

The United Reformed Church
Minutes of a meeting of Mission Council held 7-9 November 2017
at The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire

TUESDAY 7 NOVEMBER

Session 1

The meeting of Mission Council began at 1400, with worship led by the Moderators and their Chaplains. The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, was in the chair and declared Mission Council open.

17/37

During worship the Revd Philip Brooks was inducted Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, and Dr Sam Richards was commissioned as Head of Children's and Youth Work.

17/38

The Moderator welcomed everyone, identifying new members, and anyone attending as an alternate.

Apologies were received and accepted by the Moderator as follows:

Mrs Helen Lidgett	<i>East Midlands Synod</i>
The Revd David Herbert	<i>Northern Synod Moderator</i>
The Revd Prof Neil Messer	<i>Convenor of Education and Learning Committee</i>
The Revd Ruth Whitehead	<i>South Western Synod Moderator</i>
The Revd Martha McInnes	<i>East Midlands Synod</i>
The Revd Liz Thomson	<i>East Midlands Synod</i>

People attending for the first time were:

The Revd John Piper	<i>Deputy Treasurer</i>
The Revd Dr Alan Spence	<i>Convenor of Faith and Order Committee</i>
The Revd Ray Adams	<i>Convenor of Nominations Committee</i>
The Revd Ken Forbes	<i>Minute Secretary</i>
The Revd Philip Brooks	<i>In attendance – Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations</i>
Ms Daphne Beale	<i>East Midlands Synod</i>
Dr Sam Richards	<i>In attendance – Head of Children's and Youth Work</i>
Ms Ann-Marie Abbasah	<i>In attendance – Communications Officer</i>
Mr Paul Corney	<i>Thames North Synod</i>
Mrs Val Morrison	<i>Yorkshire Synod</i>
Professor Graham Handscomb	<i>In attendance – Education and Learning Committee</i>

People attending in a new role were as follows:

Mr Ian Hardie	<i>Treasurer and Convenor of Finance Committee</i>
The Revd Jennifer Mills	<i>Convenor of Children's and Youth Work Committee</i>

17/39 Facilitation Group

The General Secretary, the Revd John Proctor, proposed and Mission Council unanimously appointed the Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor, Mrs Rosie Martin, Mr Dan Morell and the Revd Simon Walkling to be a Facilitation Group.

17/40 Minutes of the Meeting of Mission Council held 12-14 May 2017

These were unanimously accepted as an accurate record, and signed by the Moderator.

The Revd Dr Michael Jagessar sought, and received, Mission Council's support in drawing attention of local churches to the extreme difficulties faced by many of the URCs global partner Churches, especially the Church in Myanmar.

The General Secretary gave notice of an additional resolution to be tabled with Paper J2.

17/41 MCAG

The General Secretary reported on feedback from the previous Mission Council regarding the quality of debate. Some on MCAG had seen debate as 'robust', while others had felt it was 'adversarial'. The General Secretary reported that MCAG had recommended that the Clerk address the matter of alternative resolutions when looking at standing orders. He reminded Mission Council of good conduct in debate.

17/42 Paper B1 – Children's and Youth Work Committee

The Revd Jenny Mills updated Mission Council on the review of Children's and Youth Work.

Mission Council adjourned at 1515.

Session 2

Mission Council resumed at 1600. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair.

The Revd Elizabeth Clark, National Rural Officer addressed Mission Council on the Church in rural communities.

17/43 Paper H2 – Funding Additional Ministry

The Revd Craig Bowman, on behalf of the Ministries Committee, introduced Paper H2, and proposed the Resolution.

It was noted during discussion that the Resolution is for a pilot scheme only, and that its review would be put before General Assembly or Mission Council before any wider implementation.

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus to change 'Other Ministry' to 'Additional Ministries'.

Mission Council authorises the Ministries Committee to explore with the Finance Committee the funding of a pilot scheme for Funding Additional Ministries within two synods. When the funding is arranged the Ministries Committee will draw up the details of the scheme in consultation with the synods identified and seek any necessary advice from the Resource Sharing Task Group.

The amended Resolution was *agreed* by consensus.

17/44 Paper H1 – Non Stipendiary Ministry of Word and Sacraments

The Revd Paul Whittle introduced paper H1, and moved the Resolutions 1-6:

1. Mission Council instructs the Education and Learning Committee, in consultation with the Resource Centres for Learning and the Ministries Committee, to look again at training requirements for NSMs and

at whether training for NSMs should have a) basic core components and b) follow specific training for Model I, II or III, or a possible Model IV.

Agreed by consensus.

2. Mission Council instructs Ministries Committee to prepare a proposal for locally ordained ministers, taking account of how that fits with the other ministries of the church, including stipendiary ministry, non-stipendiary ministry as it currently is, local leadership (recognising that there is no denominational scheme as such) and the eldership, including the specific role of authorised elders.

The General Secretary proposed the alternative resolution:

'Mission Council instructs the Ministries Committee to review the church's models of Non Stipendiary Ministry, taking account of how these fit with the other ministries of the Church.'

After discussion, Mission Council was unable to come to a decision, and Resolution 2 was referred to the Facilitation Group.

3. Mission Council supports the idea of a formal appointment process for all NSMs as on-going support for their ministry and commends that to the Synods.

Agreed by consensus.

4. Mission Council supports the idea of a formal review process for all NSMs as on-going support for their ministry and commends that to the Synods.

Agreed by consensus.

5. Mission Council supports the idea of a formal retirement process for all NSMs as on-going support for their ministry and commends that to the Synods.

Agreed by consensus.

6. Mission Council instructs the Ministries Committee and Education and Learning Committee to look again at the training needs of those transferring between one form of ministry and another with particular reference to the circumstances in which further preparation might be offered or required.

Agreed by consensus.

17/45 Paper M1 – Updating Standing Orders

The Revd Michael Hopkins introduced paper M1 and proposed the Resolution. A number of members had asked for this paper to be taken out of 'en bloc', and proposed that in the Standing Orders the pronoun 's/he', should be replaced throughout with 'they'.

After discussion, It was *agreed* by consensus that in the relevant clauses personal pronouns would not be used at all.

It was *agreed* by consensus that:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council adopts the revision of the Standing Orders as set out in paper M1 of Mission Council November 2017, with effect from the close of Mission Council.

Mission Council was adjourned at 1800.

Session 3

Mission Council resumed at 2000. The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, was in the chair.

17/46 Paper M3 – General Data Protection Regulation

The Deputy General Secretary (Admin and Resources), Mrs Jane Baird, presented Paper M3, and responded to a number of questions and comments.

17/47 Paper P1 – Law and Polity Advisory Group, Draft Complaints Policy

The Assembly Clerk, the Revd Michael Hopkins, presented a draft complaints policy, responded to a number of questions and comments, and noted a number of suggestions from members of Mission Council.

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus to accept the principle of a complaints policy, and requested that further work be done on the draft.

17/48 Paper U1 – MCAg, Criteria for the appointment of a General Secretary

Immediate Past Moderator, Mr John Ellis, presented Paper U1, and moved the Resolution.

Mr Ellis responded to a number of questions. The Moderator suggested that members of Mission Council reflect upon this question and return to it later in the meeting.

Mission Council adjourned at 2125 with evening prayers led by the Chaplain.

WEDNESDAY 8 NOVEMBER

Session 4

Mission Council was reconvened at 0915 with morning prayers led by the Chaplain. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair.

17/49 Paper D2 – Education and Learning - Successor to TLS

The Revd Fiona Thomas introduced Professor Graham Handscomb, who presented Paper D2, the progress report of the TLS Task and Finish Group. Mission Council debated the paper at length before addressing the resolution, amended by consensus by the addition of the words *'and in the light of the discussion at Mission Council.'*

Mission Council commends the progress made on designing a successor to “Training for Learning and Serving” (TLS) and directs the Education and Learning Committee to continue implementation as outlined in the paper and in the light of the discussion at Mission Council.

Agreed by consensus.

Mission Council was adjourned at 1055.

Session 5

Mission Council was reconvened at 1130. The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, was in the chair.

17/50 Paper M4

The Assembly Clerk proposed the Resolution:

Mission Council endorses the Clerk’s advice that the clear mind of General Assembly was to change the age of youth representatives to ‘25 years and under’, and directs the Clerk to institute any further changes to the Structure required to enact this the next time that other changes are also being made to the structure.

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

17/51 Paper H1 - from 17/45

The Revd Paul Whittle, on behalf of the Facilitation Group, moved the resolution:

Mission Council instructs the Ministries Committee to develop a fourth model of Non Stipendiary Ministry, based in a local church or mission project, whose training is locally focused, to meet the needs of the congregation and the community it serves. The proposal shall be brought to a future General Assembly or Mission Council.

The Resolution was *agreed* by consensus.

17/52 Paper N1 – The Future of General Assembly

Mission Council broke into groups, which were asked to reflect upon three options for future General Assemblies, to submit their thoughts in writing to Mrs Val Morrison and to report to a later session of Mission Council.

Session Six

Mission Council did not meet in this session.

Session Seven

Mission Council reconvened at 1630. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair.

17/53 En bloc business

The Moderator invited the General Secretary to move the various items which the Moderators had placed *en bloc*, which were *agreed* by consensus.

Paper A1 Assembly Arrangements Committee

No resolution.

Paper B1 Children's and Youth Work Committee

No resolution.

Paper G2 URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd

Mission Council approves the amended procedure for nominating and appointing 'Church Nominated Directors' of the URC Ministers' Pension Trust Ltd as set out in Appendix A of paper G2 of Mission Council November 2017.

Paper I1 Mission Committee

No resolution.

Paper J1 Nominations Committee

Mission Council notes and approves the changes set out below to the list of Nominations agreed in May 2017.

Paper M2 Assembly Clerk – Appeals Procedure

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council updates the definition of a dissident in the Appeals process as set out in paper M2 of Mission Council November 2017.

Paper O1 Human Resources Advisory Group

No resolution.

Paper R1 Safeguarding Advisory Group

No resolution.

17/54 Paper C1 – Communications Committee: The Future for *Reform*

The Convenor of the Communications Committee, Mr Peter Knowles, presented the report and moved the Resolution:

Mission Council recognises the contribution of *Reform* to the life of the United Reformed Church as a tool of missional discipleship, and notes the commitment of the communications committee and staff team to continue developing and monitoring the use of *Reform* over the three-year period from January 2018 to December 2020. Mission Council therefore resolves to support *Reform* by continuing with the current annual subsidy – not to exceed £90,000 in any one budget year – for the next three budget years; and asks the communications committee to present up-to-date subscription numbers to Mission Council in May 2019.

After discussion, the Resolution was *agreed* by majority vote.

17/55 Paper J2 Nominations Committee

The Convenor of the Nominations Committee, the Revd Ray Adams, presented Paper J2, and moved the Resolutions:

1) Mission Council notes and approves the changes set out in section A of Paper J2 of Mission Council November 2017 to the list of nominations agreed in May 2017.

Agreed by consensus.

2) Mission Council appoints according to the list of nominations in Sections B and C of Paper J2 of Mission Council November 2017.

Agreed by consensus.

Mr Adams moved the supplementary resolution:

Mission Council appoints Mr Bob Christie and Mr David Greatorex to be members of the Finance Committee with immediate effect until 30 June 2021.

Mission Council *agreed* by consensus.

17/56 Paper N1 Task Group on the future of General Assembly

Mrs Val Morrison moved the resolution:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council instructs the Assembly Arrangements Committee to plan a venue in the central part of the UK for the 2020 General Assembly.

Mission Council *agreed* by majority, *nem con*.

Mrs Morrison outlined the responses she had received from the discussion groups, and thanked members for their participation.

17/57 Paper Y1 Resolution: Election of Moderators of General Assembly

Mr Dan Morell introduced resolution Y1:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, adopts the changes proposed to the Rules of Procedure set out in paper Y1 of Mission Council November 2017.

Following lengthy debate the General Secretary moved the amendment:

Mission Council accepts the Resolution with the deletion of all references to ‘Re-Open Nominations’ (RON).

The amendment failed to find consensus.

The Convenor of the Assembly Arrangements Committee proposed an amendment adding the words ‘with effect from the close of Assembly 2018’. This amendment failed to find consensus.

It was *agreed*, at the suggestion of the Revd Nigel Uden, that this matter be revisited at the March 2018 Mission Council with a view to presenting a proposal to the 2018 General Assembly.

Mission Council adjourned at 1826.

Session Eight

Mission Council reconvened at 1945. The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, was in the chair.

17/58 Paper F1 Faith and Order Committee

The Convenor, the Revd Dr Alan Spence, presented the report and responded to a number of questions and comments.

17/59 Paper D1 Education and Learning: Lay Development Strategy

The Revd Fiona Thomas presented a report on the work of the Education and Learning Committee. A picture is being built up of existing practices in Lay Development, and further consultations are taking place widely, particularly with Synods. A strategy is gradually being developed, and any questions, comments or suggestions would be welcomed.

17/60 Paper I3 Walking the Way Steering Group

The Revd Richard Church and Ms Francis Brien presented the report. Comments were received on the material so far published. Ms Brien invited further feedback as new material is released.

17/61 Paper I2 Commitment for Life Review

The Convenor of the Mission Committee, the Revd Bernie Collins, presented the paper. He thanked all those who had been involved in the Commitment for Life review, and noted that the Mission Committee had strongly affirmed the findings of the review and the value of the Commitment for Life programme. Mr Collins and Ms Brien responded to a number of questions and comments.

17/62 (from 17/48) Paper U1 MCAG – Criteria for the appointment of a General Secretary

Mission Council continued its discussion on the criteria for the appointment of a General Secretary. After considerable debate, and the consideration of several alternatives, Mission Council was unable to reach a decision.

Further discussion took place concerning the process by which this issue should be further addressed. The Moderator then ruled that Mission Council was unable to reach a consensus for any change, and so the status quo would remain, and that under Standing Order 2.5.9.4 this was a piece of business upon which it was not essential to reach a conclusion.

Mr John Ellis gave a presentation on New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) and invited Mission Council to spend some time in prayer.

Mission Council adjourned at 2135 with prayers led by the Chaplain.

THURSDAY 9 NOVEMBER

Session Nine

Mission Council was reconvened at 0915 with morning prayers led by the Chaplain. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair.

17/63 Paper G1 - Budget 2018

The Treasurer, Mr Ian Hardie, presented the budget for 2018, and the Resolution:

Mission Council adopts the budget for 2018 as set out in the Appendix of paper G1 of Mission Council November 2017.

After discussion, Mission Council *agreed*.

17/64 Paper G3 - URC Ministers' Pension Trust

The Treasurer presented Paper G3, and outlined the reasons for, and effects of, the proposed changes in calculating Ministers' Pension Fund benefits, and proposed the Resolution.

Mr John Ellis proposed the amendment:

Noting:

(1) the policy set by the General Assembly that the Ministers' Pension Fund rules with regard to same sex relationships should offer exactly what the secular law requires: and

(2) that the legal framework has recently changed;

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees....

The amendment was seconded by the Revd Richard Gray.

The amendment was carried and the substantive resolution was put:

Noting:

(1) the policy set by the General Assembly that the Ministers' Pension Fund rules with regard to same sex relationships should offer exactly what the secular law requires: and

(2) that the legal framework has recently changed;

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, agrees that a Deed of Amendment to the Rules of the Ministers' Pension Fund (in materially the form attached to this paper) should be approved and signed on behalf of the United Reformed Church by the Moderator and Clerk of the Assembly.

The Revd James Breslin, Mr Ian Hardie, and the Revd John Piper declared an interest in the matter as directors of the URC Ministers' Pension Fund Trust.

The resolution, as amended, was put to the vote and carried overwhelmingly.

After discussion, the Convenor of the Equalities Committee agreed to ask the committee to think further on the matters raised in the discussion.

17/65 Paper L1 – Report on Properties

The Convenor the URC Trust, the Revd Richard Gray, presented the paper and commented briefly on the refurbished Church House and the ongoing sale of the Windermere Centre.

The Revd James Breslin presented an overview of the arrangements for the 2018 General Assembly. Mission Council reflected on the venue and the cost.

The Moderator thanked the staff of The Hayes for their gracious hospitality, those who had arranged this meeting of Mission Council, the Communications Team, the musicians, the Chaplains, and the Minute Secretary. He also thanked those who had been attending Mission Council for the last time: Mr Dan Morell, Mrs Pamela Dent, the Revd Paul Robinson and the Revd Liz Thomson. The General Secretary, on behalf of Mission Council, thanked the Moderators.

Mission Council was adjourned, after which the Moderators and Chaplains led worship with Holy Communion.