

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Mission Council at the High Leigh Conference Centre
10 – 12 March 2014**

Monday, March 10th 2014

SESSION 1

The moderator, Mr John Ellis, called Mission Council to order and took the chair. The chaplains, the Revd Melanie Smith and the Revd Nigel Uden, led opening worship. Ms Smith informed Mission Council of the death of Ms Kathleen Cross, North Western Synod clerk. The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar led the Bible study. The moderator introduced himself and the others on the platform. He offered Mission Council's welcome to new members, people attending in new roles, visitors and observers.

Those attending for the first time:

Mrs Gwen Jennings	South Western Synod
Mr Andrew Weston	FURY Moderator elect

Those present in a new role:

Mr Matthew Barkley	FURY Moderator
Ms Francis Brien	Deputy General Secretary Mission

Visitors:

Revd Dr Romilly Micklem	Medium Term Strategy Group
Revd Dr Carla Grosch-Miller	Chaplain elect
Revd Professor Alan Sell	(to be present on Tuesday afternoon)

Observers:

Revd Richard Gray	Deputy treasurer
Mr Matthew Prevett	Research student
Ms Melanie Campbell	Northern Synod clerk

Apologies for absence or partial attendance

Revd Pauline Barnes	Consensus adviser (to attend Wednesday)
Revd Lee Batson	Ecumenical observer (Church of England)
Revd Stephen Brown	Synod of Scotland
Revd Ruth Gee	Ecumenical Observer (Methodist) (late arrival)
Revd Sheila Maxey	Convener, Pastoral Reference & Welfare Committee
Revd Tim Meachin	Convener, Children's and Youth Work Committee
Revd Jane Rowell	Secretary for World Church Relations
Mr Steve Summers	CRCW Development Worker
Revd Kevin Watson	Moderator, Yorkshire Synod
Revd Mike Walsh	North Western Synod

Technical support was provided by Ms Sara Foyle, senior graphics designer.

The Revd Richard Church paid tribute to Ms Kathleen Cross, who had played a large part in the life of the Church both locally, as synod clerk, and as convener of the Assembly commission for the ministerial disciplinary process. Mission Council stood in remembrance and the moderator led prayer.

Mr Ellis explained that staff in attendance ex officio and appointed ecumenical observers were encouraged to contribute during discussions, but not during the decision stage. Neither could they vote. Visitors and other observers should not speak. He explained the method for removing matters from the en bloc resolution and stated that Paper P from the law and polity advisory group had been removed from the en bloc papers by the officers. It was proposed and agreed that consensus group facilitators should be the Revd Clare Downing, the Revd Roy Lowes and the Revd Elizabeth Nash.

The Revd Roberta Rominger, general secretary, outlined the business for the meeting, noting that there would be presentations under the general heading “cutting edges” at various points during the meeting. The clerk explained the process for the election of members for the Mission Council advisory group (MCAG). It was proposed and agreed that Mrs Gwen Jennings and Mr George Faris should act as tellers. The Moderator thanked the Revd Elizabeth Nash who was ending her term of service on MCAG.

14/01 Minutes

The General Secretary presented the minutes of the meeting held 22-24 November 2013 at the High Leigh Conference Centre. It was noted that the name of Mr Keith Webster should be added to the list of visitors. The minutes were then accepted as a correct record.

14/02 Matters arising from the minutes

13/40 Nominations Committee

When the name of Mrs Bridget Fosten was presented for appointment as clerk to the governors of Westminster College, there had been uncertainty as to whether this should be an action of Mission Council or simply a matter for note. Following the meeting it had been established that Mission Council should have made the appointment on behalf of the Assembly. However, Mrs Fosten had since withdrawn, and therefore no further action was necessary. The Nominations Committee expected to propose a new name later in the meeting.

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar took the chair.

13/28 Pastoral reference and welfare committee (PRWC)

The Revd Clare Downing read a statement on behalf of the PRWC (Paper K). The paper is attached as an appendix to these minutes. The Revd Melanie Smith, chaplain, led prayer.

14/03(1) Medium term strategy group (MTSG) (Paper S1)

The general secretary introduced Paper S1, outlining the work of the group since October 2012, and stating the questions which, in the view of the group, were still outstanding. The moderator invited questions for clarification, to which Mrs Rominger responded. Discussion followed, centred mainly on the role of the synod clerk. It was thought sensible for the synod clerks together to undertake the task of producing a role description, following which the law and polity advisory group would consider whether to prepare a list of core tasks which could be included in the Structure.

Mrs Rominger proposed the resolution:

Mission Council welcomes the update from the medium term strategy group and asks them to proceed with the work identified until the new general secretariat has put alternative medium term planning arrangements into place.

There was discussion, during which it was suggested that additional words be inserted into the resolution. The resolution was put in the following revised form:

Mission Council welcomes the update from the Medium Term Strategy Group and asks them to proceed with the work identified until Mission Council or General Assembly, receiving advice from the new general secretariat, has put alternative medium term planning arrangements into place.

The resolution was passed by consensus. There was some discussion about the desirability of adding a further member to the MTSG. Decision on this point was deferred to a later session. (Continued in session 3.)

SESSION 2

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar took the chair.

14/04 Cutting edges: faith & order committee

The Revd Elizabeth Welch, convener, introduced Paper F2: United Reformed Church, Ecumenical Future. The Revd David Tatem, secretary for ecumenical relations, offered a personal reflection on the current ecumenical scene in the three nations. Ms Welch chaired a panel discussion which was followed by questions to the panel and Mr Tatem. Mission Council discussed the issues in small groups, and during the following plenary session gave brief feedback. The convener asked members to send further comments in writing so that these could be considered and, where appropriate, incorporated in the committee's report to Assembly.

Following a short break Ms Welch introduced Paper F1: Ordained Local Ministry. The committee would welcome advice from Mission Council as to what should be presented to the Assembly in order to assist further discussion about the leadership of elders. In particular, she sought guidance as to whether the whole paper should be presented, in order that the wide discussion could be held at Assembly, or whether it would be better to focus on one of the identified options, of which the third – presiding elders – was preferred by the committee. Discussion revealed that the majority felt that the paper was making a suitable suggestion although there remain a number of differing views. It was hoped that the focus of the Assembly discussion would be made very clear in the papers to be circulated. It was agreed by consensus that the paper, suitably sharpened, should be presented to the General Assembly.

SESSION 3

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar took the chair.

The Revd Ruth Gee, president of the Methodist Conference and Methodist representative at the Council, was welcomed to the meeting.

14/05 Medium term strategy group (Paper S2)

The general secretary introduced Paper S2: Role of the Synod Moderator. She explained that it was the fruit of much work and consultation, building on work which had come to the Assembly in 2012. There was discussion. Mrs Rominger agreed that the paper should be amended to include reference to the paragraph in the Structure regarding synod moderators. The term of appointment also required correction.

Mrs Rominger proposed the resolution:

Mission Council agrees that the job description set out in the appendix to Paper S2 should be recommended to Assembly as a model for future synod moderator appointment groups.

It was suggested the word “job” be changed to “role”. The resolution was presented in the revised form as follows:

Mission Council agrees that the role description set out in the appendix to Paper S2 should be recommended to Assembly as a model for future synod moderator appointment groups.

The resolution was passed by consensus.

14/06(1) Wessex Synod, Paper Y1: Frequency of General Assembly

The Revd Clare Downing presented the paper. Mrs Downing said that she recognised that the timescale for reinstating an annual Assembly as envisaged in paragraph 9 was difficult, but pointed out that the resolution did not bind the Church to this timescale. Whilst recognising that there would be financial consequences should the intention of the resolution be realised, she suggested that given the current sense of disempowerment in churches, the cost could be seen as a worthwhile investment. During discussion the treasurer brought a suggestion from the MTSG that this matter should be considered as part of a wider review of governance and accountability processes. Mission Council indicated broad support for this suggestion. Mission Council also expressed strong support for the view that the number and length of service of Assembly moderators should not be tied to the frequency of General Assembly. It was agreed that a facilitation group led by the Revd Elizabeth Nash would consider the points made in the discussion and report later during the meeting. (Continued in Session 9.)

14/07(1) Synod of Wales, Paper Y2: Children's Assembly

The Revd Shelagh Pollard presented the paper. She referred to the Charter for Children in the Church, and on the invitation of the moderator Mission Council affirmed that children were an integral part of the Church's life. There was discussion about the Children's Assembly, and it was noted with concern and surprise how few children had attended the 2012 Assembly. There was evidence that those who had attended had found it to be an enjoyable experience. Other possible ways of involving children in the Assembly, and of enabling the adults to hear the voice of children, were suggested.

During discussion it became evident that the two resolutions in Papers Y1 and Y2 were interconnected and part of a wider discussion about General Assembly. It was agreed that the facilitation group should consider both issues. (Continued in Session 9.)

14/03(2) (continued from Session 1.) Medium term strategy group

Mission Council considered further the question of whether another person should be appointed to the MTSG. Whilst the idea found favour in principle the practical and timescale issues were such that it did not appear to be sensible.

The chaplains led evening prayers.

Tuesday, March 11th 2014

SESSION 4

Mr John Ellis took the chair. The chaplains led opening worship.

14/08 Cutting edges: mission committee

The Revd Tracey Lewis introduced Paper I: The United Reformed Church and the Centenary of the First World War 2014 – 18: How do we respond? Ms Lewis suggested that churches would be ideal places for conversations about the issues raised by the centenary. The committee was setting up a task group to help shape the debate and had provided two questions which were discussed in buzz groups. There was feedback in plenary. Ms Lewis asked that any written comments be sent to the committee and also said that she would welcome suggestions of people who might serve on the task group.

14/09(1) Assembly-Appointed Posts

The general secretary introduced Paper M1: Assembly-appointed posts. It was noted that in the first list of appointments the post of “secretary for mission” should be deleted since it no longer existed. With the agreement of Mission Council Mrs Rominger changed the wording relating to personnel at Westminster College to read “Principal of Westminster College and members of the Senatus”.

Following discussion it was agreed that, for clarity, the words “of Word and sacrament” be inserted into the first line of 2a) after the word “ministers”. There was discussion about whether it was necessary for the general secretary to be a minister of Word and sacrament, but ultimately no change was suggested. In considering 2c) there was considerable debate about the requirement that the Principal of Westminster College be a minister of Word and sacraments. It was proposed that:

Mission Council asks the Education and Learning Committee to explore the question as to whether the post of Principal of Westminster College should be restricted to ministers of Word and sacrament, though not necessarily of the URC, and report in time for the General Assembly to come to a view on the matter.

The resolution was passed by consensus. Further consideration of Paper M1 was deferred to a later point in the meeting. (Continued in Session 5.)

SESSION 5

Mr John Ellis took the chair.

14/10 Cutting edges: ministries committee

The convener, the Revd Ruth Whitehead, introduced Paper H: Resourcing our Elders, explaining that it introduced a new online resource for the development of elders, which she hoped would be launched at General Assembly. She asked Mission Council to note an error in item 7 on the first page of the report, in that the word “supporting” should be replaced by “non-serving”, and the words in brackets deleted. A session from the new resource had been printed within Paper H, and Mission Council was asked to work through it in groups. The convener invited the groups to give written feedback.

14/11 Nominations committee

The convener, the Revd John Durrell, presented an oral supplement to the written report at Paper J. Mr Durrell reported that two synod moderator review groups had met and recommended the reappointment of the Revd Paul Whittle as moderator of Eastern Synod and of the Revd Kevin Watson as moderator of Yorkshire Synod. The recommendations would be taken to the General Assembly.

Mr Durrell proposed:

1. Acting on behalf of General Assembly Mission Council agrees to appoint Mr Chris Wright as clerk to the board of governors at Westminster College.

Resolution 1 was passed.

2. Mission Council agrees to extend the term of service of the Revd Professor David Thompson as a member of the law & polity advisory group until 2016.

Resolution 2 was passed.

The Moderator led prayer for the four mentioned people, especially remembering the Revd Kevin Watson and his family at a time of bereavement.

14/09(2) Assembly-Appointed Posts (Paper M1) (continued from Session 4)

Resuming the discussion session, the Moderator summed up the changes which had been agreed. The General Secretary proposed the amended resolution:

Mission Council approves the following resolution for submission to the General Assembly.

1) General Assembly agrees that the Assembly-appointed posts are as follows:

**General Secretary
Deputy General Secretary Discipleship
Deputy General Secretary Mission
Deputy General Secretary Administration and Resources
Head of Children's and Youth Work Development
Secretary for Church and Society
Church Related Community Worker Development Worker(s)
Director of Communications
Secretary for Ecumenical Relations
Secretary for Education and Learning
Secretary for Ministries
Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry
Editor, Reform
National Rural Officer
Secretary for World Church Relations**

Synod Moderators

The Principal of Westminster College and members of the Senatus

Director of the Windermere Centre

2a) Assembly confirms that the following posts are restricted to ministers of word and sacrament in the United Reformed Church:

**General Secretary
Secretary for Ministries
Synod Moderators**

2b) Assembly confirms that the following post is restricted to members of the URC:

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations

2c) Assembly confirms that the following posts are restricted to members of the URC and to members of those Churches which belong to one or more of the three world bodies: the World Communion of Reformed Churches, (WCRC), the Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council (DECC) and the Council for World Mission (CWM).

Deputy General Secretary Discipleship
Deputy General Secretary Mission
Secretary for World Church Relations
Principal, Westminster College
Director, Windermere Centre

2d) Assembly confirms that all other Assembly appointments are open to members of the URC and to members of those Churches which belong to one or more of WCRC, DECC, CWM and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI).

The resolution was passed by consensus.

14/12 Law and polity advisory group (LPAG): advice from counsel

The convener, the Revd Professor David Thompson, reported on advice which had been obtained from counsel and disseminated through meetings with representatives of the synod trust companies. A statement of good practice for synod trusts was being prepared, and it was hoped that this would be available by the end of April.

14/13 Law and polity advisory group: Powers in Pre-union Trusts (Paper P)

Prof Thompson introduced the paper. He advised Mission Council that in the first cell of the table at part (4) of the resolution the words “,Committee of Management” should be inserted after the word “Court”.

Professor Thompson proposed:

Mission Council agrees to forward the following resolution to General Assembly:

(1) The General Assembly, in exercise of the powers conferred by s.18(1) of the United Reformed Church Act 1972 and s.10(1) of the United Reformed Church Act 1981, appoints until further notice the councils and other organs of the Church indicated in column 2 below to exercise any powers with respect to trusts and any powers of nomination vested prior to 5 October 1972 (or, as the case may be, prior to 26 September 1981) in the members, courts and other organs of dissolved associations indicated in column 1 below.

(2) In exercising any power vested in it by this resolution, a Church Meeting should act with due regard to any recommendations of the Elders’ Meeting or of other councils of the United Reformed Church exercising oversight over the local church concerned.

(3) For the avoidance of doubt, this appointment does not affect trusts or powers in relation to property governed by s. 8(2) of and Schedule 2 to the Act of 1972, or by s. 6(2) of and Schedule 2 to the Act of 1981, or to property in Scotland.

(4) In exercise of the power conferred by s.18(2) of the Act of 1972 and s.10(2) of the Act of 1981, the Assembly delegates any further exercise that may be necessary of its powers under s.18(1) and s.10(1) respectively (including any amendment of the provision now made) to Mission Council. This is in substitution for the delegation made to the Executive Committee by the Uniting Assembly of 1972.

Power vested before the date of formation/unification in:	To vest in:
The Session, Diaconate, Deacons' Court, Committee of Management or Board of Managers of a uniting congregation	The Church Meeting of the corresponding local church, or of any local church formed by its union with other local churches since the date of formation; or, if the local church has ceased to exist since the date of formation, the Synod on which it was last represented
The members or Deacons of a uniting church	
A presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of England, defined in the relevant trust instrument by jurisdiction over a particular uniting congregation	The Synod on which the local church corresponding to that uniting congregation, or any local church formed by its union with other local churches since the date of formation, is for the time being represented; or, if the local church has ceased to exist since the date of formation, the Synod on which it was last represented
A presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of England, defined in the relevant trust instrument only by geographical name	The Synod of the current province or nation of the United Reformed Church within which the bounds of the former presbytery (or the greater part thereof) lay; to be determined in case of doubt by a ruling of a Moderator of the Assembly on the advice of the Clerk, which shall be final
A county Congregational Union	The Synod of the current province or nation of the United Reformed Church within which the area of the former Union (or the greater part thereof) lay; to be determined in case of doubt by a Moderator of the Assembly on the advice of the Clerk, which shall be final
The General Assembly (or, prior to the adoption of that title, the Synod) of the Presbyterian Church of England	Mission Council (or the General Assembly if, whilst in session, it elects to exercise the power)
The Assembly of the Congregational Union or of the Congregational Church of England and Wales	
The Annual Conference of the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ	

The resolution was passed by consensus.

14/14 United Reformed Church Trust: Church House Feasibility Study (Paper L)

The Revd Professor David Thompson, chair, presented the paper. He reported on the work undertaken since the last meeting of Mission Council and proposed a feasibility study at a cost of £7,500 to £21,000 to be undertaken by the firm of architects Theis & Khan. He proposed the resolution:

Mission Council agrees a feasibility study should be undertaken to explore options for the possible development of Church House

The resolution was passed by consensus. The Moderator thanked Professor Thompson, then welcomed the Revd Professor Alan Sell to the meeting.

14/15 En bloc papers to be noted

The general secretary explained that papers G1 and O contained important information to be noted by Mission Council but did not carry any resolutions. There had been a change to Paper O: the title of the second staff post listed should read "Administrator, Mission and Racial Justice and Intercultural Ministry". Mission Council agreed to note these papers.

14/16 En bloc papers containing resolutions

The resolutions contained in the following papers were proposed en bloc:

14/16(1) Ministries and finance committee: Plan for Partnership amendments (Paper G2)

Mission Council agrees the amendments to the Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration set out in Paper G2.

It was noted that in Paper G2 the words: "shown in Appendix A" should have been in italics, and that the words: "of £1,500" should have been in bold type.

14/16(2) Nominations committee (Paper J)

Mission Council appoints:

- a) Revd Kate Gray and Revd Ashley Evans as members of the communications and editorial Committee.
- b) Revd James Mather as secretary of the listed buildings advisory group.
- c) Mr Stewart Cutler, Revd David Downing, Ms Sabrina Groeschel, Ms Victoria Paulding, Ms Emma Pugh and Revd Mike Walsh as members of the task group to give leadership on the issue of the integration of 20 to 40 year olds into the life of the United Reformed Church.
- d) Revd Sarah Moore, Revd Paul Whittle, and Revd Dr Stephen Orchard to serve as members of the Methodist/URC strategic oversight group's faith and order conversations.
- e) Dr Jim Merrilees as secretary of the ministerial incapacity and discipline advisory group.
- f) Mr Tony Bayley as a trustee of the retired ministers and widows fund.

All of these appointments to take place with immediate effect.

14/16(3) Mission Council advisory group (Paper U)

1. Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees to extend the appointment of the Revd Lis Mullen as interim synod moderator of the Northern Synod until 31 July 2015.
2. Mission Council agrees the terms of reference for the task group on the Church's engagement with 20 to 40 year olds.

The en bloc resolutions were passed by majority vote.

14/17(1) Question

The moderator said that the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith and the Revd Peter Meek had sought permission to address Mission Council in order to raise a concern. He invited them so to do.

Mr Meek addressed the Council in the following terms:

“Given that there is real concern amongst ministers about the salary level for the deputy general secretary posts for lay people:

- a) can Mission Council be reassured that if all the posts are filled by lay people that the effect is cost neutral given the assurance given to Mission Council in this regard;
- b) can Mission Council take note of the detrimental effect on the morale of ministers that this level of salary setting has caused when set alongside the stipend as per the job advertisement;
- c) can Mission Council take practical steps to affirm the value of ministers to the Church?”

The moderator pointed out that the standing orders stipulated that if a member wished to ask a question which did not relate to the business of the meeting, notice was required, which would allow time for an answer to be prepared. However, as he was aware that there was a real concern about this matter, he invited Mission Council to decide whether the matter could be taken under standing order 8 with the notice period being waived. Mission Council agreed by consensus. A statement in response would be prepared and presented later in the meeting. (Continued in Session 8.)

SESSION 6

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar took the chair.

14/18 Faith & order committee

Dr Jagessar welcomed the Revd Professor Alan Sell who presented a paper entitled: “How does the URC discern God’s will?”

Mission Council responded with acclamation and Professor Sell responded to questions.

The Moderator thanked Professor Sell for his helpful contribution to the meeting.

14/19 (1) Education & learning committee

The Revd John Smith, convener, presented Paper D: Safer Sacred Space implementation plan.

Following discussion it was agreed that the paper be revised in the light of comments made and presented later in the meeting. (Continued in Session 9.)

14/20 Question regarding the Methodist/URC liaison group

The Revd Michael Hopkins had submitted a question under standing order 8:

“Does the Methodist/URC liaison group (to be found at 7.2 in the nominations committee's reports) ever meet? Has the group produced any information or material that has been passed to synod ecumenical officers and/or united churches in the last five years? Is the group aware that the differences between the calling and stationing processes seem to be causing greater difficulties than they used to? Is the group aware that a number of united churches, which were originally set up on the basis of a full-time alternating ministry, are now challenged both by deployment pressures and decreasing membership numbers such that tensions are arising over the additional of single denomination churches of both denominations to the pastorate? Would the group be willing to specifically address the last two questions and produce a report for a future meeting of Mission Council?”

The Revd David Tatem responded in the affirmative. He reported that the group met three times a year, along with denominational ecumenical officers. Mr Tatem said that the group's method of working was changing, and that online documents would be more readily available. Ministry issues would be given high priority. The group could suggest ways forward but could not make decisions; reports may be brought to Mission Council from time to time.

The moderator invited the Revd Ruth Gee, president of the Methodist Conference, to comment, and she endorsed what Mr Tatem had said. She acknowledged that difficulties do arise, partly because URC ministers were called, whilst Methodist ministers were sent, but said that work would continue.

Mr John Ellis took the chair.

14/21 (1) Membership of the United Reformed Church, the General Assembly and Mission Council

The clerk introduced Paper M2 and proposed Resolution 1:

Mission Council agrees to propose the following resolution to General Assembly:

General Assembly agrees that with effect from the General Assembly of 2016 there shall no longer be six additional representatives of the Synod of Scotland under category 2.(6)(h).

Concern was expressed that the Synod of Scotland as a whole had not had an opportunity to give a view on the proposal. It was noted that it would be possible for amendments to be made at General Assembly. Resolution 1 was passed by consensus.

The clerk proposed Resolution 2. In doing so she explained that it was necessary to add words to the printed form of the resolution in order to provide for Assembly appointed ministers to be members of a synod, and to add former presidents of the Congregational Union of Scotland to category k.

Mission Council agrees to present the following resolution to General Assembly:

General Assembly agrees to make the following changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church:

Paragraph 2.(6)

Amend the first sentence to read: **“The General Assembly which shall embody the unity of the United Reformed Church and act as the central organ of its life and the final authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, in all matters of doctrine and order and in all other concerns of its common life shall consist of members of the United Reformed Church (save for those in categories (g), (l), (m) and (n)) as follows:”**

Amend category (d) by the deletion of the words: **“, a committee convener or otherwise entitled to membership of the Assembly,”** so that it reads: **“Where the moderator of synod is an officer of the Assembly the synod concerned shall appoint a substitute as its representative”**.

Amend category (f) by the deletion of the words: **“being members of the United Reformed Church,”** (twice).

Amend category (j) by the addition of the words: **“former chairmen and presidents of the Congregational Union of Scotland,”** before the words: “provided that” and delete the words **“such former officers are members of the United Reformed Church and that”**

Amend category (k) by the deletion of the words: **“, being members of the United Reformed Church,”**

There was considerable discussion concerning whether or not the representatives of FURY should be members of the URC. It was reported that, despite the current stipulation in the Structure, it was not the practise to insist on this. It was agreed that the wording of the resolution should not be changed at this stage, but that if FURY wished to raise the issue in future, Mission Council would be sympathetic. The matter was adjourned. (Continued in Session 8.)

14/22(1) Cutting edges: communications & editorial committee

The Revd John Humphreys, convener, asked members to fill in the questionnaire they were to be given as they left the hall for tea. (Continued in Session 9.)

Mission Council adjourned until 7.30pm, there being no necessary business for Session 7.

SESSION 8

Mr John Ellis took the chair.

14/23(1) Election of Mission Council advisory group members (Paper M4)

Voting papers were circulated; the clerk advised that three people had been nominated. As there were two vacancies, members of Mission Council should vote for two people. All three persons nominated were committee conveners so of the two elected, the one with the longer period available for service would fill the vacancy for a convener and the other would be the ‘ordinary’ member of MCAG. (Continued in Session 9.)

14/24 Cutting edges: education & learning committee

The Revd John Smith, convener, explained that the education & learning committee was engaged in a comprehensive review process called, “The Learning Church: the next chapter”. Mr Smith asked Mission Council to discuss a number of questions in groups, and asked that the groups submit their findings to the committee secretary, the Revd Fiona Thomas. The committee hoped to present a considered set of recommendations to Mission Council in 2015.

14/21(2)(continued from Session 6) Membership of the United Reformed Church, the General Assembly and Mission Council, Paper M2)

The clerk moved the revised version of resolution 2 pointing out that since it proposed a change to the Structure, it would need approval by General Assembly followed by referral to the synods before returning to Mission Council for ratification. The resolution was passed by consensus.

The clerk proposed resolution 3:

Mission Council agrees to propose the following resolution to General Assembly:

General Assembly agrees to appoint the Deputy General Secretary Administration and Resources, the Deputy General Secretary Discipleship and the Deputy General Secretary Mission as members of Assembly under category 2.(6)(n).

The resolution was passed by consensus.

The clerk proposed resolution 4:

Mission Council agrees to propose the following resolution to General Assembly:

General Assembly agrees that the Deputy Treasurer shall be a member of the United Reformed Church, and further agrees that the Deputy Treasurer for the time being shall be appointed as a member of Assembly under category 2.(6)(h).

The resolution was passed by consensus.

The clerk proposed resolution 5:

Mission Council resolves to amend the Rules of Procedure of the United Reformed Church as follows:

Amend paragraph 5.1 so that it reads:

5.1 The General Assembly shall appoint a Clerk of Assembly who shall be a member of the United Reformed Church. The Nominations Committee shall submit a name to the General Assembly for appointment as Clerk, for six years in the first instance, renewable for a maximum additional period of four years, but ensuring an overlap with a period of service of the General Secretary.

The resolution was passed by consensus.

With the consent of Mission Council the clerk proposed a corrected version of resolution 6:

Mission Council agrees to present the following resolution to General Assembly:

General Assembly agrees that the membership of Mission Council shall be:

- 1 Moderators of Assembly**
- 2 Moderators-elect**
- 3 Immediate past Moderators**
- 4 General Secretary**
- 5 Deputy General Secretaries**
- 6 Clerk**
- 7 Treasurer**
- 8 Deputy Treasurer**
- 9 Conveners of all Assembly Standing Committees**
- 10 Synod Moderators**
- 11 Three further representatives of each synod**
- 12 Three representatives of FURY (including the FURY Moderator)**
- 13 Chair of the United Reformed Church trust**

With the exception of those in category 5 (the deputy general secretaries) all the above shall be members of the United Reformed Church.

The legal adviser and the convener of the law and polity advisory group shall be in attendance with the right to speak at all times, but not to use consensus cards or to vote.

Staff secretaries shall be in attendance with the right to speak (except during the decision stage of the consensus process) but not to use consensus cards or to vote.

Up to two ecumenical representatives may attend with the right to speak (except during the decision stage of the consensus process) but not to use consensus cards or to vote.

Also present shall be the moderators' chaplains, the minute secretary, the consensus adviser (pending separate decision) and other staff members as agreed by committee conveners and the general secretary. These may participate in group sessions, and may speak during plenary sessions with the consent of the moderator.

From time to time there may be visitors and/or observers present by prior arrangement with the general secretary. They shall not have the right to speak or participate in any way during plenary or group sessions, unless with the explicit consent of the moderator.

The resolution was passed by consensus.

The moderator thanked the clerk for all the research she had undertaken in order to bring these necessary resolutions.

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar took the chair.

14/17(2) (continued from session 5) Response to Revd Nicola Furley-Smith and the Revd Peter Meek

Since no member of the Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG) was a member of Mission Council, Mr John Ellis, treasurer, and the Revd Ruth Whitehead, convener of the ministries committee, responded.

Mr Ellis explained that the remuneration committee was responsible for the salaries of lay staff based at Church House. The salaries were set following a job evaluation process. This attempted to determine a fair salary for all jobs, taking into consideration the job description and the necessary skills required, in comparison with salaries of comparable workers in the charity sector in London. Operation of this process had indicated a range of salaries for the new deputy general secretary (DGS) posts from £55,000 to £70,000. The remuneration committee decided that all three DGS posts should be on the same salary and that the lower end of the pay range be chosen for these posts, should they be taken up by lay people. It would not have been appropriate to set the salaries at a lower level, partly because of the salaries paid to others in Church House, and, more importantly, because of the marketplace and the need to attract some applicants for the posts the Church wanted to be filled. The Church required a high level of skills, and must be prepared to pay for it. Mr Ellis noted that in practice it was not uncommon for those taking up posts in the URC to take a significant cut in salary on doing so.

The question had asked about the impact on overall costs. It had indeed been the intention that the restructuring would be cost-neutral. The total number of posts had not increased. The three deputy general secretary posts replaced the previous deputy general secretary, the secretary for mission and the human resources manager. If the balance of ministers and lay people remained the same as before the increase in costs would be small. Mr Ellis acknowledged that it was the case that if all three posts were taken by lay people then the cost would increase – not in 2014 because the posts would only be occupied for part of the year, but there would be a larger impact in 2015.

Mr Ellis addressed the question concerning the comparison of the salaries with the ministerial stipend. He pointed out that the two were very different. The purpose of a stipend was to free ministers from money concerns and the figure was not related to the work done. Moreover, it was not appropriate simply to compare the stipend and salary figures. The level of the stipend should be considered in the context of other support provided for ministers and job security. Ministers based in Church House

received housing which, in London, was worth about £30,000 a year. In addition, their travel costs between home and work were paid. Therefore, comparison of the total packages for lay staff and ministers suggested there that there was no great disparity between the two.

Ms Whitehead said that whilst the ministries committee had not directly addressed the issue of the remuneration of ministers of Word and sacrament in posts also open to lay people, she wanted to affirm the value placed upon ministers. In the ministries committee it was often said that although stipendiary ministers of Word and sacrament were the Church's most expensive resource, they were also its most valuable resource.

Consistent improvements in the level of stipends, in housing provision and in the repayment of out-of-pocket expenses, including travel, had all underlined the desire of the denomination fully to support stipendiary ministers and their dependants. Whilst the stipend did not reflect the monetary value of the service ministers gave, it was the payment made so that no stipendiary minister of Word and sacrament should be in financial need.

It was the hope of the ministries committee that by freeing ministers from financial worry they could be released for service in the kingdom of God.

The moderator said that under Standing Order 8 no further discussion on the matter was permitted, although there remained scope for further conversations to be held in a number of places.

Evening prayers were led by the chaplains.

Wednesday, March 12th 2014

SESSION 9

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar took the chair. Morning prayers were led by the chaplain, the Revd Melanie Smith.

14/06(2) and 14/07(2) (continued from Session 3) Wessex Synod and Synod of Wales (Papers Y1 & Y2)

The Revd Elizabeth Nash, on behalf of the facilitation group, proposed:

Mission Council requests the medium term strategy group and its successor and the Assembly arrangements committee to work both together and separately, consulting widely, on the governance, representation and accountability structures of the United Reformed Church. This consultation should include:

- 1) How children, young people, and other minority voices can be listened to in decision making**
- 2) The balance between inspiration and other business at General Assembly**
- 3) The frequency and size of Assemblies and Mission Council meetings**
- 4) The pattern of Assembly committees and Synods in contributing and responding to General Assembly**
- 5) Length of service of General Assembly moderators**
- 6) The experiences of the 2010, 2012 and 2014 Assemblies**
- 7) Ensuring that this work is coordinated with other relevant reviews**

The outcomes of this consultation, with costed options, should be reported to the May 2015 Mission Council with a view to decisions at 2016 General Assembly.

The resolution was passed by consensus. The moderator thanked the facilitation group for its work.

14/25 Mission committee and communications & editorial committee – World War I commemoration

The Moderator invited the Revd Tracey Lewis to address Mission Council.

Ms Lewis said that she was presenting a proposal from the mission committee in collaboration with the communication & editorial committee. She explained that during earlier group discussions it had been learned that the British Legion (in partnership with B&Q) was encouraging the planting of poppy seeds as part of the remembrance of the First World War. It was suggested that this idea be adopted and added to. Mission Committee would encourage churches to plant poppy seeds, both red for remembrance and white for peace. It was understood that poppies planted on Good Friday should be in bloom in August to commemorate the commencement of the war. Funding for poppy seeds would be available for the first 100 churches applying to the communications office. Information would also be provided via a web link as to where seeds could be sourced.

14/22(2) Cutting Edges: communications & editorial committee (continued from session 6)

The Revd John Humphreys, convener, thanked those who had responded to the questionnaire on the previous day. He invited group discussion on a different set of questions and said that the interim head of communications, Ms Gill Nichol, would be pleased to receive comments from the groups.

14/26 Mission Council Advisory Group: Consensus decision making

The General Secretary introduced Paper M3. Mrs Rominger said that the URC had grown in skill in using the consensus process in recent years, and thanked the consensus adviser, the Revd Pauline Barnes, and her predecessor, the Revd Elizabeth Nash. The current discussion was not intended to question the value or place of the consensus process within the URC, but to consider whether it was any longer necessary to have a designated consensus adviser distinct from the clerk of Assembly. As the current adviser would soon complete her term of service MCAG suggested the time was right to terminate the post and look to the clerk to give the necessary advice.

Following discussion Mission Council agreed not to appoint another consensus adviser, and asked the officers of the Assembly to ensure that appropriate reflection and training on the use of the process were put in place.

Mr John Ellis took the chair.

14/23(2) (continued from Session 8) Election of Mission Council advisory group members (Paper M4)

The General Secretary announced that, as the result of the election on the previous day, the Revd Gethin Rhys would serve as a committee convener, and the Revd John Humphreys would serve as a group member. The moderator thanked them both for their willingness to serve in this way.

14/19(2) (continued from Session 6) Education & learning committee, Paper D: Safer Sacred Space Training

The convener, the Revd John Smith, thanked those who had contributed to the debate and also those who had assisted in the revision of the document. The revised document was presented to Mission Council.

Following discussion to which the convener responded, Mr Smith proposed the resolution:

Mission Council agrees that URC approved Safer Sacred Space training should be mandatory for every Minister of Word and Sacrament and Church Related Community Worker according to the provisions outlined in the revised Paper D.

The resolution was passed by consensus. The revised Paper D would be posted on the web-site.

14/27 Disciplinary process and incapacity procedure

The clerk reminded Mission Council that the Revd David Grosch-Miller was currently the General Assembly representative within the process and procedure. His service in that capacity would end on May 31st 2014. Once s/he was in post, the deputy general secretary discipleship would undertake the role. It was necessary to provide cover for the intervening period, so Mrs Carrick Smith proposed:

Mission Council resolves to appoint the Revd Professor David Thompson to serve as the General Assembly Representative within the Ministerial Disciplinary Process and the Ministerial Incapacity Procedure from 1 June 2014 until 5 November 2014 or the deputy general secretary discipleship is in post, whichever is the sooner.

The resolution was passed by consensus.

14/28 Thanks and farewells

On behalf of Mission Council the moderator expressed thanks to those for whom this would be the final meeting, and wished them well in the future:

Revd Pauline Barnes	Consensus adviser
Revd John Durell	Nominations convener
Revd John Gordon	Southern Synod
Revd David Grosch-Miller	Interim assistant general secretary (Returning as moderator of Assembly)
Revd Michael Hopkins	Wessex Synod (Returning as Assembly arrangements convener)
Revd Dr Michael Jagessar	Moderator of Assembly (Returning as immediate past moderator)
Mrs Val Morrison	Immediate past moderator
Revd Elizabeth Nash	Equalities convener
Revd Gethin Rhys	Wales Synod (Returning as ministries convener)
Dr David Robinson	Assembly arrangements convener
Revd Roberta Rominger	General secretary
Revd Howard Sharp	Mersey Synod moderator
Mr Duncan Smith	East Midlands Synod
Revd Melanie Smith	Chaplain to the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar
Revd Prof David Thompson	URC trust chair
Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe	Immediate past moderator
Mrs Irene Wren	Minutes secretary (Returning as nominations convener)

The general secretary announced that Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith had resigned as clerk of the Assembly. She thanked Mrs Carrick Smith warmly for her work and wisdom so readily shared over many years. Mrs Rominger said the officers of Assembly would appoint an acting clerk to serve the 2014 meeting of General Assembly, and that the normal process would be followed which would lead to the appointment of the next clerk.

Mrs Rominger also thanked the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar for his insights and leadership during his time as moderator of Assembly; she further thanked the Revd Melanie Smith for the worship she had led. Both Dr Jagessar and Ms Smith would complete their service at Assembly in Cardiff.

The moderator, Mr John Ellis, thanked everyone who had prepared for or contributed to the meeting of Mission Council. He particularly thanked Sara Foyle for her work on graphics.

The moderator declared that the business was complete and he led prayer.

SESSION 10

Mission Council gathered for worship and the celebration of Holy Communion. Worship was led by the chaplains, Mr John Ellis preached and the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar presided.

It was noted that the next meeting of Mission Council would take place November 3-5 2014 at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick.

APPENDIX PAPER K Report from the pastoral reference and welfare committee

The pastoral reference and welfare committee (PRWC) was given the responsibility by the 2012 General Assembly, through resolution 38, for seeking personal and collective reconciliation in the United Reformed Church, following the resignation of Lawrence Moore as moderator elect. The Committee brought a report to the November 2013 meeting of Mission Council of a 24 hour meeting facilitated by members of a reconciliation agency. What follows is a statement following a second such meeting held at the end of February 2014.

Lawrence Moore, Roberta Rominger, Val Morrison and Howard Sharp (who is Lawrence's line manager and a member of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee) met at Holy Rood House, Thirsk, with Hugh Donald and Sandra Black of the Church of Scotland's mediation service, "Place for Hope". This was our second meeting as part of the process of collective reconciliation requested by General Assembly 2012 in resolution 38 as a result of the events that culminated in Lawrence's resignation as moderator-elect at the March 2012 meeting of Mission Council.

It was a time of honest and difficult heart searching. We recognised that elements of the events that led to Lawrence's resignation served neither Lawrence nor the Church well, and this is a matter of regret.

We recognised too that we were all caught up in processes in which we found ourselves at times without precedent or adequate procedures. We discovered, through committed and careful listening to one another, that all of us acted and behaved in ways that contributed to the breakdown in relationships and procedural failures, despite our intentions to the contrary. Acknowledging the hurt and damage caused, and offering and receiving forgiveness and regret, has been a liberating and healing experience in which we have discovered the reality of the reconciling power of the Gospel that we so often preach.

We offer this experience to the Church both as part of our service and commitment to its peace and unity and in the conviction that brokenness and destruction do not need to be the last word about who we are as disciples of Jesus and the community of resurrection faith.