

**The United Reformed Church**  
**Minutes of a virtual meeting of Mission Council held 20-21 November 2020**

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November**

**FIRST SESSION**

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The Moderator, the Revd Clare Downing, was in the Chair.

**20/12**

The meeting of Mission Council began at 1100. The Moderator welcomed everyone and identified new members.

Those attending for the first time or attending in a new capacity were:

The Revd Paul Robinson	<i>Convenor of Children's and Youth Work</i>
Ms Sarah Lane-Cawte	<i>Convenor of Mission Committee</i>
Mr Tim Hopley	<i>North Western Synod Representative</i>
The Revd Timothy Meadows	<i>Mersey Synod Representative</i>
The Revd Geoffrey Clarke	<i>East Midlands Synod Moderator</i>
The Revd Camilla Veitch	<i>East Midlands Synod Representative</i>
The Revd Elaine Hutchinson	<i>West Midlands Synod Representative</i>
Miss Karen Bell	<i>Wessex Synod Representative</i>
The Revd Tessa Henry-Robinson	<i>Wessex Synod Representative</i>
The Revd Russell Furley-Smith	<i>Southern Synod Representative</i>
The Revd Fiona Bennett	<i>Synod of Scotland Representative</i>

Worship was led by the Chaplain, the Revd Helen Everard; Bible study was led by Maria Jung Youn Lee.

**20/13**

The Minutes of Mission Council meetings of November 2019 and July 2020 were both approved unanimously.

The Revd Steve Faber proposed, and Ms Francis Brienens seconded an emergency resolution, which had been circulated by email on an Order Paper earlier that morning:

**Mission Council is concerned by reports this week that the government is preparing to break its manifesto pledge and abandon Britain's long-standing commitment to spending 0.7% of national income on international development; believes that a commitment to the poorest in the world should not be an optional extra but at the heart of our country's responsibilities, especially in the context of a global pandemic and a climate emergency; and instructs the Moderators of General Assembly to make these concerns known to government in the strongest possible terms, and encourages people and local churches to contact their MPs about this important issue.**

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Mission Council *agreed* unanimously.

**20/14**

The Moderator, Mr Peter Pay, took the Chair.

The General Secretary moved *en bloc*, Resolutions:

- A1 Business Committee: Mission Council/Assembly Executive and General Assembly**
- B1 Children's and Youth Work Committee: response to Covid-19 update**
- B2 Children's and Youth Work Committee: URC infant feeding policy for local churches**
- C2 Education and Learning Committee: Environmental Statement - Working Towards a Green Charter**
- C3 Education and Learning Committee: Carbon Calculator**
- D1 Faith and Order Committee: Update**
- F1 Ministries Committee: Guidelines on conduct and behaviour of Ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers and Elders**
- H1 Nominations Committee: List of Nominations**
- H2 Nominations Committee: Supplementary (resolutions 1 and 2 only)**
- I1 Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee: Update to terms of reference**
- J1 Human Resources Advisory Group: Review panel for the renewal of the appointment of the Principal of Westminster College**
- M1 Walking the Way Steering Group: Continuing the Way of Jesus**

Mission Council *agreed* unanimously.

**20/15**

The Treasurer, Mr Ian Hardie, presented Paper E1, Budget for 2021, and moved the Resolution:

**Resolution E1** **Budget 2021**  
**Recognising that there is more than usual uncertainty about future income, Mission Council nonetheless adopts the budget for 2021 as set out in the Appendix to paper E1 for November 2020 Mission Council.**

Mission Council met in groups until adjourning at 1230.

## **SECOND SESSION**

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Mission Council resumed at 1330.

Following brief discussion, Resolution E1 was put.

Mission Council *agreed* unanimously.

**Paper E2**

**Finance and Pensions**

The Deputy Treasurer, the Revd John Piper, presented Paper E2.

## **20/16**

The General Secretary, the Revd Dr. John Bradbury, presented Paper N1 and moved the Resolution:

**Resolution N1** **Synod of Scotland**  
**Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly appoints the Revd Paul Whittle as Moderator of the National Synod of Scotland from 1 January 2021 until December 31 2023.**

Mission Council *agreed* unanimously.

## **20/17**

The Convener of the Nominations Committee, the Revd Ray Adams moved Resolution H2(3):

**Resolution H2(3)** **Thames North Synod**  
**Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, appoints the Revd George Watt to be Moderator of the Thames North Synod from 1 June 2021 to 31 May 2028.**

Mission Council *agreed* unanimously.

The Moderator Greeted Mr Whittle and Mr Watt.

## **20/18**

After paying tribute to the late Revd Michael Davies, Mr Alan Yates presented Paper K1 and moved the Resolution. Mission Council noted and approved a minor change of wording.

Mr Yates and Mrs Jane Baird responded to a number of questions and comments.

**Resolution K1** **Risk Process Review Panel**  
**a) Mission Council receives the Report of the Risk Process Review Panel and acknowledges that the United Reformed Church faces risks which might seriously affect its financial wellbeing, its structures and consequently its ability to proclaim the gospel.**

Mission Council *agreed* overwhelmingly.

**b) Mission Council acknowledges the work undertaken by the Panel and confirms that the work of the group is now complete and asks the Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources) to continue to manage the Risk Review process on a biennial basis.**

Mission Council *agreed* overwhelmingly.

Mission Council met in groups to discuss a number of risks facing the URC, and to record comments and suggestions, and adjourned at 1500.

## **THIRD SESSION**

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Mission Council resumed at 1530. The Moderator, the Revd Clare Downing, was in the Chair.

### **20/19 - Paper C1**

The Convenor of the Education and Learning Committee presented a video on *Stepwise*. Mr Yates presented Paper C1 and moved the Resolution:

**Resolution C1** **Education and Learning**  
**Mission Council accepts the plan to consult with named bodies to develop a view of how education and learning within the URC can achieve the integration envisioned in the 2005 General Assembly.**

Mr Yates responded to a number of questions and comments, and the Resolution was put.

Mission Council *agreed* overwhelmingly.

### **20/20 – Papers F2 and F3**

#### **Ministries**

The Revd Paul Whittle presented Paper F2 and moved the Resolution:

**Resolution F2** **Ministerial Capability Process**  
**Mission Council adopts the URC Ministerial Capability Process as detailed in Appendix 1 of Paper F2**

Mr Whittle; the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith, Secretary for Ministries; and the Legal Adviser, Mr Andrew Middleton, responded to a number of questions and comments.

Mr Whittle undertook to consult with the Methodist Church, the Moderator of the South Western Synod, and others and to submit any resulting adjustments to the Process to a future meeting of Mission Council.

Mission Council *agreed* overwhelmingly.

### **Paper F3**

The Revd Paul Whittle moved the Resolution:

**Resolution F3** **CRCWs**  
**Mission Council resolves that ‘locally called and locally appointed’ non-stipendiary Church Related Community Workers would be expected to follow an individually designed training path as determined by the Education and Learning Committee in consultation with the RCL that is relevant to their local context and local opportunities.**

There was considerable discussion, to which Mr Whittle responded, and the Resolution was put. Mission Council *agreed* overwhelmingly.

The session ended in prayer led by the Revd Helen Everard.

Mission Council adjourned at 1655.

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> November**

## **FOURTH SESSION**

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Mission Council resumed at 0930. The Moderator, Mr Peter Pay was in the Chair.

Prayer was led by the Revd Helen Everard.

### **20/21 - Paper L1**

The General Secretary, who was acting Convener of the Safeguarding Advisory Group, introduced Paper L1, noting a slight change in the wording at 8.2 and 8.3.

Mr Ioannis Athanasiou presented Paper L1. He outlined the background to the production of the paper. He noted that the denomination's safeguarding training framework was ready to be implemented immediately.

Mission Council met in groups to discuss the paper.

The General Secretary and Mr Athanasiou responded to a number of questions and comments that had arisen from the group discussion.

Reservations were expressed about the readiness of the framework to be implemented, and about issues such as:

- risk assessments
- self-care and wellbeing
- local church employees
- training in other organisations
- children and young people in leadership roles
- local administration of the framework
- use of appropriate terminology

In the light of the issues raised, the General Secretary moved that the Paper and Resolution L1 be withdrawn, and an alternative paper be submitted to the March 2021 Mission Council.

Mission Council *agreed* overwhelmingly.

The General Secretary encouraged members to submit their questions and comments in writing. The chaplain led prayer.

Mission Council adjourned at 1055.

## **FIFTH SESSION**

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Mission Council resumed at 1130. The Moderator, the Revd Clare Downing took the Chair.

The Convener of the Mission Committee, Ms Sarah Lane-Cawte, reported that emergency Resolution passed by Mission Council in the first session of the present meeting (20/13) has now been enacted.

### **20/22 – Paper G1 and G2**

### **Mission Committee**

Ms Sarah Lane-Cawte asked Mission Council's approval of a revised wording of resolution G1. Mission Council *agreed*.

Ms Lane-Cawte proposed resolution G1.

*1. Having recently recognised the climate emergency (Resolution 14, July 2020), Mission Council calls for all councils, committees, local churches and individuals to work towards eliminating the use of single-use plastics, given their significant environmental impact.*

*2. Mission Council notes with alarm the huge increase in the use of disposable items during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially single-use plastics. While there may be occasions during this pandemic when it is impossible to avoid the use of single-use plastic items, their use should be kept to an absolute minimum. They should also be carefully disposed of in a way that minimises their impact on the environment.*

The Revd Fran Kissack proposed an amendment to replace 'While there may be' with 'While there are' in clause 2. This was seconded by Mrs Rosie Martin

Following discussion, Mission Council *agreed* the amendment.

### **Resolution G1**

**1. Having recently recognised the climate emergency (Resolution 14, July 2020), Mission Council calls for all councils, committees, local churches and individuals to work towards eliminating the use of single-use plastics, given their significant environmental impact.**

**2. Mission Council notes with alarm the huge increase in the use of disposable items during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially single-use plastics. While there are occasions during this pandemic when it is impossible to avoid the use of single-use plastic items, their use should be kept to an absolute minimum. They should also be carefully disposed of in a way that minimises their impact on the environment.**

Mission Council *agreed* unanimously.

Ms Lane-Cawte moved Resolution G2

*Mission Council resolves:*

*(i) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, to commit the United Reformed Church to a journey towards being an anti-racist Church, identifying barriers within all parts of its life - including local, synod and Assembly structures and processes, and initiating strategies to combat racism within its own body and in the wider community/society.*

*(ii) To instruct the mission committee to explore and develop initiatives to address the barriers within our structures, and to develop resources to equip and empower the United Reformed Church to begin the process of education and change in all parts of its life.*

*(iii) To instruct the mission committee to report on progress to the March 2021 meeting of Mission Council, and to future meetings of Mission Council and General Assembly, including any specific objectives identified.*

Miss Victoria Turner proposed an amendment to change 'structures' to 'theology and relationships' in clause (ii). This was seconded by the Revd Tessa Henry-Robinson.

Ms Sarah Lane-Cawte asked that 'structures' be retained in addition to 'theology and relationships'. The proposer of the amendment, Miss Turner, agreed.

Mission Council *agreed* the amendment.

The Revd Dr Andrew Prasad proposed an amendment to add the word 'leadership' after 'structures' in clause (i). This was seconded by Miss Victoria Turner.

The Moderator paused discussion, to be resumed later, so that this important business need not be rushed.

### **20/23 – URC 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

Following an introduction by Ms Francis Brienen, Mission Council met in groups to discuss plans for the URC's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

Mission Council adjourned at 1300.

## **SIXTH SESSION**

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Mission Council resumed at 1400. The Moderator, the Revd Clare Downing, took the Chair.

### **20/24 (from 20/22)**

The tabled amendment proposed by Dr Prasad was put. Mission Council *agreed* the amendment

## Resolution G2

## Mission Committee

Mission Council resolves:

**(i) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, to commit the United Reformed Church to a journey towards being an anti-racist Church, identifying barriers within all parts of its life - including local, synod and Assembly structures, leadership and processes, and initiating strategies to combat racism within its own body and in the wider community/society.**

**(ii) To instruct the mission committee to explore and develop initiatives to address the barriers within our structures, theology and relationships, and to develop resources to equip and empower the United Reformed Church to begin the process of education and change in all parts of its life.**

**(iii) To instruct the mission committee to report on progress to the March 2021 meeting of Mission Council, and to future meetings of Mission Council and General Assembly, including any specific objectives identified.**

Mission Council *agreed* unanimously. The chaplain led prayer.

**20/25**

The Moderator, Mr Peter Pay, took the Chair.

The Moderator thanked those leaving Mission Council, the Revd Dr Phil Wall and Mrs Helen Lidgett for their service, and all members of Mission Council for their participation. He thanked those who had arranged the meeting, Church House and communications staff, Affinity and the technical team, the Clerk and Assistant Clerk, Conveners and Committee Secretaries, the Chaplain, musicians and Bible Study leader, and the Minute Secretary.

Closing worship was led by the Chaplain. the Revd Helen Everard, and included the inductions of Ms Karen Campbell as Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries and of the Revd Jenny Mills as Secretary for Education and Learning.

The meeting closed at 1515.