

Address to the Throne

URC Mission Council, July 2020

To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty:

The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church, acting on behalf of its General Assembly, sends loyal greetings to Your Majesty. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are meeting by video conference on the day when our General Assembly should have convened at the University of Aston. As with so many events this year, the coronavirus pandemic has forced a change of plan. We are finding new ways to gather, worship, confer and serve together, while staying safely apart – just as our church congregations have done while our buildings have been in lockdown. The doors may have been shut, but the church has been far from closed.

Your Majesty's broadcast address at the height of the crisis was hugely appreciated. In it, you noted that coronavirus was "a disruption that has brought grief to some, financial difficulties to many, and enormous changes to the daily lives of us all." Like you, we mourn the lost lives and the missed opportunities. Like you, we applaud the selfless devotion shown by health service staff, carers and key workers – and rejoice in the many acts of compassion and creativity that the crisis has prompted.

The pandemic has also drawn attention to some significant inequalities in British society. Mortality rates have been much higher in deprived areas and among people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, who are more likely to live in overcrowded housing and work in frontline roles with higher risks of exposure. Asylum seekers and other migrants have missed out on much of the available government support. The lockdown increased pressure on families living in poverty, with foodbanks telling us that more children are going hungry, and parents of young children experiencing the biggest impact on their mental health. Debt and unemployment levels look set to rise. In this new reality, our churches will continue to serve and stand alongside their local communities: sharing God's love, calling out injustice, and providing practical support.

We know from our partner Churches around the globe that there are many places where the virus has had an even more severe impact. An additional 60 million people risk falling into extreme poverty this year. As a Church, we urge continued support for agencies such as Christian Aid and for initiatives to release poorer nations from their debt burden. The growing challenges in this country should not diminish our commitment to the world's poorest communities.

As we begin to emerge from lockdown, our society finds itself at a critical moment, when we as a Church pray that the choices made will be guided by values of justice and love. As the rainbows fade, we shall call upon our communities to hold onto the way that they pulled together to help each other. As we rebuild, we shall press for our economy and institutions to be redesigned so they address inequalities and work better for everyone. As the climate crisis remains urgent, we shall join with many others to emphasise the imperative of taking bold collective action for the wellbeing of people and planet.

We hope and pray that through this, the vision Jesus holds out of 'life in all its fullness' for all will be brought closer.

We pray too that God will strengthen, sustain and guide Your Majesty as you continue to lead and serve.

The United Reformed Church

Mission Council Agenda

10 July 2020



First Session: 10.30 to 11.30

In the Chair – Derek Estill

Call to Order and Notices Clerk and General Secretary

Welcome Moderator

Opening Devotions David Coaker

Welcome to New Members, etc Moderator

Resolutions 32 and 33 Michael Hopkins

En bloc items John Proctor

The *En bloc* resolutions are 10-19, 21, 23, 26, 28, 31, 34-35, 37-42.

There is a correction to Resolution 10: David Livingstone URC, Harlow, Eastern Synod has not yet closed.

N.B. Resolution 36 is withdrawn entirely from the agenda, at the request of the Convenor and decision of the Moderators. After further consultation, the Education and Learning Committee will hope to bring the matter to a future meeting.

In the Chair – Nigel Uden

Resolution 25 Pastoral Supervision Ministries Committee: Paul Whittle

Resolution 29 Safeguarding Safeguarding Adv Gp: Richard Church

Resolution 27 Walking the Way Mission and Discipleship: Francis Brien

Second Session: 11.45 to 12.45

In the Chair – Nigel Uden – continuing as necessary with Resolutions 25, 29 and 27

If time in second session allows,

In the Chair – Derek Estill

Resolutions 20+22 Pension Funds Finance Committee: John Piper

Third Session: 14.00 to 15.00

In the Chair – Derek Estill – continuing as necessary with Resolutions 20 and 22

Resolution 30 Defibrillators Wessex Synod: Sue Brown

In the Chair – Nigel Uden

Address to the Throne John Proctor

Final actions including farewells Moderator

Closing Prayers David Coaker

Conflicts of interest around pension funds at the Mission Council and General Assembly

There are a number of different conflicts of interest around the decision-making relating to pension funds.

Ministers¹ who are members of the Ministers Pension Fund, their spouses or civil partners, and their dependent children, have an obvious interest. This interest takes more one form: some may wish to support a Defined Benefit scheme to protect the guaranteed nature of their pension; however, some may wish to support a move to a Defined Contribution scheme in order to secure their interests through stabilising the long term health and robustness of the Fund.

People who are members of the Lay Staff Pension Fund, their spouses or civil partners, and their dependent children, also have an obvious interest. This interest takes more one form: some may wish to support a Defined Benefit scheme to protect the guaranteed nature of their pension; however, some may wish to support a move to a Defined Contribution scheme in order to secure their interests through stabilising the long term health and robustness of the Fund.

Anyone who is a member of a local church of the United Reformed Church, including Local Ecumenical Partnerships and Union Churches, also has an interest because the size of their contributions to the Ministry and Mission Fund will change depending upon which decisions are taken. Some may wish to keep such contributions as low as possible, while others may wish to make a larger contribution in order to maintain or secure what they perceive as a benefit to their minister.

It is important that Decisions made by Mission Council and General Assembly, are in the best interests of the Church and reflect the views of its members, acting in their representative capacities. This is only possible after discussion and consultation amongst its members has taken place. If everyone with a conflict of interest in respect of pensions was removed from the decision-making, there would only be a handful of people left. This would not enable effective, representative decision making to take place. It is therefore important that those that have declared and recorded a conflict of interest are included. This will not diminish the decision made.

Decisions made in respect of the Pension funds will be considered by the United Reformed Church Trust (URCT). On its behalf, the Law and Polity Advisory Group have approached the Charity Commission, who have agreed that, in this context, those with a conflict of interest may participate in decision-making. Individual conflicts of interest should be declared and recorded. The Charity Commission have advised that it is prepared to make an order to this effect for the benefit of the United Reformed Church Trust under section 105 of the Charities Act 2011.

This is why you were asked in advance of the meeting to declare your interests. These have been checked, and recorded, and the numbers declaring each interest were:

1. Are you a member of the URC Ministers' Pension Fund, or a spouse or civil partner of a member of the Fund? 51 out of 78
2. Are you a member of the URC Lay Staff Pension Fund, or a spouse or civil partner of a member of the Fund? 9 out of 78
3. Are you a member of a URC local church? 76 out of 78

In total, 76 out of 78 people recorded an interest in at least one category, many people in two categories, and some in all three categories. A full list will be preserved with the official copy of the minutes.

¹ In this paper, the term 'Ministers' means both Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Church-Related Community Workers.

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

Dear Colleagues,

26 June 2020

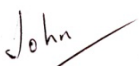
Mission Council, Friday 10 July

I write to follow up the earlier covering letter, with further detail about our meeting.

1. Our Communications team is planning practice sessions on Monday 6 and Wednesday 8 July. Times and login codes will be announced. Try to be there, even if you are familiar with Zoom. If you want help with Zoom, look at the three Zoom guides at the top of this webpage: www.urc.org.uk/information-guides
2. Three late business papers are now available on the URC website, as follows:

Resolution 13	New Mission Projects: detailed information from Eastern Synod
Resolution 28	Supplementary Nominations, adding to list in the Book of Reports
Resolution 42	A new resolution, with contingency plans for the next meeting of Mission Council. The moderators designate this as <i>En bloc</i> .
3. Now a general point about the wording of resolutions. We shall consider almost every resolution in a different setting – at either a different council or a different time – from the plans originally made. We therefore require in most cases modest changes of wording. The wordings in the Book of Reports, and in the Mission Council papers for March, are not the authoritative and latest versions. The authoritative and latest versions are at the foot of the letter sent a fortnight ago (and included again at the foot of this letter).
4. You will realise that, when we discuss Resolutions 20 and 22 about pensions, most of us will have a personal interest as well as a formal responsibility. Many of us work for the Church and belong to its pension schemes; some have already retired and benefit from these schemes; the great majority of us help to support the schemes through our giving in local congregations. You might think that this would commit all of us to silence, leaving nobody in a position to join the discussion. However, advice from the Charity Commission for England and Wales indicates that these interests need not prevent members of Mission Council sharing in the discussion and in any decision. The Clerk will make a formal statement to this effect during our meeting, which we shall hope to post on the website in advance. Meanwhile, we shall need to ask you to declare your interests by returning a simple form, which will be sent to you.
5. Finally an apology for an error in the Book of Reports. On page 45, the great bulk of the work in collating our list of closed churches was actually done by Mrs Ann Barton, whom we thank warmly for her careful efforts in this task.

Yours sincerely,



Resolutions for Mission Council, July 2020

Resolutions that would have been brought to General Assembly

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These deal with regulatory matters that are beyond the powers of Mission Council. They must therefore be deferred until Assembly can meet.

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Mission Council encourages all churches without websites to set one up as a matter of urgency, and to consider using the URC's iChurch initiative.

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Mission Council encourages all members and friends of the Church to read *Reform*, the magazine of the United Reformed Church, and to subscribe to it so that, as it also approaches its 50th anniversary, it can continue to challenge, debate, refresh, enrich and inform.

Education and Learning Committee

Resolution 19 (page 91)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council endorses the direction for the Education and Learning Committee described in the Way Forward paper on pp91-98 of the Book of Reports.

Finance Committee and Pensions Committee

Resolution 20 (page 114)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council, being representative of Local Churches, Synods and the whole Church, confirms the Church's commitment to the pensions promises already made, and wishes any consideration of future pension arrangements for the Church's Ministers of Word and Sacraments, Church Related Community Workers, missionaries and staff to keep clearly in mind:

- a) The Church's warm gratitude for the commitment, gifts and service of those who work among us and serve in our name;
- b) The Church's desire to deal with these people honourably in their retirement;
- c) The Church's desire to act as a responsible employer, for the people we employ and for our stipendiary office-holders.

Resolution 21 (page 114)

Mission Council thanks Dr Chris Evans, on his retirement as Convener of the Pensions Committee, for his conscientious and careful service in this role and thanks all those across the Church who are involved in the current Integrated Risk Management Project for their hard work and their willingness to work towards a resolution of the significant pensions challenges that face the Church.

Resolution 22 (page 114)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council authorises the directors of the URC Trust to amend its guarantee of the Ministers' Pension Fund provided to the URC Ministers' Pension Trust in response to the changing regulatory environment, but limited to the available resources of the URC Trust.

Ministries Committee

Resolution 23 (page 156)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council adopts the Gift Policy contained on pp157-8 of the Book of Reports.

Resolution 24 (page 159)

This proposes a change to the Basis of Union, which is beyond the powers of Mission Council. The matter must therefore be deferred until Assembly can meet.

Resolution 25 (page 162)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council adopts the policy for pastoral supervision set out on pp162-7 of the Book of Reports.

Mission Committee: Environmental Task Group

Resolution 26 (page 188)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council directs the Environmental Task Group to consult on a travel and expenses policy for the URC which (i) encourages consideration of the purpose of travel and its environmental impact, (ii) introduces a carbon budget for international travel on URC business, and (iii) incentivises low-carbon travel modes, with a view that proposals should be brought to a future General Assembly, or to the Assembly Executive if necessary.

Mission and Discipleship: Walking the Way Steering Group

Resolution 27 (page 195)

Mission Council, in affirming the work of the Walking the Way Steering Group, encourages those who plan the Church's budget to seek ways of funding its continuing work at the level indicated on p202 of the Book of Reports, according to the priorities set out on pp195-201.

Nominations committee

Resolution 28 (page 203)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pp204-223 of the Book of Reports, subject to the additions, amendments and corrections contained in the supplementary report to Assembly.

Safeguarding Advisory Group

Resolution 29 (page 227)

- a) Having already endorsed the safeguarding strategic plan 2020-2025, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, acknowledges that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility in the United Reformed Church.
- b) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council directs all local churches and synods and those who oversee safeguarding arrangements in the Church to implement the safeguarding strategic plan in ways that promote the welfare of the URC and the well-being of the community in which the Church is placed.

Wessex Synod

Resolution 30 (page 255)

- a) Mission Council encourages Elders Meetings and/or Church Meetings to install 'public-access defibrillators' on an external wall of their Church buildings, wherever possible.
- b) Mission Council encourages Synods to offer financial support where possible to help churches purchase and install these defibrillators.
- c) Mission Council resolves that, if successful, this initiative be used to mount national and local press campaigns to promote the profile of our churches as safe, caring and compassionate communities.

Resolution from the Assembly Clerk: Ministerial Disciplinary Process

Resolution 31 (not in Book of Reports)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appoints Morag McLintock as General Assembly Representative in the Ministerial Disciplinary Process from 11 July 2020 until the close of General Assembly 2021.

Explanatory text for Resolution 31:

The responsibility of General Assembly Representative in the Ministerial Disciplinary Process is presently carried by the Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship). In order to avoid a gap when the Revd Richard Church retires in July, the incoming Convenor of the Law and Polity Advisory Group is willing to cover this responsibility for the coming year. During that year consideration can be given to a longer-term arrangement.

From the Assembly Clerk: Virtual meetings and Standing Orders

Supporting paper is on the URC website, under 'Mission Council papers, July 2020'.

Resolution 32

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves to make the addition to the Rules of Procedure covering Virtual Attendance at Physical Meetings and Virtual Meetings, with immediate effect.

Resolution 33

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council:

- a) re-designates the Standing Orders as "Standing Orders for Physical Meetings", with immediate effect;
- b) adopts the "Standing Orders for Virtual Meetings", with immediate effect;
- c) declares, for the avoidance of doubt, that where a majority of those present at a meeting are physically gathered, it shall be a physical meeting conducted according to the Standing Orders for Physical Meetings, and where a majority of those present at a meeting are not physically gathered, it shall be a Virtual Meeting, conducted according to the Standing Orders for Virtual Meetings;
- d) reminds the whole United Reformed Church of the longstanding provision in the Rules of Procedure: "1.3 ...The Standing Orders which are printed in the Book of Reports to General Assembly shall apply to all meetings of the Assembly and the Mission Council and, in so far as they are applicable, to meetings of Synods, district councils and their committees."

Resolutions remaindered from the cancelled Mission Council in March

From Paper B1 at Mission Council: Children's and Youth Work

Resolution 34:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council welcomes the review of the United Reformed Church's Child Friendly Church Award and commends the new Children and Youth Friendly Church scheme to replace this from 2020 as an award to be made by children's and youth work committee on behalf of the denomination to churches completing the approval process.

From Paper C2 at Mission Council: Communications

Resolution 35:

- a) Mission Council recognises the contribution of Reform to the life and work of the United Reformed Church and notes the commitment of the Communications Committee and staff team to continue its growth and development over the five-year period from January 2021 to December 2025, a period that includes the 50th anniversary of the URC and the magazine.
- b) Mission Council acknowledges with thanks the work of the Reform team and the wider Communications Team in making savings and reducing the financial cost to the Church, and endorses the further changes outlined in the report.
- c) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, and noting the decision in March 2020 by the Officers of Assembly to support Reform in 2021, Mission Council resolves to support Reform over the subsequent four year period to December 2025 by continuing with a reduced annual subsidy, not to exceed £50,000 annually, and asks the Communications Committee to make regular reports to Mission Council.

From Paper D1 at Mission Council: Education and Learning

Resolution 36:

- a) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves that from 2021 the normal route to becoming a Synod-Recognised Lay Preacher in the United Reformed Church will be based on Stepwise, in accordance with the proposals given in Appendix A of this paper;
- b) Mission Council requests the Education and Learning Committee, in consultation with the Ministries Committee and appropriate committees and officers of the Synods, to develop and publish detailed guidance by the end of 2020 for implementing the resolution above.

From Paper I2 at Mission Council: Mission Committee

Resolution 37:

Mission Council accepts the plan to develop the Legacies of Slavery recommendations presented to MC in November 2019 and to consult with synods and local churches between the General Assemblies of 2020 and 2021, with the aim of bringing refined resolutions to General Assembly in 2021 or 2022.

From Paper I4 at Mission Council: Walking the Way

Resolution 38:

Mission Council instructs the Walking the Way Steering Group to establish a small task group to bring forward detailed proposals for the celebration of the URC's upcoming 50th anniversary.

From Paper J3 at Mission Council: Nominations

Resolution 39:

Mission Council approves the proposals for synod nominations to the Mission Committee.

From Paper R3 at Mission Council: Safeguarding Advisory Group

Resolution 40:

Mission Council expects a standardised approach to safeguarding training across the United Reformed Church and strongly encourages all those who are working with children, young people and adults at risk in the life of the Church to access the new basic safeguarding training.

From Paper U1 at Mission Council: Mission Council Advisory Group

Resolution 41:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council, approves the pattern for the routine reporting of Assembly Committees as set out in Paper U1.

New Resolution: contingency plans for next meeting of Mission Council

Resolution 42:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council authorises the Officers of Assembly to take such steps as may be needed to arrange the next meeting of Mission Council, as either a virtual or a physical meeting.

Resolution 42:

General Secretary and Clerk

Next meeting of Mission Council

Basic Information

Contact address	General Secretary: john.proctor@urc.org.uk Assembly Clerk: michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council, acting in the name of General Assembly, authorises the Officers of Assembly to take such steps as may be needed to arrange the next meeting of Mission Council, as either a virtual or a physical meeting.

1. We have booked a Mission Council meeting at The Hayes, Swanwick, on 20-22 November. However, the progress of the Covid emergency is not predictable, and we cannot presently be confident of gathering in our usual way at that time.
2. However, until the July meeting of Mission Council is over, we shall not know all of the benefits and difficulties involved in meeting virtually.
3. Therefore a decision will be needed, at a time after our July meeting, about what to do in November.
4. The Officers of Assembly as a group have the power to take urgent decisions in the name of the United Reformed Church. Sometimes urgent issues arise unexpectedly. This, by contrast, is one that we can foresee, and it is proper to consult Mission Council about the trust they may wish to place in the Officers.
5. The six Officers are the two Moderators, Clerk, Treasurer, General Secretary and Business Convenor. After 11 July these six people will be Clare Downing, Peter Pay, Michael Hopkins, Ian Hardie, John Bradbury and Adrian Bulley.
6. The Officers will be concerned for the safety of all who belong to Mission Council. We have urged local churches to be responsible in the face of Covid, and the wider Church will aim to be responsible too.
7. Should the Officers decide to hold a virtual meeting, they may well call this for the weekend we already have in our diaries, but for 20 and 21 November only, without needing to use the Sunday.

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

Dear Colleagues,

June 2020

Mission Council
Friday 10 July – on Zoom (codes to be advised nearer the time)

I look forward warmly to seeing you at Mission Council and write now to mention several practical matters as we prepare for the meeting.

1. Mission Council will meet online on Friday 10 July. There will be three business sessions of an hour each, starting at 10.30, 11.45 and 2.00. Thus there will be a short mid-morning break and a full hour for lunch.
2. This is the first time we have held a central council of our Church online. This arrangement is the best we can manage at the moment, and we mean to use it well. Warm thanks to our URC Communications team and to Affinity, who have helped us at many General Assemblies and will be handling the technology on this occasion.
3. At the moment we are planning practice sessions on Monday 6 and Wednesday 8 July. Times will be announced. This will be a chance to test such skills as logging in, muting your microphone, participating in discussion, and voting. Try to be there, even if you are familiar with Zoom. If you want help with Zoom, have a look at the three Zoom guides at the top of this webpage: www.urc.org.uk/information-guides
4. The list of resolutions for the meeting is at the foot of this letter. You will see that these are many. We shall try to deal with much of the business that would have come to Assembly, and with those items that we remaindered when the March Mission Council was cancelled. The resolutions therefore come from three sources:

1 to 31	Business that was prepared for General Assembly
32 and 33	New Rules and Standing Orders for virtual meetings
34 to 41	Matters remaindered from Mission Council in March

The Moderators will classify the resolutions initially as follows:

32, 33	These will be considered at the start of the meeting
20, 22, 25, 29	These will definitely be assigned agenda time
1-9, 24	These will need to be left until General Assembly can meet
Everything else	10-19, 21, 23, 26-28, 30-31, 34-41 have been placed <i>En Bloc</i> .

5. When business is placed *En Bloc*, the Moderators think that decisions might be reached responsibly without further discussion. So the agenda will include a slot when these items will be voted on – as a single lump of business (*En Bloc*).

However, it is up to you whether all of these papers remain *En Bloc*. So when you read

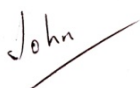
the *En Bloc* papers, I strongly encourage you to contact the author of a paper if you have questions or concerns. Authors' names and email addresses are noted at the head of each paper. This is not to stifle debate on the day, but to clear up any matters that can easily be resolved by conversation in advance, so that we can use our time on the day to discuss the substance of proposals, rather than procedure or meaning.

If you think any of these papers needs discussion at Mission Council, particularly if you disagree with a proposed resolution, you may ask that a piece of business be removed from *En Bloc*. You must put that request to the Clerk michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk 48 hours before we meet (12 noon on Wednesday 8 July). If three people ask to remove an item, it will be withdrawn from *En Bloc* and added to our agenda.

So you can remove anything from *En Bloc*. But we cannot remove everything from *En Bloc* and still have time to discuss it all in the meeting. Time will not allow. So there is an element of risk in removing items – if there are too many of these, some might get remaindered and left to another meeting. Nonetheless there will be time to add some of the *En Bloc* business to the agenda, if people so wish.

6. When we deal with an item on the agenda, the Moderators will always seek consensus. However, decisions about the new Standing Orders (Resolutions 32 and 33) are clearly urgent, and the Moderators have classified these as requiring a simple majority. If the new Standing Orders are agreed, the other resolutions presently listed (20, 22, 25, 29) will require a two-thirds majority rather than a simple majority (as set out in new SO 8.3).
7. Observers and URC staff who are not members of Mission Council do not participate in decision-making. Staff members are, however, welcome to speak.
8. We ought not to post on social media during business sessions. This restriction only applies when Council is in session; members may join in online debates during breaks, about completed business (although not on business that has been adjourned until later in the meeting). 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.
9. Do remember that we rely on every Mission Council member to take information back to synods. That goes for all the business at the meeting – what we discuss, and anything we simply decide. Do let the people you represent know what the Church is doing.
10. On the pages below is the wording of all the resolutions for the meeting. Each of them is referenced to the Book of Reports or to one of the March Mission Council papers, and these are on the URC website <https://urc.org.uk/july-2020.html>
11. Finally, thank you, for your commitment to Mission Council, and for offering time and care to the Church, so that we can take our decisions as wisely as possible. As always, please come to share, listen, reflect and discern together, and to support each other in seeking the guidance of God.

With best wishes,
Yours sincerely,

John

Resolutions for Mission Council, July 2020

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- c) The Church's desire to act as a responsible employer, for the people we employ and for our stipendiary office-holders.

Resolution 21 (page 114)

Mission Council thanks Dr Chris Evans, on his retirement as Convener of the Pensions Committee, for his conscientious and careful service in this role and thanks all those across the Church who are involved in the current Integrated Risk Management Project for their hard work and their willingness to work towards a resolution of the significant pensions challenges that face the Church.

Resolution 22 (page 114)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council authorises the directors of the URC Trust to amend its guarantee of the Ministers' Pension Fund provided to the URC Ministers' Pension Trust in response to the changing regulatory environment, but limited to the available resources of the URC Trust.

Ministries Committee

Resolution 23 (page 156)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council adopts the Gift Policy contained on pp157-8 of the Book of Reports.

Resolution 24 (page 159)

This proposes a change to the Basis of Union, which is beyond the powers of Mission Council. The matter must therefore be deferred until Assembly can meet.

Resolution 25 page 162

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council adopts the policy for pastoral supervision set out on pp162-7 of the Book of Reports.

Mission Committee: Environmental Task Group

Resolution 26 (page 188)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council directs the Environmental Task Group to consult on a travel and expenses policy for the URC which (i) encourages consideration of the purpose of travel and its environmental impact, (ii) introduces a carbon budget for international travel on URC business, and (iii) incentivises low-carbon travel modes, with a view that proposals should be brought to a future General Assembly, or to the Assembly Executive if necessary.

Mission and Discipleship: Walking the Way Steering Group

Resolution 27 (page 195)

Mission Council, in affirming the work of the Walking the Way Steering Group, encourages those who plan the Church's budget to seek ways of funding its continuing work at the level indicated on p202 of the Book of Reports, according to the priorities set out on pp195-201.

Nominations committee

Resolution 28 (page 203)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appoints committees and representatives of the Church as set out on pp204-223 of the Book of Reports, subject to the additions, amendments and corrections contained in the supplementary report to Assembly.

Safeguarding Advisory Group

Resolution 29 (page 227)

- a) Having already endorsed the safeguarding strategic plan 2020-2025, Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, acknowledges that safeguarding is everybody's responsibility in the United Reformed Church.
- b) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council directs all local churches and synods and those who oversee safeguarding arrangements in the Church to implement the safeguarding strategic plan in ways that promote the welfare of the URC and the well-being of the community in which the Church is placed.

Wessex Synod

Resolution 30 (page 255)

- a) Mission Council encourages Elders Meetings and/or Church Meetings to install 'public-access defibrillators' on an external wall of their Church buildings, wherever possible.
- b) Mission Council encourages Synods to offer financial support where possible to help churches purchase and install these defibrillators.
- c) Mission Council resolves that, if successful, this initiative be used to mount national and local press campaigns to promote the profile of our churches as safe, caring and compassionate communities.

Resolution from the Assembly Clerk: Ministerial Disciplinary Process

Resolution 31 (not in Book of Reports)

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council appoints Morag McLintock as General Assembly Representative in the Ministerial Disciplinary Process from 11 July 2020 until the close of General Assembly 2021.

Explanatory text for Resolution 31:

The responsibility of General Assembly Representative in the Ministerial Disciplinary Process is presently carried by the Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship). In order to avoid a gap when the Revd Richard Church retires in July, the incoming Convenor of the Law and Polity Advisory Group is willing to cover this responsibility for the coming year. During that year consideration can be given to a longer-term arrangement.

From the Assembly Clerk: Virtual meetings and Standing Orders

Supporting paper is on the URC website, under 'Mission Council papers, July 2020'.

Resolution 32

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves to make the addition to the Rules of Procedure covering Virtual Attendance at Physical Meetings and Virtual Meetings, with immediate effect.

Resolution 33

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council:

- a) re-designates the Standing Orders as "Standing Orders for Physical Meetings", with immediate effect;
- b) adopts the "Standing Orders for Virtual Meetings", with immediate effect;
- c) declares, for the avoidance of doubt, that where a majority of those present at a meeting are physically gathered, it shall be a physical meeting conducted according to the Standing Orders for Physical Meetings, and where a majority of those present at a meeting are not physically gathered, it shall be a Virtual Meeting, conducted according to the Standing Orders for Virtual Meetings;
- d) reminds the whole United Reformed Church of the longstanding provision in the Rules of Procedure: "1.3 ...The Standing Orders which are printed in the Book of Reports to General Assembly shall apply to all meetings of the Assembly and the Mission Council and, in so far as they are applicable, to meetings of Synods, district councils and their committees."

Resolutions remaindered from the cancelled Mission Council in March

From Paper B1 at Mission Council: Children's and Youth Work

Resolution 34:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council welcomes the review of the United Reformed Church's Child Friendly Church Award and commends the new Children and Youth Friendly Church scheme to replace this from 2020 as an award to be made by children's and youth work committee on behalf of the denomination to churches completing the approval process.

From Paper C2 at Mission Council: Communications

Resolution 35:

- a) Mission Council recognises the contribution of Reform to the life and work of the United Reformed Church and notes the commitment of the Communications Committee and staff team to continue its growth and development over the five-year period from January 2021 to December 2025, a period that includes the 50th anniversary of the URC and the magazine.
- b) Mission Council acknowledges with thanks the work of the Reform team and the wider Communications Team in making savings and reducing the financial cost to the Church, and endorses the further changes outlined in the report.
- c) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, and noting the decision in March 2020 by the Officers of Assembly to support Reform in 2021, Mission Council resolves to support Reform over the subsequent four year period to December 2025 by continuing with a reduced annual subsidy, not to exceed £50,000 annually, and asks the Communications Committee to make regular reports to Mission Council.

From Paper D1 at Mission Council: Education and Learning

Resolution 36:

- a) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves that from 2021 the normal route to becoming a Synod-Recognised Lay Preacher in the United Reformed Church will be based on Stepwise, in accordance with the proposals given in Appendix A of this paper;
- b) Mission Council requests the Education and Learning Committee, in consultation with the Ministries Committee and appropriate committees and officers of the Synods, to develop and publish detailed guidance by the end of 2020 for implementing the resolution above.

From Paper I2 at Mission Council: Mission Committee

Resolution 37:

Mission Council accepts the plan to develop the Legacies of Slavery recommendations presented to MC in November 2019 and to consult with synods and local churches between the General Assemblies of 2020 and 2021, with the aim of bringing refined resolutions to General Assembly in 2021 or 2022.

From Paper I4 at Mission Council: Walking the Way

Resolution 38:

Mission Council instructs the Walking the Way Steering Group to establish a small task group to bring forward detailed proposals for the celebration of the URC's upcoming 50th anniversary.

From Paper J3 at Mission Council: Nominations

Resolution 39:

Mission Council approves the proposals for synod nominations to the Mission Committee.

From Paper R3 at Mission Council: Safeguarding Advisory Group

Resolution 40:

Mission Council expects a standardised approach to safeguarding training across the United Reformed Church and strongly encourages all those who are working with children, young people and adults at risk in the life of the Church to access the new basic safeguarding training.

From Paper U1 at Mission Council: Mission Council Advisory Group

Resolution 41:

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council, approves the pattern for the routine reporting of Assembly Committees as set out in Paper U1.

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Virtual Meetings

The Clerk

An enabling document, formally proposed by the Clerk, and formally seconded by the Assistant Clerk.

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Michael Hopkins, michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk
Action required	Agreement.
Draft resolution(s)	Resolution 32 Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council resolves to make the addition to the Rules of Procedure covering Virtual Attendance at Physical Meetings and Virtual Meetings, with immediate effect. Resolution 33 Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council: a) re-designates the Standing Orders as “Standing Orders for Physical Meetings”, with immediate effect; b) adopts the “Standing Orders for Virtual Meetings”, with immediate effect; c) declares, for the avoidance of doubt, that where a majority of those present at a meeting are physically gathered, it shall be a physical meeting conducted according to the Standing Orders for Physical Meetings, and where a majority of those present at a meeting are not physically gathered, it shall be a Virtual Meeting, conducted according to the Standing Orders for Virtual Meetings; d) reminds the whole United Reformed Church of the longstanding provision in the Rules of Procedure: “1.3 ...The Standing Orders which are printed in the Book of Reports to General Assembly shall apply to all meetings of the Assembly and the Mission Council and, in so far as they are applicable, to meetings of Synods, district councils and their committees.”

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Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Clarifying provisions for Virtual Meetings, and for Virtual Attendance, by updating the Rules of Procedure. Simplifying the Standing Orders to make them practical for Virtual Meetings.
Main points	Enabling Virtual Meetings to occur in ordered but efficient ways. Many private and public bodies, including many charities, have had to devise rubrics of this kind. We have learned from good practice elsewhere. Within the new Rules of Procedure, a good deal of material relies heavily upon work already done by the Church of Scotland; while within the new Standing Orders, sections 1-6 are based upon material from local authorities, and sections 7-17 have largely been copied across, or nearly so, from our existing Standing Orders. What is offered here is not innovation and extensive new drafting, with the risk of it being full of holes, but rather much of this is already approved and used, and that which is new has been tested by others first. It is important to note that both the Rules of Procedure and the Standing Orders can be amended by the Mission Council, or its successor, on a single vote. What is offered represents our best endeavours to provide something workable now for immediate use. However, if it becomes apparent that improvements could be made these can be effected by a single vote of the General Assembly or Mission Council, i.e. if what we have is not perfect, it is not set in stone forever.
Previous relevant documents	None.
Consultation has taken place with...	The General Secretary, the Synod Clerks, the Assembly Officers (current and elect). Guidance published by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, the Charity Commission of England and Wales, and the charity regulators in the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Ecumenical partners, particularly the Church of Scotland and the Methodist Church of Great Britain. Local authorities offering information on virtual meetings.

Summary of Impact

Financial	n/a
External (e.g. ecumenical)	n/a

AN ADDITION TO THE RULES OF PROCEDURE TO COVER VIRTUAL MEETINGS:

10. PROVISION FOR VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE AT PHYSICAL MEETINGS AND FOR MEETINGS HELD ENTIRELY VIRTUALLY

10.1 *Definitions*

In this Rule, the following words shall have the following meanings:

10.1.1 “Designated Body” shall mean any Council of the Church, or its Committees, including the Mission Council, Advisory Groups and Task Groups.

10.1.2 “Relevant Meeting” shall mean a meeting called as meetings of the Designated Body are normally called.

10.1.3 “Virtual Attendance” means that a person is not physically present at a Relevant Meeting, but instead is able to participate in and is present at the Relevant Meeting by means of a video and/or audio platform, in like manner to any person who may be physically present. For the avoidance of doubt, in order to constitute Virtual Attendance the presence of such a person at a Relevant Meeting must entail:

- (a) the capacity for effective two-way communication, by visual and/or spoken means, between such a person(s) and those physically present and with other people attending virtually;
- (b) the ability of such a person to engage in debate with, and to ask questions of, those who are physically present and others attending virtually, and to answer questions from them; and
- (c) the ability of such a person to cast a vote contemporaneously with those physically present and others attending virtually.

10.1.4 “Virtual Meeting” means that a Relevant Meeting is held entirely by means of a video and/or audio platform.

10.2 *Permission for Virtual Attendance*

10.2.1 A Designated Body may permit any person(s) to be in Virtual Attendance at any Relevant Meeting(s).

10.2.2 If a Designated Body resolves to permit Virtual Attendance, it shall mean that, subject to 10.3, the person(s) in Virtual Attendance is/are deemed to be present at the Relevant Meeting for all purposes in the same way as if such person(s) had been physically present.

10.2.3 A decision to permit Virtual Attendance at all Relevant Meetings of a Designated Body may subsequently be revoked in respect of future Relevant Meetings.

10.2.4 For the avoidance of doubt, this section is permissive only and not directive.

10.3 *Convener or Moderator at a Relevant Meeting*

10.3.1 It shall be the responsibility of the Convener or Moderator, as the case may be, of any Relevant Meeting where Virtual Attendance is permitted, to establish at the opening of the Relevant Meeting:

- (a) the identity of any person(s) who purport to be in Virtual Attendance, and

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- (b) that such a person(s) is/are in Virtual Attendance as defined in section 10, so that they are permitted to participate in the Relevant Meeting and have the right to vote.

10.3.2 If at any time during a Relevant Meeting the continuing ability of a person in Virtual Attendance to participate in the Relevant Meeting in terms of sections 10.1.3 and 10.3.1(b) is questioned, it shall be the responsibility of the Convener or Moderator to establish whether the person still meets those requirements and if not to deem that person to have left the Relevant Meeting.

10.3.3 In all cases described in these Rules the decision of the Convener or Moderator, as the case may be, shall be final.

10.3.4 If the Convenor, or Moderator, is in Virtual Attendance at a Relevant Meeting and becomes unable to participate in terms of sections 10.1.3 and 10.3.1(b), then the Relevant Meeting shall either appoint an alternative Convenor, or Moderator from amongst those attending, or else the Relevant Meeting shall be deemed to have ended. No substitute shall be so appointed unless qualified to perform the relevant function(s) in accordance with the rules and practices of the United Reformed Church.

10.4 *No appeal*

10.4.1 Providing that a Relevant Meeting remains quorate, no failure of technology however caused, or decision to deem any person to be or not to be in Virtual Attendance or to have left the Relevant Meeting, shall invalidate the Relevant Meeting or any decision taken at the Relevant Meeting, nor shall any such matter be a ground for appeal against any decision taken at a Relevant Meeting.

10.5 *Virtual Meetings*

10.5.1 For the avoidance of doubt, the United Reformed Church declares that all Designated Bodies may in principle hold Virtual Meetings of Relevant Meetings, unless explicitly prohibited from so doing by a constitutional provision.

10.5.2 In deciding whether it is appropriate for a Designated Body to hold a Virtual Meeting, the Convener, or Moderator, is required to consult with other Officers of the Designated Body to consider what proportion of the members of the Designated Body are able to participate in a Virtual Meeting, and to have particular regard if a greater proportion of members are unable to participate in a Virtual meeting than are able to participate in a Physical Meeting.¹

10.5.3 The entirety of Rules 10.1 to 10.4 shall apply in full, as far as they are applicable, to all Virtual Meetings.

Resolution 32 (wording on cover sheet) moves the inclusion of the rules above in our Church's Rules of Procedure.

¹ For example, if 30 people normally attend a Physical Meeting, but only 13 can attend a virtual meeting, the Officers would be ill advised to proceed with a Virtual Meeting; whereas if 20 people normally attend a Physical Meeting, and 18 can attend a Virtual Meeting, the Officers might consider this a reasonable basis to proceed. The Officers should also be aware that some people who cannot usually attend a Physical Meeting may be able to attend a Virtual Meeting. Timings should also be considered – if people cannot normally attend a Physical Meeting in the middle of the day, it should not be assumed that they can attend a Virtual Meeting then. This, and any other footnotes, are only examples and do not form part of the Rules.

STANDING ORDERS FOR VIRTUAL MEETINGS

1. *Records of Virtual Meetings*

- 1.1 Any streaming and/or recording² of Virtual Meetings does not replace the formal minutes of the meeting and the decisions made. Formal minutes shall continue to be maintained and retained.

2. *Operating Procedure*

- 2.1 The Virtual Meeting will commence when the Moderator opens the meeting, within the requirements set out in the Rules of Procedure.
- 2.2 At the start of any meeting the Moderator shall make reasonable efforts to confirm that members can hear and be heard during the Virtual Meeting. The meeting will not start until the Moderator is satisfied that all is in order.
- 2.3 Where available video as well as audio should be normally used during Virtual Meetings. Where video is not available, or it is not safe for the attendee to use video, then audio only may be used.
- 2.4. The Virtual Meeting will finish when the Moderator formally closes the meeting.

3. *Managing contributions from members during Virtual Meetings*

- 3.1. All microphones should be set to mute at the start of the Virtual Meeting, apart from the Moderator and any (co)host(s). Microphones should only be unmuted when a participant is speaking.
- 3.2 The Moderator has absolute discretion to pause or adjourn the meeting at any time, and to remove any virtual attendees from the meeting if their conduct falls short of the expected standards in church.
- 3.3 In all but the smallest meetings, it is helpful if the Moderator is not also the host. The host may be a staff member(s) or volunteer(s) who are not a member of the meeting in the same way that such people may assist with stewarding a physical meeting.

4. *Voting on items during the meeting*

- 4.1 All decisions shall preferably be made by using any built in voting mechanism in the Virtual Meeting software, otherwise the Moderator will ask each individual member to raise their hand, either physically or using built in features, or to confirm verbally their agreement.
- 4.2 Voting shall normally use built in voting mechanisms, but where this causes a difficulty with more than one person joining a meeting from the same location in order for each person to have a vote then each person should log in on a separate device, or by telephone, or another piece of software used for voting. In a very small meeting, where the Moderator can see everyone on the screen at once, it may be possible to resolve this informally.
- 4.3 Voting on any motion whose effect is to alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis, the Structure and any other form or expression of the polity and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church, is governed by paragraph 3(1) and (2) of the Structure.

5. *Attendance*

- 5.1 All Virtual Meetings are required to meet any previously agreed quorum for meetings, where such a quorum has been specified.

² Meetings should not normally be recorded, in order to comply fully with both safeguarding and data privacy policies.

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6 *Interpretation of Standing Orders*

- 6.1 Where the Moderator is required to interpret any Standing Orders in light of the requirements of a Virtual Meeting, they shall take advice from the Clerk before making a ruling. The Moderator's decision in all cases shall be final.

7 *En bloc business*

- 7.1 The Moderator, Clerk, and General Secretary shall together decide which items of business shall be taken en bloc. Placing business in the en bloc category does not imply anything about the importance of any item of business, merely that those planning the meeting think that it may be possible to agree the business without discussion. Any members wishing to have items removed from en bloc business should notify the Clerk by a stated time in advance of the meeting. If three or more members have so notified, then the business shall be added to the agenda of the meeting, otherwise en bloc business shall be voted upon without any discussion.

8 *Business requiring discussion*

- 8.1 It is not possible to use Consensus Decision-Making in its normal way during a Virtual Meeting, since Consensus Decision-Making relies upon the Moderator being able to sense the mood of the meeting and the members which requires senses not available in a Virtual Meeting. However, all meetings should still be conducted in the spirit and ethos of seeking consensus.
- 8.2 At any time during the debate, the Moderator may use the procedure indicated in Standing Order 4.1 to hold an Informal Straw Poll, which may be held purely to discern the mood of the meeting without making any decision. The Moderator may invite members to speak in the order they see fit. The Moderator may ask if anyone who has not yet contributed wishes to speak.
- 8.3 All decisions shall be made by vote, using the procedure set out in Standing Order 4.1. The Moderator, Clerk, and General Secretary shall together decide in advance which items of business require a simple majority, and which require a two thirds majority.³ This Standing Order does not override any other provision for a specific majority set out elsewhere in the Standing Orders, particularly Standing Orders 10.12, 10.13 and 10.14.

9 *Presentation of business*

- 9.1 All reports of committees, together with the draft motions arising therefrom, shall be delivered to the General Secretary by a date to be determined, so that they may be circulated to members in time for consideration before the date of the Assembly meeting.
- 9.2 A Synod may deliver to the General Secretary not less than twelve weeks before the commencement of the meeting of the Assembly notice in writing of a motion for consideration at the Assembly. This notice shall include the names of those appointed to propose and second the motion at the Assembly.
- 9.3 A local church wishing to put forward a motion for consideration by the General Assembly shall submit the motion to its Synod for consideration and, if the Synod so decides, transmission to the Assembly, at such time as will enable the Synod to comply with Standing Order 9.2 above.

³ For example, agreeing the minutes of the previous meeting might reasonably be taken on a simple majority, whereas a major strategic decision with significant financial implications requires a greater level of support than a one vote majority.

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- 9.4 A member of the Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion (which notice must include the name of a seconder) to be included in the Assembly agenda. If the subject matter of such a notice of motion appears to the General Secretary to be an infringement of the rights of a Synod through which the matter could properly have been raised, the General Secretary shall inform the member accordingly and bring the matter before the Business Committee which shall advise the Assembly as to the procedure to be followed.
- 9.5 Proposals for amendments to the Basis and Structure of the URC, which may be made by the Mission Council or a committee of the General Assembly or a Synod, shall be in the hands of the General Secretary not later than 12 weeks before the opening of the Assembly. The General Secretary, in addition to the normal advice to members of the Assembly, shall, as quickly as possible, inform all Synod Clerks of the proposed amendment.
- 9.6 It shall not be in order, whether in en bloc business or any other decision-making, to move a motion or amendment which:
- 9.6.1 contravenes any part of the Basis of Union, or
 - 9.6.2 involves the Church in expenditure without prior consideration by the appropriate committee, or
 - 9.6.3 pre-empts discussion of a matter to be considered later in the agenda, or
 - 9.6.4 amends or reverses a decision reached by the Assembly at its preceding two meetings unless the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary together decide that changed circumstances or new evidence justify earlier reconsideration of the matter, or
 - 9.6.5 is not related to the report of a committee and has not been the subject of 21 days' notice under Standing Order 9.4, or
 - 9.6.6 simply reaffirms existing work.

The decision of the Moderator (in the case of 9.6.1, 9.6.2, 9.6.3, 9.6.5, and 9.6.6) and of the Moderator with the Clerk and the General Secretary (in the case of 9.6.4) on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.

The business

- 10.1 If notice has been given of two or more motions on the same subject, or two or more amendments to the same motion, these shall be taken in the order decided by the Moderator on the advice of the Clerk.
- 10.2 A report presented to the Assembly by a committee or Synod, under Standing Order 9.1, shall be received for debate, unless notice has been duly given under Standing Order 9.4 of a motion to refer back to that committee or Synod the whole or part of the report and its attached motion(s). Such a motion for reference back shall be debated and voted upon before the relevant report is itself debated. To carry such a motion two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. When a report has been received for debate, and before any motions consequent upon it are proposed, any member may speak to a matter arising from the report which is not the subject of a motion.
- 10.3 During the meeting of the Assembly and on the report of a committee, notice (including the names of proposer and seconder) shall be given to the Clerk of any new motions which arise from the material of the report, and of any amendments which affect the substance of motions already presented. During the course of the debate a new motion or amendment may be stated orally without supporting speech in order to ascertain whether a member is willing to second it.

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- 10.4 No motion or amendment shall be spoken to by its proposer, debated, or put to the Assembly unless it is known that there is a seconder. The only exceptions to this are motions presented on behalf of a committee, of which printed notice has been given, and the procedural motions in Standing Orders 10.13, 10.14, and 10.15. The procedural motions in Standing Orders 10.13, 10.14, and 10.15 may be moved and spoken to without the proposer having first obtained and announced the consent of a seconder. They must, however, be seconded before being put to the vote, and precedence as between the procedural motions is determined by the fact that after one of them is before the Assembly no other motion can be moved until that one has been dealt with.
- 10.5 A seconder may second without speaking and, by declaring the intention of doing so, reserve the right of speaking until a later period in the debate.
- 10.6 An amendment shall be either to omit words or to insert words or to do both, but no amendment shall be in order which has the effect of introducing an irrelevant proposal or of negating the motion. The Moderator may rule that a proposed amendment should be treated as an alternative motion.
- 10.7 If an amendment is carried, the motion as amended shall take the place of the original motion and shall become the substantive motion upon which any further amendment may be moved. If an amendment is rejected, a further amendment with a different outcome may be moved.
- 10.8 An amendment which has been moved and seconded shall be disposed of before any further amendment may be moved, but notice may be given of intention to move a further amendment should the one before the Assembly be rejected.
- 10.9 The mover may, with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly, alter the motion or amendment proposed.
- 10.10 A motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the proposer with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly. Any such consent shall be signified without discussion. It shall not be in order for any member to speak upon it after the proposer has asked permission to withdraw unless such permission shall have been refused.
- 10.11 Alternative (but not directly negative) motions may be moved and seconded in competition with a motion before the Assembly. It shall be for the Moderator, on the advice of the Clerk, to rule when motions shall be considered as alternatives under the Terms of this Standing Order.
 - 10.11.1 When such draft alternative motions have been received by the General Secretary, the Moderators may ask the General Secretary to convene a meeting (physical or virtual) of the proposers, to ascertain if it may be possible to agree on a single draft motion to put before the Assembly, or to clarify the areas of disagreement.
 - 10.11.2 If the Assembly has alternative motions before it, each proposer shall be given the opportunity to present their motion in an order decided by the Moderator.
 - 10.11.3 After any amendments duly moved under Standing Orders 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 have been dealt with and debate on the alternative motions has ended, the movers shall reply to the debate in reverse order to that in which they spoke initially. The first vote shall be a vote in favour of each of the motions, put in the order in which they were proposed, the result not being announced for one until it is announced for all. If any of them obtains a majority of those voting, it becomes the sole motion before the Assembly.

If none of them does so, the motion having the fewest votes is discarded. Should the lowest two be equal, the Moderator gives a casting vote.

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The voting process is repeated until one motion achieves a majority of those voting.

10.11.4 Once a sole motion remains, further discussion is permissible and votes for and against that motion shall be taken in the normal way and in accordance with Standing Order 4.

10.12 In the course of the business any member may move that the question under consideration be not put. This motion takes precedence over every motion before the Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule. Should the motion be carried, the business shall immediately end and the Assembly shall proceed to the next business.

10.13 In the course of any discussion, any member may move that the question be now put. This is sometimes described as “the closure motion”. If the Moderator senses that there is a wish or need to close a debate, the Moderator may ask whether any member wishes so to move; the Moderator may not simply declare a debate closed. Provided that it appears to the Moderator that the motion is a fair use of this rule, the vote shall be taken upon it immediately it has been seconded. When an amendment is under discussion, this motion shall apply only to that amendment. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. The mover of the original motion or amendment, as the case may be, retains the right of reply before the vote is taken on the motion or amendment.

10.14 During the course of a debate on a motion any member may move that decision on this motion be deferred to the next Assembly. This rule does not apply to debates on amendments since the Assembly needs to decide the final form of a motion before it can responsibly vote on deferral. The motion then takes precedence over other business. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule or that deferral would have the effect of annulling the motion. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. At the discretion of the Moderator, the General Secretary may be instructed by a further motion, duly seconded, to refer the matter for consideration by other councils and/or by one or more committees of the Assembly. The General Secretary shall provide for the deferred motion to be presented again at the next Meeting of the General Assembly.

11. *Timing of speeches and of other business*

11.1 Save by prior agreement of the Business Committee, speeches made in the presentation of reports concerning past work of Assembly committees which are to be open to question, comment or discussion shall not exceed five minutes.

11.2 The Assembly may meet in parallel sessions or Breakout Rooms to consider the past work of Assembly committees for questions and comments. Any draft motions arising therefrom must be dealt with in a plenary session of the Assembly.

11.3 Save by the prior agreement of the Business Committee, speeches made in support of the motions from any Assembly committee, including the Mission Council, or from any Synod shall not in aggregate exceed 15 minutes, nor shall speeches in support of any particular committee or Synod motion exceed 5 minutes, (e.g. a committee with four motions may not exceed 15 minutes). The

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- proposers of any other motion of which due notice has been given shall be allowed an aggregate of five minutes, unless a longer period be recommended by the Business Committee or determined by the Moderator.
- 11.4 Each subsequent speaker in any debate shall be allowed 3 minutes unless the Moderator shall determine otherwise; it shall, in particular, be open to the Moderator to determine that all speeches in a debate or from a particular point in a debate shall be of not more than a different specified number of minutes.
- 11.5 When a speech is made on behalf of a committee, it shall be so stated. Otherwise a speaker shall begin by giving name and accreditation to the Assembly.
- 11.6 Secretaries of committees and members of staff who are not members of Assembly may speak on the report of a committee for which they have responsibility at the request of the Convenor concerned. They may speak on other reports with the consent of the Moderator.
- 11.7 In each debate, no one shall address the Assembly more than once without the permission of the Moderator, except that at the close of each debate the proposer of the motion or the amendment, as the case may be, shall have the right to reply, but must strictly confine the reply to answering previous speakers and must not introduce new matters. Such reply shall close the debate on the motion or the amendment.
- 11.8 The foregoing Standing Order (11.7) shall not prevent the asking or answering of a question which arises from the matter before the Assembly or from a speech made in the debate upon it.
- 11.9 An invited speaker, whether speaking to a draft motion or not, may address the Assembly for such period of time as may be agreed by the Business Committee.
- 12 *Questions*
- 12.1 A member may, if 2 days' notice in writing has been given to the General Secretary, ask the Moderator or the Convenor of any committee any question on any matter relating to the business of the Assembly to which no reference is made in any report before the Assembly.
- 12.2 A member may, when given opportunity by the Moderator, ask the presenter of any report before the Assembly a question seeking additional information or explanation relating to matters contained within the report.
- 12.3 Questions asked under Standing Orders 12.1 and 12.2 shall be put and answered without discussion.
13. *Points of order, personal explanations, dissent*
- 13.1 A member shall have the right to call attention to a point of order, and immediately on this being done any other member addressing the Assembly shall cease speaking until the Moderator has determined the question of order. The decision on any point of order rests entirely with the Moderator. Any member calling to order unnecessarily is liable to censure of the Assembly.
- 13.2 A member feeling that some material part of a former speech by such member at the same meeting has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may request the Moderator's permission to make a personal explanation. If the Moderator so permits, a member so rising shall be entitled to be heard forthwith.
- 13.3 The right to record in the minutes a dissent from any decision of the Assembly shall only be granted to a member by the Moderator if the reason stated, either verbally at the time or later in writing, appears to the Moderator to fall within the provisions of paragraph 10 of the Basis of Union.

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- 13.4 The decision of the Moderator on a point of order, or on the admissibility of a personal explanation, or on the right to have a dissent recorded, shall not be open to discussion.
14. *Admission of the public and closed sessions*
- 14.1 Only those who are members of the meeting, staff members in attendance, or invited guests may join a Virtual Meeting. However, a meeting in open session may be shown as a live stream.
- 14.2 A closed session is one in which the business is highly sensitive. Only members of Assembly, the Legal Adviser, and any technical staff required to enable Assembly to function may be present. Neither content nor process may be divulged to non-members, save specific information authorised by the Moderator in consultation with the Clerk and the Legal Adviser. No social media in any form may be used during a closed session, nor to report upon such closed session. Any live streaming must be switched off. Minutes will be taken, but these will be held *in retentis* by the Clerk, and shall not be made available to non-members.
- 14.3 A closed session may be called for at any time in any decision-making mode, and voted upon by the Assembly, requiring a simple majority. This motion takes precedence over every motion before the Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded, and the proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule. Should the motion be carried the business shall immediately pause while non-members leave the meeting.
- 14.4 If a matter is known to be highly sensitive in advance, then the Assembly Officers, consulting the Legal Adviser if necessary, may announce in advance that a certain piece of business will be conducted in a closed session giving their reasons.
- 14.5 Members of Assembly who leave during a closed session may not be re-admitted.
15. *Communications during the course of debate*
- 15.1 The primary responsibility of members is to attend to the business and participate in the decision making. Those present must refrain both from posting on social media sites during business sessions and from commenting upon partially completed business.
- It is the responsibility of the communications committee's staff to make official announcements. This restriction is only in place when in session; those attending are free to join in the online debates during breaks and after the close of business in respect of business that the Assembly has completed. Everything written and shared on social media sites at any time is the sole responsibility of the author, and is subject to the same defamation laws as any other form of written communication.
16. *Record of the Assembly*
- 16.1 A record of attendance at the meetings of the Assembly shall be kept in such a manner as the Business Committee may determine.
- 16.2 The draft minutes of each day's proceedings shall be made available in an appropriate form normally on the following day. They shall, after any necessary correction, be approved at the opening of a subsequent session. Concerning the minutes of the closing day of the Assembly the Clerk shall submit a motion

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- approving their insertion in the full minutes of the Assembly after review and any necessary correction by the Officers of the Assembly. Before such a motion is voted upon, any member may ask to have read out the written minute on any particular item.
- 16.3 A signed copy of the minutes shall be preserved in the custody of the General Secretary as the official record of the Assembly's proceedings.
- 16.4 As soon as possible after the Assembly meeting ends, the substance of the minutes together with any other relevant papers shall be published as a "Record of Assembly" and a copy sent to every member of the Assembly, each Synod and Local Church.
17. *Suspension and amendment of Standing Orders*
- 17.1 In any case of urgency or upon proposal of a motion of which due notice has been given, any one or more of the Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of the Assembly present and voting shall so decide.
- 17.2 Motions to amend the Standing Orders shall be referred to the Clerk of the Assembly for report before being voted on by the Assembly (or, in case of urgency, by the Mission Council). The Clerk of the Assembly may from time to time suggest amendments.

Resolution 33 (wording on cover sheet) moves the adoption and use of the Standing Orders above for occasions when the Church meets virtually.

Resolution 13

Mission Projects in Eastern Synod

Basic Information

Contact address	The Revd Paul Whittle: moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council receives the new pieces of mission work at Love's Farm, St Neots, and at North Avenue, Chelmsford, as Mission Projects of the United Reformed Church.

1. Love's Farm Church

- 1.1 Love's Farm is a new community of around 1500 houses on the edge of St Neots. In 2013 Churches Together in St Neots, with St Neots URC taking a lead role, approached the Eastern Synod seeking a grant from its Pioneer Fund to support a Pioneer Minister, based in Love's Farm, to develop the embryonic church that was emerging. A grant of £250k was awarded to support this post for five years, and a house provided to be the manse. The grant has since been renewed for a second five-year period. The appointee, the Revd Helene Tame, is an Anglican, but the post is fully funded by the URC Synod.
- 1.2 The work has grown significantly. Breakfast Church meets every Sunday, bar the first in the month, and can attract over fifty people. Messy Church meets on the first Friday of the month. Little Loves is a parent/carer and toddler group meeting on a Thursday morning, and hosted by the Breakfast Church team. The Youth Club is every Friday evening and the Youth Café after school on Wednesdays in term time. Helene has a good role as community chaplain and the church seeks to engage with and support the community in a variety of ways.
- 1.3 Helene herself writes: "We have seen a real deepening of faith despite some significant challenges. I continue to reflect on the reality that our growth and faith journey rarely happens in a straight line. I know that God has brought us together as a church community and got us this far – I continue to trust the onward journey to him."
- 1.4 Love's Farm is still in its relatively early days, but is a church community in its own right. Recognition of this is overdue. The Synod is committed to supporting the continuance of this work and is in conversation with the Church of England at local and diocesan level to explore how we can more intentionally sustain this work as a bilateral ecumenical partnership. Synod recognized Love's Farm as a Mission Partnership in October 2019 and commends it to Mission Council for recognition as such.

2. **North Avenue Christian Centre, Chelmsford: 'Hope in the Community'**
- 2.1 In 2019 Eastern Synod recognised North Avenue Christian Centre as a Mission Project.
- 2.2 Following the decision to close North Avenue United Reformed Church in mid-2018, Eastern Synod wanted to continue and build on significant Christian work going on in the premises. North Avenue is recognised as being a socially deprived area of Chelmsford.
- 2.3 The Christian Centre is managed by a Partnership between Synod and a gathered church, Oasis. The Partnership was formed in order to support existing work and develop outreach and mission in the local community. The Synod had already appointed a Church Related Community Worker (CRCW) to the area, and Oasis Church were already hiring the premises for their Sunday services.
- 2.4 During the first year the objective was to maintain existing, valued work. Practical structures were put in place, including an ecumenical partnership agreement, reworked hiring agreements, a management structure and appointment of key management roles; the work of existing groups (a long-established youth centre, a Community Café and a Fellowship group) was therefore able to continue. New initiatives begun by the CRCW, including a Little Free Pantry, a study group and an open prayer space (a Prayer Knit-In) have since been established. All the existing and new initiatives have been able to continue in some form or another during the current lockdown, and community prayer support is available from the CRCW. The Centre has recently embarked on a significant building improvement and enhancement programme, which has largely been able to go ahead during this time.
- 2.5 The continuance of a Christian presence on this site since the closure of the URC Church has undoubtedly been welcome by the local community: engagement with the existing work remains high, and there has been real enthusiasm for and involvement in the new work too. The congregation of the worshipping community is also growing; they too are valuing the collaborative Partnership.
- 2.6 Eastern Synod commends North Avenue Christian Centre as a Mission Project to Mission Council.

Resolution 28

Nominations: Supplementary Report

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd Ray Adams: ray.adams12@btinternet.com Mr George Faris: nominations.secretary@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	See Resolution 28 in the Book of Reports for General Assembly 2020

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	This is the supplementary report referred to in the Nominations Committee report to General Assembly 2020. It provides additions, amendments and corrections.
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	Nominations Committee report to General Assembly 2020 (Book of Reports pp204-223)
Consultation has taken place with...	All synods are represented on the Committee.

Summary of Impact

Financial	None
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Some roles involve ecumenical contact and collaboration.

1. Amendments to published list of nominations to be noted

Mission Council is asked to note the following amendments to the Nominations list in the Book of Reports for General Assembly 2020:

2.2.1 Panel for General Assembly Appointments

Ms Sandra Bailey has resigned from the panel.

5.1 Business Committee

Ms Sandra Bailey has resigned from the committee.

2.4 Disciplinary Process – Commission Panel

The Revd Dr Janet Tollington, should be included in the list of those retiring in 2025.

4.1.4 Assessment Board

Ms Karen Campbell has resigned from the board.

4.5 Worship Reference Group

The Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) should be added as a member.

9.2 Westminster College Board of Governors

The Revd Dr Rick Mearkle will resign from the Westminster College Board of Governors on 31 August 2020 to take up a part-time teaching post at the college.

2. Amendments to published list of nominations for approval

Mission Council is asked to note and approve the following amendments to the Nominations list in the Book of Reports for General Assembly 2020:

4.1.1 Accreditations (CRCW+SCM) Subcommittee

The Secretary for Ministries and the CRCW Development Worker will act as Joint Secretaries, as this new subcommittee builds up experience in handling its remit. A further resolution will be brought to Mission Council or General Assembly, not later than spring 2022, either amending this arrangement or extending it.

4.2.2 Stepwise task and finish group

The latest membership is:

Convenor: Professor Graham Handscomb

Administrator: Stepwise Programme Assistant

Secretary for Education and Learning

Stepwise Programme Manager

Education & Learning Instructional Designer

Project Manager for *Walking the Way*

Education & Learning Programme Officer (by invitation)

Representatives – serving appropriate terms of service:

Children's and youth work committee: Mr Leo Roberts

Mission committee: The Revd Stuart Nixon

Synod training and development officers: The Revd Peter Henderson

Resource Centres for Learning: a tutor

Together Ethnic and Minority URC The Revd Zaidie Orr

Co-opted Members – co-opted by the Education and learning committee for appropriate terms of service:

Mr Pete Atkins (Fresh Expressions) The Revd David Downing

Mr Iain Johnston (Faith in Community Scotland)

8.1 Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Group

- i. The Synod Moderators have nominated the Revd Paul Whittle as the URC co-convenor for a further year.
- ii. The Ecumenical & Interfaith Officer for the National Synod of Scotland (the Revd John Bremner) is a member of the group.
- iii. The Ecumenical & Interfaith Officer for the National Synod of Wales (vacancy) is a member of the group.
- iv. The Revd Roy Fowler is serving until the end of General Assembly 2021.
- v. The Revd Tim Richards is serving until the end of General Assembly 2024.
- vi. Nominated members serve 5-year terms, which may be renewed.

3. New appointments and re-appointments

Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council is asked to make the following additional appointments and re-appointments to those listed in Book of Reports for General Assembly 2020:

Ref	Committee/Group	Name	Role	From	To
2.1	Faith and order committee	The Revd Dr Robert Pope**	Convenor	GA20	GA26
2.4	Disciplinary Process Commission Panel	Mrs Vivien Andrew**	Member	GA20	GA25
2.4	Disciplinary Process Commission Panel	The Revd Andy Braunston†	Member	GA20	GA25
2.7	Safeguarding advisory group	Mrs Jane Dowdell**	Member	GA20	GA23
4.1.4	Assessment Board	Ms Mercy Nimako†	Member	GA20	GA25
4.1.4	Assessment Board	Ms Liz Sharples**	Member	GA20	GA25
4.1.4	Assessment Board	The Revd Samuel Silungwe**	Member	GA20	GA25
5.4.1	Pensions Committee	Ms Joana Marfoh**	Member	GA20	GA24
5.4.1	Pensions Committee	Mr Richard Nunn**	Convenor	GA20	GA22
5.5	United Reformed Church Trust	Mr David Greateorex**	Member	GA20	GA24
5.5	United Reformed Church Trust	The Revd Nick Mark**	Member	GA20	GA24
5.5.1	Church House Management Group	Dr Ian Harrison**	Member	GA20	GA24
5.7	Investment committee	Mr Lyndon Thomas**	Member	GA20	GA24
9.2	Westminster College Board of Governors	The Revd Stuart Scott**	Governor	1 Sep 20	31 Aug 21
10.5	Silcoates School	The Revd Jason McCullagh**	Governor	GA20	GA23
	Thames North Synod	The Revd Dr Andrew Prasad†	Moderator	1 Mar 21	31 May 21
	Southern Synod	The Revd Bridget Banks**	Moderator	1 Sep 20	31 Aug 27

Key: ** = new appointment, † = extension of term of service.

Note: The latest approved Nominations list is available at bit.ly/URCNom. It will be revised shortly after the July 2020 meeting of Mission Council.