

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

April 2017

Dear Colleagues,

**Mission Council**  
**Friday to Sunday, 12 – 14 May 2017**  
**High Leigh, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire**

I look forward warmly to seeing you at Mission Council, and write now to mention several practical matters.

1. There will be an introduction session at 12 noon on the first day for new Mission Council members, to outline processes and procedures, introduce the Assembly officers, and explain some items of business. Old timers who would like to attend are welcome too. A full version of our rules for procedure is in the 'Standing Orders' (which are also used at General Assembly), and these can be found on the URC website at: <http://bit.ly/2ol2sWX>, pp.247-257.

2. In recent Mission Council meetings we have taken some of our business *En Bloc*. The fact that an item is listed as *En Bloc* does not mean it is less important than timetabled items. Rather, the *En Bloc* list contains those items where the Moderators think that decisions might be reached responsibly without further discussion. You will see that the agenda includes a slot when these items will be voted on.

I suggest you read the *En Bloc* papers first. This will give you time to contact the author of a paper if you have questions. Authors' names and email addresses are noted on the cover sheets. If you think any of these papers need discussion at Mission Council, particularly if you disagree with a proposed course of action, you may ask that a piece of business be removed from *En Bloc*. A sign-up sheet will be available at the meeting, where you can list the paper you wish to be withdrawn. If an item gets three signatures by close of business on the first day, it will be withdrawn from *En Bloc* and added to our agenda, with time given for discussion.

I need to remind you too that we really rely on every Mission Council member to read the papers and take note of information to relay back to their synods. In using the *En Bloc* method of decision-making there is no wish to bury information or to avoid discussions which Mission Council ought to have. We must all ensure the appropriate flow of information from Mission Council to the synods.

3. You should already have several papers from the first mailing: a cover letter, an expenses form, a list of members, directions to the venue, and (for new members) 'What we are about in Mission Council.' If any of these are missing, please contact Helen Munt at Church House, 020 7916 2020, [helen.munt@urc.org.uk](mailto:helen.munt@urc.org.uk)

4. Observers and URC staff who are not members of Mission Council should not participate in decision making. Staff members are welcome to speak but, like observers, they should not use orange and blue cards.

5. We are not expected to post on social media sites during business sessions. This restriction applies when Council is in session. It also applies during a break, to any unfinished matter that has been carried forward to another session rather than concluded. Within that understanding, members may join in online debates during breaks and at the close of business. As ever, everything shared on these sites is the responsibility of the author and subject to the same defamation laws as any other written communication.

6. All bedrooms are en-suite. To comply with the venue's health and safety regulations, please do not bring food from outside into the Centre, nor take food from the dining room to your room.

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7. Below are the papers enclosed in this mailing listed according to the ways we mean to address them. Notice that two papers – D2 and J2 - which have to be prepared late, will only be available at the venue.

**Category A: En Bloc**

B2 and B3 Children's and Youth Work Committee  
F3 Faith and Order Committee: report on ongoing work  
G1, G2, G3 Finance Committee  
H3 Ministries Committee: updates  
I2, I3, I4, I5, I6 Mission Committee  
I8 Mission and Discipleship: Walking the Way  
J1 Nominations Committee: main list of nominations  
M2, M3, M5 Clerk and General Secretary  
O1 Human Resources Advisory Group: report on work  
R1 and R2 Safeguarding Advisory Group  
T1 MIND: Changes to the Disciplinary Process  
U1 Task Group on the Future of General Assembly

**Category B: Majority Voting**

M1 Clerk: appointment of Minute Secretary  
M4 Law and Polity Advisory Group: Rules for Appeals

**Category C: Consensus decision making**

B1 URC Youth: commitment to God's creation  
F1 and F2 Faith and Order: Isolated Membership, and the Future of Church Membership  
H1 Ministries Committee: Call  
I7 Mission Committee: the World Council of Churches 2021 Assembly  
J2 Nominations: supplement to J1 (late paper; to be tabled at High Leigh)  
X2 West Midlands Synod: stipendiary minister numbers

**Alternative resolutions**

Papers D1 and Y1 present alternative resolutions about Windermere. These will be considered together under Standing Order 4.10, then Council will move to Consensus Decision Making, once one of the two has been identified as the substantive resolution. The Moderators deem this matter 'urgent'.

Paper H2 presents two alternative ways forward for ministerial deployment. Again we start under Standing Order 4.10, then move to majority voting; we have to resolve this, one way or another.

**A number of matters are to be given agenda time, but do not presently require Mission Council decision**

D2 Teaching staff appointment at Westminster College (late paper; to be tabled at High Leigh)  
I1 Mission Committee: Greenbelt  
I9 Mission Committee: the Rural Advocate (presentation but no paper)  
X1 The Scottish Church Census  
Z1 The Synod Moderators: where is God calling the URC?

8. A request from the Chaplains: are you musical; do you sing; do you play an instrument that you could bring? We hope to assemble a small choir and orchestra to lead hymns in the closing communion service. If you can contribute, you are warmly invited to do so. If you need a music stand, please bring it. If you think you need music transposed, please email [gwencoll@gmail.com](mailto:gwencoll@gmail.com) or [revdmrobinson@gmail.com](mailto:revdmrobinson@gmail.com) before 5 May.

9. As always, please come to share, listen, reflect and discern together, and to support each other in fellowship outside the formal timetable. Let us treat each other with grace as we seek the guidance of God.

With best wishes,  
Yours sincerely,

