

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

Dear Colleagues,

26 June 2020

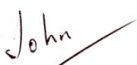
Mission Council, Friday 10 July

I write to follow up the earlier covering letter, with further detail about our meeting.

1. Our Communications team is planning practice sessions on Monday 6 and Wednesday 8 July. Times and login codes will be announced. Try to be there, even if you are familiar with Zoom. If you want help with Zoom, look at the three Zoom guides at the top of this webpage: www.urc.org.uk/information-guides
2. Three late business papers are now available on the URC website, as follows:

Resolution 13	New Mission Projects: detailed information from Eastern Synod
Resolution 28	Supplementary Nominations, adding to list in the Book of Reports
Resolution 42	A new resolution, with contingency plans for the next meeting of Mission Council. The moderators designate this as <i>En bloc</i> .
3. Now a general point about the wording of resolutions. We shall consider almost every resolution in a different setting – at either a different council or a different time – from the plans originally made. We therefore require in most cases modest changes of wording. The wordings in the Book of Reports, and in the Mission Council papers for March, are not the authoritative and latest versions. The authoritative and latest versions are at the foot of the letter sent a fortnight ago (and included again at the foot of this letter).
4. You will realise that, when we discuss Resolutions 20 and 22 about pensions, most of us will have a personal interest as well as a formal responsibility. Many of us work for the Church and belong to its pension schemes; some have already retired and benefit from these schemes; the great majority of us help to support the schemes through our giving in local congregations. You might think that this would commit all of us to silence, leaving nobody in a position to join the discussion. However, advice from the Charity Commission for England and Wales indicates that these interests need not prevent members of Mission Council sharing in the discussion and in any decision. The Clerk will make a formal statement to this effect during our meeting, which we shall hope to post on the website in advance. Meanwhile, we shall need to ask you to declare your interests by returning a simple form, which will be sent to you.
5. Finally an apology for an error in the Book of Reports. On page 45, the great bulk of the work in collating our list of closed churches was actually done by Mrs Ann Barton, whom we thank warmly for her careful efforts in this task.

Yours sincerely,



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.

New Resolution: contingency plans for next meeting of Mission Council

Resolution 42:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council authorises the Officers of Assembly to take such steps as may be needed to arrange the next meeting of Mission Council, as either a virtual or a physical meeting.