 78

2. Are you a member of the URC Lay Staff Pension Fund, or a spouse or civil partner of a member of the Fund? 9 out of 78

3. Are you a member of a URC local church? 76 out of 78

In total, 76 out of 78 people recorded an interest in at least one category, many people in two categories, and some in all three categories. A full list will be preserved with the official copy of the minutes.

<b>Name</b>	Are you a member of the URC Ministers' Pension Fund, or a spouse or civil partner of a member of the Fund? (The answer is Yes, if you [or your spouse or civil partner] expect to benefit from the Fund one day, or if either of you already benefits from the Fund now. If none of these applies, the answer is No).	Are you a member of the URC Lay Staff Pension Fund, or a spouse or civil partner of a member of the Fund? (The answer is Yes, if you [or your spouse or civil partner] expect to benefit from the Fund one day, or if either of you already benefits from the Fund now. If none of these applies, the answer is No).	Are you a member of a URC local church? (The answer is Yes if you are a member of a local URC, or of a Union Church with a URC component, or of an LEP with a URC component. If none of these applies, the answer is No.)
Sarah Moore	Yes	No	Yes
Reuben Watt	No	No	Yes
George Faris	No	No	Yes
Adrian Bulley	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lorraine Downer	No	No	Yes
John Proctor	Yes	No	Yes
Elaine Colechin	Yes	No	Yes
KEIR HOUNSOME	No	No	Yes
David John Greatorex	No	No	Yes
Paul Whittle	Yes	No	Yes
Michael Hopkins	Yes	No	Yes
Gerald England	Yes	No	Yes
Clare Downing	Yes	No	Yes
Ella Lemon	No	No	No
Maureen Shepherd	Yes	No	Yes
Alan Kirby	No	No	Yes
Rev Brian Jolly	Yes	No	Yes
Jane Baird	No	Yes	Yes
Graham Hoslett	Yes	No	Yes



Richard Lockley	No	Yes	Yes
Rosie Buxton	Yes	No	Yes
Anthony Obi	No	No	Yes
James Breslin	Yes	No	Yes
Steve Faber	Yes	No	Yes
Gwen Jennings	Yes	No	Yes
Anne Lewitt	Yes	No	Yes
John Piper	Yes	No	Yes
Marilyn Piper	Yes	No	Yes
Philip French	No	No	Yes
Geoffrey Clarke	Yes	No	Yes
Ruth Dixon	No	No	Yes
Alan Yates	No	No	Yes
George Watt	Yes	No	Yes
Pamela Tolhurst	No	No	Yes
Joan Grindrod-Helmn	Yes	No	Yes
Rev Bernie Collins	Yes	No	Yes
Nicholas Jones	Yes	No	Yes
Myra Rose	No	No	Yes
William Robson	No	No	Yes
Ray Adams	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fran Kissack	Yes	No	Yes
Andy Jackson	No	Yes	No
Sam Richards	No	Yes	No
Phil Wall	Yes	No	Yes
Melanie Campbell	No	Yes	Yes
Fiona Thomas	No	Yes	Yes
Peter Stevenson	Yes	No	Yes
Simon Fairnington	No	Yes	Yes
Sara Foyle	No	Yes	No
Bridget Banks	Yes	No	Yes
Francis Brienen	No	Yes	Yes
Sue Brown	No	No	Yes
David Grosch-Miller	Yes	No	Yes
Gerald England	Yes	No	Yes
Jenny Mills	Yes	No	Yes
Rosie Martin	No	No	Yes
Steve Summers	No	Yes	No
Helen Lidgett	Yes	Yes	Yes
Shirley Miller	Yes	No	Yes
Rita Griffiths	No	No	Yes
Simeon Mitchell	No	Yes	No
Tim Crossley	No	Yes	Yes
Richard Church	Yes	No	Yes

Paul Franklin	Yes	No	Yes
Gerald England	Yes	No	Yes
Andrew Evans	No	No	Yes
Nigel Uden	Yes	No	Yes
Robert Pope	Yes	No	Yes
Andrew Prasad	Yes	No	Yes
Val Morrison	No	No	Yes
Ruth Whitehead	Yes	No	Yes
Lythan Nevard	Yes	No	Yes
Victoria Turner	No	No	Yes
Philip French	No	No	Yes
Ian Hardie	No	No	Yes
Ruth Dixon	No	No	Yes
Martyn Coe	Yes	No	Yes
Nicola Furley-Smith	Yes	No	Yes
Jo Harris	No	No	No
Jason Askew	Yes	No	Yes
Simon Walkling	Yes	No	Yes
John Bradbury	Yes	No	Yes
David Pickering	Yes	No	Yes
Derek Estill	No	No	Yes
Jamie Kissack	Yes	No	Yes
David Herbert	Yes	No	Yes
Jacky Embrey	Yes	No	Yes
Jim Merrilees	No	No	Yes
Peter Pay	No	No	Yes
Charles Mather	Yes	No	Yes
Marion Tugwood	Yes	No	Yes
Yes	51	15	83
No	39	75	7

## **APPENDIX II**

### **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.