

The United Reformed Church

Minutes of a meeting of Mission Council held on 8-10 May 2015, at The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire.

Friday 8 May 2015

Session 1

The meeting of Mission Council began at 2.00 pm, with Worship led by the Moderator, Mr John Ellis, and his chaplain, the Revd Nigel Uden, which included the induction of the Revd Richard Church as Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship).

After worship, the Moderator introduced himself and the others on the platform: the Revd John Proctor (General Secretary), and the Revd Michael Hopkins (Clerk). He welcomed to Mission Council new members, people attending in a new capacity, visitors, and observers.

Those attending for the first time, or returning after a break in service:

Mr Stephen Ball	<i>FURY representative</i>
The Revd Martyn Coe	<i>North Western Synod representative</i>
The Revd Geoffrey Felton	<i>Eastern Synod representative</i>
The Revd Angela Gemmer-Snell	<i>West Midlands Synod representative</i>
The Revd Joan Grindrod-Helmn	<i>Northern Synod representative</i>
Miss Katie Henderson	<i>FURY representative</i>
Mr Frank Liddell	<i>Southern Synod representative</i>
Dr James Merrilees	<i>Synod of Scotland representative</i>
The Revd Dr Romilly Micklem	<i>Wessex Synod representative</i>
The Revd Kim Plumpton	<i>Southern Synod representative</i>
The Revd Paul Robinson	<i>Synod of Wales representative</i>
Mr Victor Russell	<i>Thames North Synod representative</i>

Those present in a new capacity:

The Revd James Breslin	<i>Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee</i>
The Revd Richard Church	<i>Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship)</i>
Mr David Greatorex	<i>East Midlands Synod representative</i>
The Revd Michael Hopkins	<i>Clerk of the General Assembly</i>
Mr Andrew Weston	<i>FURY Moderator</i>

Observers:

Ms Linda Austin	<i>Medium Term Strategy Group</i>
Mrs Melanie Campbell	<i>Northern Synod Clerk</i>
The Revd Elizabeth Caswell	<i>Convener of the Human Sexuality Task Group</i>
The Revd Dr Stephen Orchard	<i>Convener of the Church Membership Task Group</i>
Dr Augur Pearce	<i>Secretary of the Law and Polity Advisory Group</i>
Mr Keith Webster	<i>Convener of the Human Resources Advisory Group</i>

Apologies for absence:

The Revd Craig Bowman	<i>Secretary for Ministries</i>
Dr Andrew Bradstock	<i>Secretary for Church & Society</i>
The Revd Stephen Brown	<i>Synod of Scotland representative</i>
The Revd Dr Carla Grosch-Miller	<i>Chaplain to the Revd David Grosch-Miller</i>
The Revd Sheila Maxey	<i>Convener of the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee</i>
The Revd Tim Meadows	<i>Mersey Synod representative</i>
Mr Alexander Nunn	<i>FURY Moderator-elect</i>
Mr Danny Pigeon	<i>Northern Synod representative</i>
The Revd John Smith	<i>Convener of the Education and Learning Committee</i>
Dr Steve Tomkins	<i>Editor of Reform</i>
The Revd Simon Walking	<i>Synod of Wales Moderator</i>

15/1

The Moderator reminded the Council of the use of consensus cards.

The Moderator advised that supplementary papers G2, J2, and Y1 were available.

Papers C1 and T1 had already been removed from en bloc business, and they and any other papers removed from en bloc business would be addressed in session 8. Paper F2 should be entitled "Church Membership", and paper Z1: pages 150 and 151 paragraphs 1 to 8 should be readdressed to A to H.

The General Secretary gave notice of a vacancy for a member of the Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) open to any member of Mission Council, requesting nominations. The Convener of the Equalities Committee reminded Council that MCAG was lacking in female, lay, and BME representation.

The Moderator proposed that the Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor, Mrs Linda Harrison, the Revd Roy Lowes, and the Revd Jenny Mills be appointed as members of the Facilitation Group, if one were to be needed. This was agreed unanimously.

15/2 Minutes of the previous meeting

The Clerk presented the minutes of the meeting held on 3-5 November 2014, which were amended with the insertion of the words "and West Midlands Synod" in minute 14/52. They were agreed unanimously in their amended form and signed by the Moderator.

The Convener of the Ministries Committee explained to Mission Council that the Ministries Committee had, since the publication of the draft minutes, and being unaware of the error in them, used the original wording as the basis for their actions with regard to the matters covered by Paper H1 of this Mission Council. This action in good faith was accepted.

15/3 Matters Arising

The General Secretary reported on a review of Consensus Decision Making. Members were asked for specific theological reflection.

The General Secretary reported on the future of the Medium Term Strategy Group, proposing that more time was needed to see how the new General Secretariat settles down. Following questions, the Moderator proposed that:

Mission Council

(i) notes the report of the General Secretary; and

(ii) requests a further report on the future of the Medium Term Strategy Group not later than its March 2016 meeting.

This was passed by consensus.

The General Secretary reported that the United Reformed Church's involvement with the Greenbelt Festival would now be in 2016 and 2017, for which funds had been set aside from the Legacy Fund.

Mr Clifford Patten updated Council on the work of the Joint Property Strategy Group.

Session 2

Mission Council resumed at 4.20 pm. The Moderator, the Revd David Grosch-Miller, was in the chair.

15/4 Paper Z1 - National Synods Task Group

The Convener of the Task Group, the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar, presented the report.

During discussion, the Revd Dr Romilly Micklem asked if the resolution could be worded more tightly, and the proposers accepted the insertion of some commas to this effect.

The Revd Professor David Thompson responded to questions.

The resolutions were moved:

1. Mission Council accepts the conclusions reached by the National Synods Task Group (NSTG) in its report and commends them to all Synods.

This was passed by consensus.

2. Mission Council seeks the leave of the General Assembly to withdraw the draft Resolution 19A moved by it at the Assembly session of July 2014.

This was passed by consensus.

3. Mission Council resolves to make the following amendment to the Structure of the United Reformed Church: Reword paragraph 2(4)A(xxii) to read:

a) to seek to expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community, and

b) in Scotland and Wales to speak and act on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church in public affairs, or the conduct of ecumenical relationships, specific to the nation concerned, in the General Assembly's name but without prejudice to the Assembly's right to speak and act in the same field on behalf of the United Reformed Church either in England or throughout Great Britain.

This was passed nem con, in excess of the required two thirds majority.

The General Secretary then moved that:

Mission Council resolves to refer Resolution 3 to Synods of the United Reformed Church under the procedure set out in paragraph 3(1) of the Structure, with responses to come to the General Secretary by 31st March 2016, so that the matter may then be appropriately forwarded to General Assembly.

This was passed unanimously.

15/5 Paper R2 - Safeguarding historic review

The General Secretary presented the report. There was discussion on various practicalities, particularly on the relative merits of volunteers and employing appropriate individuals. The General Secretary moved the resolution: **Mission Council directs the General Secretariat to set in hand a safeguarding review, along the lines described in paper R2 of Mission Council May 2015, and to report back to every meeting of Mission Council until further notice.**

This was passed by consensus.

15/6 Paper X1 – Northerly Synods Consultation

Sufficient signatures had already been secured to remove this from en bloc business. The Moderator gave permission to Mrs Melanie Campbell, Northern Synod Clerk, to present the paper, and move the resolution: Mission Council resolves to include one new paragraph in the 'Process for the appointment of Synod Moderators': Where the new Moderator will need to engage closely with a Synod's partners – in, for example, adjacent Synods or other churches – the Nominating Group may, as part of the interview process, arrange for short-listed candidates to meet with a small number of key people from among the partners. Whether and how to arrange this will be a decision for the Nominating Group, which may afterwards seek advice or comment from these key people, but shall not in any way be bound by their views.

During the discussion, it became clear that a number of members had concerns about the proposal, and the business was remaindered.

15/7 Paper F2 - Church Membership

The Convener of the Faith and Order Committee, the Revd Elizabeth Welch, presented the report, and invited the Revd Professor Stephen Orchard to speak. Professor Orchard introduced the report, for discussion in groups after the break. Mission Council then adjourned.

Session 3

Mission Council resumed at 8.00 pm, meeting in groups, and then gathering together for evening worship led by the Revd. David Grosch-Miller.

Saturday 9 May 2015

Session 4

Mission Council resumed at 9.00 am, and the Moderator, Mr John Ellis, was in the chair. Morning prayers were led by the Revd Nigel Uden.

15/8 Paper N1 – Marriage of same-sex couples

The Moderator reminded the Council that this business had been notified as urgent because the Church expects a decision to be reached. Resolution 1 would be resolved by Consensus Decision Making, if possible, and depending upon what was agreed, the appropriate parts of resolutions 2, 3, and 4 would be decided by majority voting. The Convener of the Human Sexuality Task Group, the Revd Elizabeth Caswell, presented the report, and moved resolution 1. During discussion a number of minor changes of wording were agreed to clarify section C of 'Resolution X' (a draft resolution to be put to General Assembly).

Mission Council adjourned.

Session 5

Mission Council resumed after a brief break. The Moderator, the Revd David Grosch-Miller, was in the chair.

15/9 Paper Y1 – Persecution of Christian and Religious Minorities

The Revd Tracey Lewis proposed, and the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar seconded, resolution 1:

1. Mission Council agrees to suspend Standing Orders to consider the resolutions below as a matter of urgency.

This was agreed by consensus.

Mrs Lewis and Dr Jagessar proposed resolutions 2, 3, and 4.

2. Mission Council views with deep and prayerful concern the many recent examples of Christians around the world being persecuted for their faith.

3. Mission Council calls upon the newly-elected British government to make religious freedom a strategic priority and to take early practical steps that show this commitment.

4. Mission Council mandates the Officers of Assembly to represent these concerns to the government, acting where appropriate with colleagues from other churches and faiths.

The Revd James Breslin declared an interest as both an Officer of the Assembly and a Director of the Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom. Mr Breslin suggested that the resolution should go further as Islamic minorities are also subject to persecution. The Revd Gethin Rhys proposed adding the words "and other religious minorities" to resolution 2, which was accepted by the proposers.

2. Mission Council views with deep and prayerful concern the many recent examples of Christians and other religious minorities around the world being persecuted for their faith.

3. Mission Council calls upon the newly-elected British government to make religious freedom a strategic priority and to take early practical steps that show this commitment.

4. Mission Council mandates the Officers of Assembly to represent these concerns to the government, acting where appropriate with colleagues from other churches and faiths.

These were all agreed by consensus.

15/10 Paper S2 – Governance options

The Treasurer, Mr John Ellis, presented the paper. After questions and discussion, Mission Council broke into groups to discuss the paper in more detail, until the end of the session, when Mission Council adjourned.

Session 6

After a break, Mission Council resumed at 4.30 pm. The Moderator, Mr John Ellis, was in the chair.

15/11 Paper N1- marriage of same sex couples

Considerable discussion continued on resolution 1. The Convener of the Human Sexuality Task Group and the General Secretary assured Mission Council that significant pastoral care would be offered to churches and Ministers who were distressed by whatever the Assembly might decide for whatever reason. Resolution 1 was then considered in a decision-making session in the following form:

1. Mission Council resolves to commend to General Assembly Resolution X as set out within this paper.

Resolution X for General Assembly:

A. In keeping with the 2007 commitment on Human Sexuality, General Assembly does not consider it appropriate to express a single view on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church on the matter of Same Sex Marriage.

B. General Assembly declares that the Church Meeting of each Local Church of the United Reformed Church in England and Wales is the relevant governing authority for the purpose of giving consent for the trustees of its building to seek the registration of that building for religious marriage ceremonies of same-sex couples, in accordance with the provisions of Section 26A(1) of the Marriage Act 1949 as amended by the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013.

C. In the case of Local Ecumenical Partnerships and Union Churches, where the constitution makes no provision for a Church or Congregational Meeting (including a Special or Extraordinary General Meeting) the relevant governing authority of the United Reformed Church under Section 26A(1) of the Marriage Act 1949 as amended by the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013 is the council which represents the widest gathering of members of that Church or Partnership. In case of doubt the council to act in this matter shall be jointly determined, in the light of the LEP constitution and any Sharing Agreement, by the Moderator and Clerk of the Synod on which that Church is represented.

D. Noting that Mission Council has already recognised, on behalf of General Assembly, ‘that if a future Assembly were to allow for ministers and members of the United Reformed Church to solemnise same-sex marriages under Scots Law, the Synod of Scotland would be the appropriate council of the URC to approach the Registrar General for Scotland’, the General Assembly confirms that it now lies within the competence of the National Synod of Scotland to nominate under section 9(1A) of the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 as amended by the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014 members of the United Reformed Church who have indicated their willingness in writing to the Synod to be approved celebrants of same sex marriage in Scotland.

E. The General Assembly recalls that the Trusts on which Local Church buildings are commonly held empower the Church Meeting to direct in what ways such a building is or is not to be used for public worship and ancillary purposes.

F. The General Assembly authorises the General Secretary, the Clerk, or any Deputy General Secretary to sign and furnish a copy of this resolution (or a relevant extract) in the name of the Assembly, whenever such a copy may be required by law.

It was not possible to find consensus, but the resolution was passed, recognising disagreement. The Council spent time in prayer.

The Revd David Grosch-Miller took the chair. He reminded the Council that the following resolutions would be taken using the majority voting Standing Orders.

The Convener moved resolution 2:

2. Mission Council recalls General Assembly, to meet for one day on 27 June 2015 in Birmingham, to consider Resolution X.

Discussion centred upon the practicalities of what could be achieved in such a meeting, and the financial implications. The resolution was put to the vote, and overwhelmingly carried, with five votes against.

The Convener then moved resolutions 3A and 3B as alternative motions. Discussion included consideration of the difference between being required to refer business under section 3(1) of the Structure and Assembly voluntarily choosing to refer business and the reasons for and against voluntary referral.

The resolutions were moved as alternatives:

3A. Mission Council resolves that, should General Assembly support Resolution X, it will advise Assembly that the matter does not involve constitutional change and therefore need not be referred under the procedure in Section 3(1) of the Structure.

3B. Mission Council resolves that, should General Assembly support Resolution X, it will advise Assembly to refer the matter under the procedure in Section 3(1) of the Structure, to the Synods of the Church.

There voted for resolution 3A 15, and for resolution 3B 43. 3B then became the substantive motion, and was overwhelmingly carried.

The Convener then proposed resolution 4:

4. Mission Council resolves that, should General Assembly support Resolution X, it will advise Assembly to refer the matter under the procedure in Section 3(1) of the Structure, to Local Churches, as well as to the Synods.

Following discussion this was put to the vote, and overwhelmingly lost.

The Moderator expressed thanks to all involved in the careful preparation of this business. Particular thanks was expressed to Dr Graham Campling for the painstaking and time-consuming analysis of every form submitted, which he had undertaken meticulously and with grace.

Mission Council then adjourned.

Session 7

15/12 The Moderator, Mr John Ellis, was in the chair.

Mr Ellis and the Revd Clare Downing addressed Mission Council on their recent visits to Zambia, and the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the United Church of Zambia.

15/13 En bloc business

This business was formally moved by the General Secretary:

Paper D1 - Appointment of Tutor in New Testament Language, Literature and Theology at Westminster College

Information paper – no resolution

Paper F1 – Report of the Faith and Order Committee's work

Information paper – no resolution

Paper G1 – Financial outcome 2014

Information paper – no resolution

Paper G2 – Report and Accounts of the URC Trust 2014

Information paper – no resolution

Paper H2 – Review of priorities in Education and Learning

1. Mission Council rescinds Resolution 14/52 of November 2014.

2. Mission Council asks the Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship), conferring with the Ministries, Education and Learning, and Finance Committees to bring forward recommendations about priorities for education and learning that will support the well-being and future vitality of the church's recognised ministries

Paper H3 – Amendments to the Structure

3. Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council gives first approval to the following changes to the Structure:

Functions of Synods:

2(4)(A)(xvi) to consider on the recommendation of local churches applications for recognition as candidates for the ministry ~~and to candidates for any form of fulltime service in the Church at home and abroad, and, in the case of candidates for the ministry, determine their eligibility for a call.~~ **Ministries of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Work and to transmit them, if approved, to the Assembly for decision, and, in partnership with the relevant Resource Centre for Learning, to give oversight pastoral care to such candidates during their training.**

Functions of Ecumenical United Areas:

2(5)(A)(vi) to consider, on the recommendation of Local Churches, applications for recognition as candidates for the Ministries of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Work and to transmit them, ~~if approved,~~ to the Synod ~~for decision.~~

Functions of General Assembly:

New function [numbering to be determined]:

to consider, on the recommendation of Synods, applications for recognition as candidates for the Ministries of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Work, to oversee their training, and to determine their eligibility for a call.

Paper I1 - Memorandum of Understanding between the United Reformed Church and the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK)

4. Mission Council affirms the United Reformed Church's long standing partnership and historical relationship with the Presbyterian Church of Korea and continues to hold the Presbyterian Church of Korea in prayers.

5. Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council receives and endorses the Memorandum of Understanding.

6. Mission Council authorises the Mission Department, in conversation with the Discipleship Department, the Synods, and Local Churches, to pursue the practical outworking of this commitment.

7. Mission Council requests the Mission Committee to report back after the first review of the Memorandum has taken place.

Paper I2 – Commitment for Life

8. Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council accepts the recommendation of the Mission Committee that the percentages for allocating income from Commitment for Life be changed to 75% for Christian Aid, 5% for Global Justice Now (formerly World Development Movement) and 20% for administration, grants, and programme expenses, with effect from 1 January 2015.

Paper I4 – Mission Committee update

Information paper – no resolution

Papers J1 and J2 – Nominations Committee

9. Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appoints:

1. With immediate effect:

- 1.1 Miss Judith Haughton BEM as Convener of the Disciplinary Process Commission Panel until General Assembly 2020.
- 1.2 The Revd Dr Janet Tollington as Deputy Convener of the Disciplinary Process Commission Panel until General Assembly 2020.
- 1.3 The Revd Dr Martin Camroux as a member of the Ministries Committee until General Assembly 2018.

2. From 1 July 2015:

- 2.1 The Revd Bernie Collins as Convener-elect of the Mission Committee for one year and then as Convener until General Assembly 2020.
- 2.2 The Revd Alan McGougan as Convener-elect of the Commitment for Life Reference Group and then as Convener until General Assembly 2020.
- 2.3 The Revd Anne Bedford as Convener-elect of the Retired Ministers Housing Society Sub-committee for one year and then as Convener until General Assembly 2020.
- 2.4 Mr Simon Loveitt as Convener-elect of the CRCW Programme Sub-Committee for one year and then as convener until General Assembly 2020.
- 2.5 Mrs Soo Webster as convener of the Pilots Management Sub-Committee for a further 12 months until General Assembly 2016.
- 2.6 Ministries Committee: the Revd Angela Claxton for one year to fill existing vacancy with the expectation that this will be extended until General Assembly 2020.
- 2.7 Northern College Governor extension of service: the Revd Robert Pope until June 30th 2017.

3. Committee Members until 30 June 2019:

- 3.1 Accreditation Sub-committee: the Revd Russell Furley-Smith
- 3.2 Communications and Editorial Committee: Ms Rebecca Gudgeon, Ms Heather Carr, and Mr Tim Llewellyn
- 3.3 CRCW Programme Sub Committee: Mr Derek Estill
- 3.4 Finance Committee: Mr Brian Hosier
- 3.5 Methodist/URC Interfaith Reference Group: the Revd Bob Day, the Revd Ann Jack
- 3.6 Ministries Committee: the Revd Sally Thomas
- Leadership in Worship Advocate: Mr Andy Buxton
- 3.7 Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee: Mrs Pam Sharp
- 3.8 Retired Ministers Housing Society Sub-Committee: the Revd Bill Frame, Mr Peter West
- 3.9 Windermere Management Committee: Mr Clifford Patten.
- 3.10 Mission Committee: the Revd Lesley Moseley; Mr John Collings; Mr John Cornell.
- 3.11 Children's and Youth Work Committee: Mr Adam Woodhouse; Mr Sam Brown.
- 3.12 Finance Committee: the Revd Iain McLaren.
- 3.13 Panel for Assembly Appointments: Mr Clive Curtis; the Revd Dick Gray; Mrs Gwen Jennings; the Revd Samuel Silungwe; the Revd Bill Young.
- 3.14 International Exchange Reference Group: Convener Elect until July 2016 and then as Convener until General Assembly 2020 Ms Judith North, Ms Angela Bogg.
- 3.15 Maintenance of Ministry Sub Committee: Mr Keith Berry.
- 3.16 Methodist/URC Liaison Committee: the Revd Tim Richards.
- 3.17 Windermere Management Committee: Mr Kevin Mantle.
- 3.18 Congregational Memorial Hall Trust: Mr Simon Fairnington.
- 3.19 URC Investment Committee: Mrs Jean Hudson.
- 3.20 CTBI: the Revd Sarah Moore.

4. Until General Assembly 2020:

- 4.1 Assessment Board: the Revd Lesley Charlton, Mrs Jill Shelton
- 4.2 Disciplinary Process Commission Panel: Mr Andy Braunston, the Revd Hilary Collinson, the Revd Martha McInnes, the Revd Rachel Poolman, Mr Patrick Smyth and the Revd Peter Stevenson.
- 4.3 Panel for General Assembly Appointments: Mrs Sheana Dudley.

5. Also from 1 September 2015:

5.1 The Revd Steven Mark Faber as Moderator of West Midlands Synod, for a term of seven years, to 31 August 2022.

5.2 The Revd Andrew Christopher Mills as Moderator of North Western Synod for a term of seven years, to 31 August 2022.

Paper L1 – Church House – plans and prospects

10. a) Mission Council accepts the view of the Trust that the United Reformed Church can make good and efficient use of Church House for the foreseeable future, for the work that we need to do centrally;

b) Mission Council therefore asks the Trust to seek estimates for a limited project to remodel Church House, in ways that will improve access, the use of space, and potential flexibility for letting;

c) Mission Council asks the Trust to report back, with a more precise scheme and clear financial information.

Paper L2 – Terms of Reference for the United Reformed Church Investment Committee

11. Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council approves the revised Terms of Reference for the United Reformed Church Investment Committee

Paper M1 – Appointment of the General Assembly Representative to the Ministerial Disciplinary Process and Incapacity Procedures

12. Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appoints the Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) as General Assembly Representative to the Ministerial Disciplinary Process from 10 May 2015.

Paper M2 – The Lobbying Act

Information paper – no resolution

Paper M3 – Resolution 19, a way forward

13. Resolution 19(A) of General Assembly 2014 is withdrawn and resolution 19(B)(4) of General Assembly 2014 is not put.

14. Resolutions 19 (B)(1) and 19(B)(3) and 19(B)(5) of General Assembly 2014 are not put.

15. Mission Council instructs the Law and Polity Advisory Group, consulting the Children's and Youth Work Committee and the Faith and Order Committee, to bring recommendations about the appropriateness or otherwise of those who are not members of the United Reformed Church being voting members of the Councils of the United Reformed Church; and to report by March 2016.

16. Mission Council rescinds its decision of November 2014 to extend the consultation on Resolutions 19(B)(2) and 19(E) of General Assembly 2014 to 31 March 2016, and revises that date to 31 December 2015, with a view to making decisions on ratification at its meeting in March 2016.

17. Mission Council instructs the Clerk to issue a definitive briefing on the status of this resolution to Synod Moderators and Clerks as soon as possible.

Paper M4 – Presentation of Standing Orders

18. Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council instructs the Clerk of General Assembly to re-number the Standing Orders and make any consequential changes in presentation, and to re-issue them after their being checked by the Assembly Officers.

Paper O1 – Human Resources Advisory Group

Information paper – no resolution

Paper O2 – The Future of the Human Resources Advisory Group

19. Mission Council agrees to the continuation of the Human Resources Advisory Group, effective from July 2015, as an Advisory Group to Mission Council, with the current membership.

20. Mission Council agrees that the terms of reference set out in Appendix A of Paper O2 of Mission Council May 2015 shall replace the terms of reference of Human Resources Advisory Group previously agreed by Mission Council in October 2012.

21. Mission Council agrees that the Human Resources Advisory Group henceforth consist of:

- a) A Convener appointed by Mission Council or General Assembly, upon the recommendation of the Nominations Committee, for a renewable term of four years; the current convener to serve until 31 July 2017;**
- b) 4-6 members with HR and/or management experience, including those with experience of accredited ministries in the Church to serve for a term of four years, the current members to continue to serve;**
- c) The Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources);**
- d) The General Secretary will be an ex-officio member of the Group;**
- e) A member of the Human Resources team – to take notes and deputise for the Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources) if required.**

Paper R1 – Report on current safeguarding work

Information paper – no resolution

Paper S1 – The Role of Synod Clerk

22. Mission Council:

- a) notes the wide range of tasks for which Synod Clerks are responsible;**
- b) thanks those who fulfil these tasks with dedication within our various synod structures; and**
- c) agrees that the Medium Term Strategy Group does not need to promote any further work on a standard role description for a Synod Clerk.**

These were all approved unanimously. As resolution 3 had been approved by the required two-thirds majority, the General Secretary moved that:

Resolution 15/11/3 be referred to the Synods under the procedure in paragraph 3(1) of the Structure, with responses to the General Secretary by 31 March 2016.

This was approved nem con.

15/14 Paper C1 – Towards a new logo for the United Reformed Church

The Convener sought the permission of Mission Council to move the resolutions in an amended form, which was granted:

1. Mission Council requests the Communications & Editorial Committee to establish a short term Task Group to create, advocate, and run a competition to produce a new logo for the United Reformed Church; the competition to be launched and run over the autumn/winter of 2015/16.
2. Mission Council:
 - a) agrees to the appointment of a judging panel of six people as set out in paragraph 4.5 of Mission Council paper C1 May 2015.
 - b) requests the Communications and Editorial Committee to bring the names of the six to Mission Council in November 2015.
 - c) and directs that the competition result should be announced at General Assembly 2016.

During discussion there was some support for a fresh logo, however a significant majority thought that the advantage of the continuity of the existing logo and the costs associated with changing to a completely new logo outweighed the case for change. With permission of Mission Council, the Convener withdrew the resolutions, and stated that the committee would either “tweak” the current logo, or bring a fresh proposal in due course.

15/15 Paper J2 - Nominations

Although technically covered within paper J1, the Convener formally moved acceptance of the names in paper J2, as these had not been available before the meeting. This was agreed by consensus.

15/16 Paper T1 – Shared Synod Panels for the Ministerial Disciplinary Process

The Secretary of the MIND Advisory Group proposed:

On the recommendation of the MIND Advisory Group, and acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council approves the changes to the Disciplinary Process shown in paper T1 of Mission Council May 2015, as amended, (including the Appendix set out at the end of the paper) with immediate effect.

This resolution had been removed from the en bloc business because of a minor drafting error in the text, which was shown correctly on the screen.

The resolution was agreed unanimously.

15/17 Mr Andrew Weston addressed Mission Council on his visit to Ethiopia with Christian Aid. Following the address, evening prayers were led by the Revd David Grosch-Miller. After this, Mission Council adjourned.

Sunday 10 May 2015

Session 8

Prayers were led by the Revd Nigel Uden. The Moderator, the Revd David Grosch-Miller, was in the chair.

15/18 Ballot papers were distributed for the election of a member of the Mission Council Advisory Group, the Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor and the Revd Jacky Embrey both having been proposed, seconded, and consented to their nomination.

15/19 Paper X1 – Northerly Synods Collaboration

The Revd Jacky Embrey brought a revised resolution:

Mission Council resolves to include one new paragraph in the 'Process for the appointment of Synod Moderators':

- a) Where the new Moderator will need to engage closely with a Synod's partner – in, for example, adjacent Synods or other churches – the Nominating Group may, as part of the interview process, arrange for short-listed candidates to meet with a small number of key people from among the partners.
- b) The Nominating Group may also choose to seek advice or comment from the key people, but excluding any serving Synod Moderators. The Group shall not be in any way bound by the views offered.

During discussion, it was clear that members felt that concerns had not been fully addressed by the revised wording. The Revd Paul Whittle proposed that it be referred to the Nominations Committee, whose concern it was to manage this process. This was agreed by consensus.

15/20 The General Secretary intimated that the Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor had been elected to serve on the Mission Council Advisory Group, for a period of four years, commencing immediately.

15/21 Paper H1 – Age of application for non-stipendiary ministry

The Convener of the Ministries Committee presented the paper, which had been removed from en bloc. It had no resolution attached.

The Revd Roy Lowes queried the process followed by Ministries Committee since Mission Council last met (see item 15/2 above), and was not happy with the course of action proposed in the paper. He proposed a resolution on behalf of West Midlands Synod:

Mission Council instructs the Ministries Committee to remove item (e) from the remit of the Working Party on Non-stipendiary Ministry established as described in Paper H1 para 9 of Mission Council May 2015. Further, bearing in mind our consensus processes, the strong support for West Midlands Synod's resolution at Mission Council in November 2014, positive feedback from an informal internet consultation, and noting that the Synod Moderators also offered qualified support for the West Midlands resolution, Mission Council instructs Ministries Committee to convene a process of consultation with interested parties representing a cross section of views on the proposal in Paper X1 of Mission Council November 2014. These parties are to include representatives of the West Midlands Synod and at least one Synod Moderator, and the consultation is to be with a view to bringing a new proposal to the meeting of Mission Council in November 2015.

Following discussion, Mr Lowes agreed to withdraw the resolution on the understanding that the age limit of application for non-stipendiary ministry would be considered before the November Mission Council by the Task Group established by Ministries Committee, and that representatives of West Midlands Synod would be included as members of the Task Group for the consideration of this item. The Convener of the Ministries Committee

agreed to implement this arrangement, and that a further report would be made to the November 2015 meeting of Mission Council.

15/22 Paper I3 - Support for a new international Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty

The Revd Peter Meek spoke of the importance of this item meriting discussion. The Revd James Breslin suggested the importance of the topic merited discussion at the General Assembly. The wording was amended, and the resolution proposed:

Mission Council endorses the call for a Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty, and asks the Mission Committee to bring an appropriate resolution to General Assembly in 2016.

This was passed by consensus.

15/23 Paper F2 - Report from group discussions on membership

The Convener, the Revd Elizabeth Welch, and the Revd Professor Stephen Orchard, presented a summary of the points made in group discussions.

15/24 Paper S2 – Governance patterns

The Treasurer intimated that the Medium Term Strategy Group had taken note of the widespread views in the discussion groups that:

- Communication with local churches is paramount, in both directions
- Change is needed – timing is good (new Deputy General Secretary structure)
- No desire for a 2-day Assembly (too short) – neither annual nor biennial
- No desire for 3rd MC meeting in a year
- Committee structure needs review
- Streamlining needs to strike balance between central oversight (DGSs) and representation from the wider URC
- Need to trust those we put in place to manage groups/committees
- The concept of task groups well supported
- Use technology - but there is no substitute for face to face meetings

Mr Ellis further intimated that the General Secretariat and the Assembly Arrangements Committee would consider these points in their future thinking:

- Retain biennial Assembly over four days
- Retain biannual Mission Council over three days
- Plan review of Committees looking for significant streamlining
- Explore reshaping around three DGS areas
- Make more use of task groups
- Make better use of technology
- Require substantial cost savings to be devoted to enhancing Assembly
- Retain possible longer term aim of annual but different Assemblies

The Revd Clare Downing expressed disappointment that her group's suggestion of an annual Assembly and one Mission Council had not been included. Mr Ellis responded that the summary included only those points which had wide support from across the different groups, but all suggestions had been heard.

On behalf of the Medium Term Strategy Group, Mr Ellis proposed that:

Mission Council requests a further report in 2016 on the Resolution passed in Session 9 of its March 2014 meeting.

This was agreed.

15/25 Personalia

The Moderator advised that the following had completed their term on Mission Council since the last meeting:

The Revd Lee Batson *Church of England Ecumenical Observer*

Mr Colin McBean *Wessex Synod representative*
Mr Alistair Wilson *Southern Synod representative*

The Moderator advised that the following were now completing their term on Mission Council:

The Revd Connie Bonner *Synod of Scotland representative*
The Revd Ruth Gee *Methodist Church Ecumenical Observer*
Mrs Ruth Henriksen *Synod of Wales representative*
The Revd John Humphreys *Convener of the Communications and Editorial Committee (remains as Synod of Scotland Moderator)*
The Revd Roy Lowes *West Midlands Synod Moderator*
The Revd Shelagh Pollard *Synod of Wales Synod representative*
The Revd Jane Rowell *Secretary for World Church Relations*
The Revd John R Smith *Convener of the Education and Learning Committee*

All were thanked for their contribution to Mission Council.

The Moderator thanked all the staff and officers for their contribution and support before and during Mission Council. The business being completed, Mission Council adjourned, to meet again on 13-15 November 2015 at The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire.

After a brief break, the Revd David Grosch-Miller led closing worship, which included a celebration of Holy Communion.