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URC131

Published by

The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT

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Produced and printed by the communications department,
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The United Reformed Church, Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT



Minutes of an ordinary meeting of the United Reformed Church General Assembly At Southport, and within the Floral Hall

Friday 8 July 2016 2.30pm
Business session one

The General Secretary invited the Moderator to constitute the Assembly, meeting in Southport on 8 July 2016, with prayer.

The Moderators, the Revd David Grosch-Miller and Mr John Ellis duly constituted Assembly, and led an act of worship assisted by their chaplains, the Revd Dr Carla Grosch-Miller and the Revd Nigel Uden. During worship, the Moderators inducted the Revd Kevin Watson and Mr Alan Yates as Moderators of the General Assembly. Mr Watson and Mr Yates both signed the Assembly Bible.

The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, expressed the thanks of the Church to Mr Ellis and Mr Grosch-Miller, and their chaplains, and presented gifts. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, then addressed Assembly. Following the singing of a hymn, the Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, took the chair.

The General Secretary laid the Roll of Assembly on the table:

ROLL OF ASSEMBLY 2016

Moderators

1. The Revd Kevin Watson
2. Mr Alan Yates

Clerk

3. The Revd Michael Hopkins

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United Reformed Church Chaplain to HM Forces (one place)

47. The Revd Michael Meachin

Northern Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers
(six places)

48. The Revd Elaine Brown
49. The Revd Gordon Brown
50. The Revd Joan Grindrod-Helmn
51. The Revd David Herbert
52. The Revd Rachel Poolman
53. The Revd Matthew Prevett

Lay representatives (six places)

54. Mrs Margaret Brock
55. Mrs Margaret Humberston
56. Mr Robert Jones
57. Mr Luke Noble*
58. Mrs Linda Robson
59. Ms Georgia Whelan*

North Western Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers
(13 places)

60. The Revd Mark Bates
61. The Revd Philip Brooks
62. The Revd David Coaker
63. The Revd Paul Frampton
64. The Revd David Harkison
65. The Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee
66. The Revd Brian Jolly
67. The Revd Catherine Lewis-Smith
68. The Revd Sarah Moore
69. The Revd Pamela Noonan
70. The Revd John Piper
71. The Revd Dr Marion Tugwood
72. The Revd Pamela Ward

Lay representatives (13 places)

73. Mr Nick Andrews
74. Mrs Deborah Brooks
75. Mr Chris Burton
76. Mrs Pam Dent
77. Mr Vernon Dunn
78. Mr Jonnie Hill
79. Mr Walt Johnson
80. Mrs Pauline Jones
81. Miss Charis Ollerenshaw*
82. Mrs Marilyn Piper
83. Dr Adam Scott
84. Miss Connie Sutton*
85. Miss Rachel Tugwood*

126. Mr Geo Shaw
127. Mr Alan Thompson
128. Mrs Janet Thompson
129. Place un lled (reserved for a person aged 26 or under)

West Midlands Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers (11 places)

130. The Revd Maz Allen
131. The Revd Angela Gemmer-Snell
132. The Revd Martin Hardy
133. The Revd Eric Massey
134. The Revd David Miller
135. The Revd Shirley Miller
136. The Revd Richard Pope
137. Mrs Adella Pritchard
138. The Revd Nadene Snyman
139. The Revd Nick Stanyon
140. The Revd David Walton

- 171. Mrs Faith Paulding
- 172. Miss Anne Scar
- 173. Mr Aaron Wood*

South Western Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers
(eight places)

- 174. The Revd Dr. Susan Durber
- 175. The Revd Robert Jennings
- 176. The Revd Bohyun Kim
- 177. The Revd Lythan Nevard
- 178. The Revd Phil Nevard
- 179. The Revd Kathryn Price
- 180. The Revd Dr Hazel Starritt
- 181. The Revd Paul Stokes

Lay representatives (eight places)

- 182 Mr George Faris
- 183 Ms Susan Ingham
- 184 Mrs Gwen Jennings
- 185 Ms Haeun Kim*
- 186. Mr Tony Langmead
- 187. Ms Charmaine Mutare*
- 188. Ms Truida Mutare
- 189. Mr Rychard Winslade

Wessex Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers
(13 places)

- 190. The Revd Nigel Appleton
 - 191. The Revd Cli Bembridge
 - 192. The Revd Heather Cadoux
 - 193. The Revd Gordon Connell
 - 194. The Revd Ruth Dillon
 - 195. The Revd Anne Dove
 - 196. The Revd Tom Grant
 - 197. The Revd Brian Harley
 - 198. The Revd Helen Higgin-Botham
 - 199. The Revd Graham Hoslett
- 20t

- 262. Mr Frank Liddell
- 263. Mrs Hilary Miles
- 264. Miss Sheila Rudofsky
- 265. Mr Clive Snashall
- 266. Miss Penny Thomas
- 267. Mr Robert Upward
- 268. Mr Alistair Wilson
- 269. Mr Cochrane Young
- 270. Mrs Norma Young
- 271. Place un lled

Wales Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers
(ve places)

- 272. The Revd Adrian Bulley
- 273. Ms Kirsty Mabbot
- 274. The Revd Sally Thomas
- 275. The Revd David Salisbury
- 276. The Revd Dr Philip Wall

Lay representatives (ve places)

- 277. Mr Chris Atherton
- 278. Miss Megan Marston-Phipps*
- 279. Mrs Mollie Neate
- 280. Mr Brad Turner
- 281. Miss Victoria Turner*

Scotland Synod

Ministers of Word and Sacraments and church related community workers
(11 places)

- 282. The Revd Jan Adamson
- 283. The Revd Gordon Armstrong
- 284. The Revd Fiona Bennett
- 285. The Revd Mitchell Bunting
- 286. The Revd Catherine McFie
- 287. The Revd Alan McGougan
- 288. The Revd Leslie Morrison
- 289. The Revd Branwen Rees
- 290. The Revd A. Gordon Smith
- 291. The Revd Caro Smyth
- 292. The Revd Jake Tatton

Lay representatives (11 places)

- 293. Mr Bob Christie
- 294. Mr John Collings
- 295. Miss Jessica Danskine*
- 296. Mrs Lynn Danskine
- 297. Miss Victoria Danskine*
- 298. Mr Ben Forsyth
- 299. Dr Ewen Harley
- 300. Ms Morag McLintock
- 301. Dr James Merrilees
- 302. Mrs Lesley Richmond
- 303. Mrs Margaret Sneddon



Business session two

The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair. Councillor Iain Brodie-Browne, Mayor of the Metropolitan Borough of Sefton, welcomed General Assembly to Southport.

The convenor of the mission committee, the Revd Tracey Lewis, invited the Revd David Tatem to present British and Irish ecumenical guests:

The Rt Revd Dr Russell Barr (Church of Scotland)

The Revd Dr Keith Davies (Methodist Church)

The Revd Paul Davis (Congregational Federation)

The Rt Revd Robert Freeman (Church of England)

The Revd Neil Kirkham (Presbyterian Church of Wales)

The Rt Revd Dr Frank Sellar (Presbyterian Church in Ireland)

Bishop Anba Angaelos (General Bishop of the Coptic Church in Great Britain)

Mr Ultan Russell (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales)

The convenor of the mission committee invited the Revd Dr Michael Jagessar to present international ecumenical guests:

The Revd Wayne Hawkins (CWM)

The Revd Dr Majid Abel (Presbyterian Church of Pakistan)

The Revd Chris Ferguson (World Communion of Reformed Churches)

Pfarrer Martin Henninger (Evangelical Church of the Palatinate)

The Revd Peggy Kabonde (United Church of Zambia)

The Revd Dr Karen Georgia Thompson (United Church of Christ, USA)

The Revd Lyim Hong-Tiong (Presbyterian Church of Taiwan)

The Revd Peggy Kabonde and the Rt Revd Robert Freeman made suitable reply to the Moderator's welcome.

1. The West Midlands Synod referred the Revd Neil Eldridge to the disciplinary process. An Assembly commission met on 23 July 2014 and resolved that his name be deleted from the Roll of Ministers. Mr Eldridge appealed, and an appeals commission on 3 December 2014 upheld the decision of the earlier commission. The total cost was £9,380.
2. A synod referred a minister to the disciplinary process. An Assembly commission met on 17 May 2016 and resolved that the minister's name remain on the Roll. There was no appeal and the total cost was £2,173.
3. A synod referred a minister to the disciplinary process. The case was then discontinued by the mandated group, so that it was not eventually necessary for an Assembly commission to meet. There was no cost to the Assembly budget.
4. A synod referred a minister to the incapacity procedure. The minister subsequently proceeded to retire, and the case was discontinued by the commission. The cost was £640.

The Moderators invited their chaplains, the Revd Dr Gwen Collins and the Revd Mark Robinson, to lead closing worship, after which Assembly adjourned until the following morning.

At Southport, and within the Floral Hall

Saturday 9 July 2016 9am Business session three

The Assembly was led in worship by the chaplains, and Bible study was led by the Revd Sohail Ejaz. The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, was in the chair.

The Clerk intimated arrangements for comments on minutes, and that resolutions, 21, 22, 23, and 33 had been removed from en bloc business. Resolutions 21, 22, and 23 would be taken this afternoon with other faith and order committee business, and resolution 33 tomorrow with other mission committee business. The General Secretary addressed Assembly on “the agenda before us”.

The Assembly called for the report of the synod moderators, which was presented by the Revd Paul Whittle, the Revd Ruth Whitehead and the Revd Steve Faber. Assembly was invited to discuss the questions raised in the report around their tables.

Mr Stephen Ball, youth representative, and others, requested that Assembly be given time to discuss the questions raised by children during the opening worship. The Moderator invited Assembly to discuss these questions around their tables.

The Assembly proceeded to elect Moderators of General Assembly 2018-2020. The Clerk explained the voting procedure. The Moderator led Assembly in prayer before

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The Revd Gordon Armstrong intimated that Oakshaw Trinity Church, Paisley, a United Reformed Church/Church of Scotland local ecumenical partnership, has been awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

The minutes of Friday's sessions had been tabled, and the Clerk moved their acceptance, which was unanimously agreed.

The Moderator invited the Revd Chris Ferguson, the General Secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, to address Assembly.

The Assembly called for the report of the faith and order committee. The convenor, the Revd Elizabeth Welch, proposed resolutions 21, 22 and 23:

Resolution 21

General Assembly asks 'What Is the Spirit Saying to the Churches?' and invites local churches, synods and General Assembly, and their committees, to continue prayerfully to ask this question, looking at the points of celebration in their life and the possibilities and challenges in front of the Church.

Resolution 22

General Assembly encourages local churches to be proactive in sharing their good news stories via the communications department, the creative use of social media, synod gatherings and whatever other opportunities present themselves or can be created.

Resolution 23

General Assembly invites the faith and order committee in consultation with other relevant bodies to undertake work arising out of this report and on 'A Statement Concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church', to produce further resources for study and worship, to help churches in their reflection on 'What is the Spirit saying to the churches?'

After extensive discussion, the Moderator ruled that the resolutions be referred to the facilitation group.

The convenor invited the Revd Professor Stephen Orchard to propose resolution 24:

Resolution 24

General Assembly:

- a) welcomes the principles embodied in the Wider Fold proposals;
- b) instructs the faith and order committee to prepare a plan to implement these principles, in consultation with the law and polity advisory group;
- c) instructs the faith and order committee to bring proposals for such a plan to the meeting of Mission Council in May 2017.

After extensive discussion, it was not possible to find consensus, but the resolution was passed recognising disagreement.

The Assembly called for the report of the finance committee. The Treasurer, Mr John Ellis, formally proposed resolution 26 and asked permission for the Venerable Anthony MacRow-Wood, Archdeacon of Dorset, President of Churches' Mutual Credit Union, to speak about the Churches' Mutual Credit Union, which the Moderator granted:

Resolution 26

General Assembly welcomes the participation of the United Reformed Church in the Churches' Mutual Credit Union.

The resolution was passed by consensus.

Assembly adjourned at 4pm.

Business session

Assembly re-convened at 4.30pm. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair. The Assembly called for the report of the Mission Council. The Revd David Grosch-Miller, immediate-past Moderator, presented the report of the Mission Council, and formally proposed resolutions 3 and 4. The Moderator gave permission to the Revd Professor David Thompson, who was not a member of Assembly, to speak to resolutions 3 and 4. The Assembly gave its permission for resolution 3 to be moved in the form in which it had appeared on the order paper:

Resolution 3

General Assembly adopts the following amendments to the Structure of the URC:

5. Appeal, Reference and Constitutional Review
 - 5.1. Any decision of a Church Meeting within an area of ecumenical experiment may be taken by way of appeal to the area meeting. A decision of any other Church Meeting may be taken by way of appeal to the synod on which the local church concerned is represented. Any decision of an ecumenical area meeting having implications for the United Reformed Church or any part thereof may be taken by way of appeal to the synod on which local churches in the area are represented. Any decision of a synod may be taken by way of appeal to the General Assembly.
 - 5.2. A Church Meeting may itself refer any dispute or difference arising within the local church for resolution by the synod. An ecumenical area meeting may refer any dispute or difference arising within the area for resolution by the synod. A synod may refer any dispute or difference arising within the province or nation under its oversight for resolution by the General Assembly.
 - 5.3. The synod may declare any decision of a Church Meeting within the province or nation under its oversight, or any decision of an ecumenical area meeting within that province or nation having implications for the United Reformed Church or any part thereof, which is (or has been reached by a procedure) incompatible with the Basis of Union, the Structure of the URC, the constitution of the ecumenical area (where applicable) or any rule or resolution of Assembly binding on the local church or the ecumenical area to be a nullity. The General Assembly may declare any decision of a Synod to be a nullity on analogous grounds. The review of any decision with a view to declaring it a nullity shall be known as constitutional review.

5.4.

Functions of General Assembly:

New function [numbering to be determined]:

to consider, on the recommendation of synods, applications for recognition as candidates for the ministries of Word and Sacraments and church related community work, to oversee their training, and to determine their eligibility for a call.

This was passed unanimously.

Resolution 6

General Assembly resolves to make the following changes to Paragraph 2(4) A(xxii) of the Structure.

Present version:

- d) Noting that Mission Council has already recognised, on behalf of General Assembly, 'that if a future Assembly were to allow for ministers and members of the United Reformed Church to solemnise same-sex marriages under Scots Law, the Synod of Scotland would be the appropriate council of the URC to approach the Registrar General for Scotland', the General Assembly confirms that it now lies within the competence of the National Synod of Scotland to nominate under Section 9(1A) of the Marriage

Mr Church and the Deputy General Secretary (Mission), proposed resolution 1:

Resolution 1

General Assembly welcomes the work of the Walking the Way steering group and commends it to the wider Church.

At Southport, and within the Floral Hall

Sunday 10 July 2016 9am
Business session six

The Assembly was led in worship by the chaplains, and Bible study was led by several members of Assembly. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair.

The Assembly called for the emergency report of the mission committee on the Church's response to the European Union referendum. The convenor, the Revd

Charles Ernest Burland Cran eld
 Jean Patricia Crawshaw
 John Bridson Cribb
 Douglas Harvey Cummins
 Kenneth Frank Davies
 Donald Dennison
 David Dones
 Edward Philip Eastman
 Derek Arthur Fitch
 Walter Ford
 Christopher Keith Forecast
 Barbara Mary Gates
 David Stanton Goodall
 James Graham
 Cyril Handel Grant
 Leslie Craven Green
 Isabel Hathaway
 Thomas Leslie Haywood
 Michael John Hensman
 Frederick Leon Hill
 Stanley Hodges
 Stanley Horner Hodgson
 James Joseph Horne
 Maurice James Husselbee
 Phyllis Hutchison
 Bryan William Imbush
 Charles John Alexander Innes
 Robert Andrew Irving
 Muriel Anne Je rey
 David Arthur Leonard Jenkins
 Catherine Jones
 Norman Barry Jones
 Thomas Glanville Jones
 Hugh Kember
 Kenneth Frank James Knight
 Andrew Lorimer
 Murdoch MacKenzie
 Andrew John Mackereth
 David Murray Main
 David Hurlstone Mason
 Myrtle McKelvey
 Robert McVey
 Colin John Meynell
 Kathleen Moody
 Bernard Leslie Morrell
 Godfrey Shaw Nichols
 Frederick Adams Noden
 Gertrude Hanna Maria Stephanie Norris
 John Edward Parry
 Walter Phillips
 Brian Godfrey Prior
 Helen Mary Pullin
 Derek Norman Richmond
 Alvinza Riddoch
 Victor George Ridgewell
 John Rutherford
 Sheila Mary Scarr
 Donald Scho eld

Alan Philip Frederick Sell
Jean Simpkin
Dora Helen Smith
Hubert John Smith
Kenneth Maltus Smith
Nellie Smith
Norman Harold Smith
Lawrence S Squires
Derek Hugh Stockwell
Ronald William George Talmey
John Frederick Waghorn
Zamantha Claire Walker
Alfred Bentley Webster
David Alexander Welbrock
Stanley James Whi en
Alan Christopher White
Edward Glyn Williams
Frances Williams
Robert James Woods
George Neilson Wotherspoon

Sunday 9 July 2016

The convenor of the Mission Committee, the Revd Tracey Lewis, proposed resolutions 31 and 32 and asked the permission of Assembly to amend the report as detailed on the order paper. The Assembly declined the deletion of words in paragraph 2.5 but accepted the addition of a new paragraph 2.6:

2.6

We recognise the significance of the December 2015 Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). One of its outcomes is to aim to hold the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels recognising that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change.

Resolution 31

General Assembly adopts the Environmental Policy, and encourages all committees, synods and local churches to do their best to implement it.

The resolution was agreed by consensus.

Resolution 32

General Assembly resolves to appoint a task group until 31 July 2022 in the first instance, of four persons, to be appointed by the nominations committee and funded from the mission committee budget, to monitor the United Reformed Church's progress toward meeting its commitment to reduce its carbon footprint, reporting to the mission committee.

The task group's specific remit shall be to:

- a) compile, produce or commission resources for worship and teaching related to themes contained in the Environmental Policy;
- b) consider the budgetary implications of implementing the Environmental Policy;
- c) commission a suitable individual or body to calculate the Church's carbon footprint, enabling a benchmark to be set against which future reductions in this footprint may be made; and
- d)

Following discussion, this business was remaindered.

The Assembly called for synod resolutions and the Revd Paul Whittle, the Revd Jane Weedon, and the Revd Nigel Appleton moved resolutions 37A, 37B, and 37C.

Resolution 37A

General Assembly resolves to:

- a) commend the Church of Scotland Report 'The Inheritance of Abraham' (revised version) for study by United Reformed churches;
- b) endorse the conclusion of 'The Inheritance of Abraham' and reject claims that scripture offers any peoples a privileged claim for possession of a particular territory;
- c) commend 'A Moment of Truth, a word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering, Kairos Palestine 2009' for study by United Reformed churches and encourage the formation of Kairos communities, either within individual congregations or ecumenically;
- d) urge the UK government and the European Union to do all that is within their power to ensure that human rights are respected and international law is upheld in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories;
- e) urge the UK Government and the European Union to exert, through sanctions or other effective means that address the inequality of power between the parties, international pressure on Israel to end the occupation of Palestinian territory and the blockade of Gaza and allow a just peace to be achieved.

Resolution 37B is identical to paragraphs c), d) and e) of 37A.

Resolution 37C

General Assembly resolves to:

- a) commend the Church of Scotland Report 'The Inheritance of Abraham' (revised version) and 'A Moment of Truth, a word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering, Kairos Palestine 2009' for study by United Reformed churches and synods.
- b) urge the UK government and the European Union to do all that is within their power to ensure that human rights are respected and international law is upheld by all parties in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.
- c) develop and deepen our existing work around these issues so as to enable the United Reformed Church to adopt a programme of dialogue and action with partner churches, interfaith partners and public authorities.

Under standing order 4.10, Assembly voted, and resolution 37C received significantly more than 50% of the votes cast and became the substantive motion.

Business session eight

The Assembly resumed at 4.40pm. The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair. The Assembly called for the report of the education and learning committee, and the convenor, the Revd Professor Neil Messer, invited Assembly to thank Mrs Heather Skidmore, retiring after many years of service with TLS. The Moderator greeted her and expressed the thanks of the Assembly.

Professor Messer intimated that Mr Lawrence Moore had resigned from the post of Director of the Windermere Centre after 14 years, to explore a vocation as a non-stipendiary minister and to offer his time to support missional discipleship on a freelance basis. The Moderator expressed the thanks of the Assembly to Mr Moore.

Dr Messer proposed resolution 13:

Resolution 13

In the light of the discussion of the papers on expectations of ministers, General Assembly:

- a) directs Mission Council to agree a statement on the expectations of ministers of Word and Sacraments;
- b) instructs the ministries and education and learning committees to carry out the necessary consultation and drafting work to enable Mission Council to fulfil this task.

After extensive discussion, the resolution was passed recognising disagreement.

The en bloc resolutions were moved by the General Secretary:

Resolution 2

General Assembly appoints Mr Ian Hardie as Treasurer of the Church from 1 July 2017 for six years.

Resolution 8

General Assembly notes the closures listed, with praise to God for the worship and witness offered by these fellowships across the years.

Resolution 9

In order that the Book of Reports should be as accessible as possible, General Assembly requests that every report on which a decision is invited should include a summary of its main points in not more than 250 words on a cover sheet. Assembly gives to the General Secretary, as editor, authority to vary this guideline in appropriately exceptional cases.

Resolution 10

Assembly agrees that the General Assembly in 2018 will meet in the Albert Hall, Nottingham from 6 to 9 July 2018 or at such other place or on such other date as may be necessary.

Resolution 11

General Assembly changes the name of the communication and editorial committee to the communications committee with immediate effect, and authorises any consequent changes.

Resolution 12

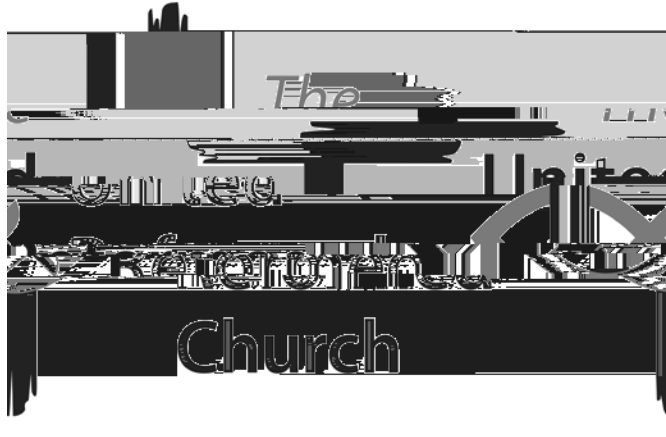


- d) The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church continues to support ecumenical engagements towards peace and reconciliation of the Korean Peninsula. These actions include promoting the campaign

Resolution 21

General Assembly:

a)



At Southport, and within the Floral Hall

Monday 11 July 2016 9am Business session nine

The Assembly was led in the worship by the chaplains, and Bible study was led by Ms Karen Campbell.

The Moderator, Mr Alan Yates, was in the chair.

The Moderator offered the thanks of the Assembly to committee convenors who were standing down, and to the Revd Lis Mullen, retiring as Moderator of Northern Synod, and Mr Andrew Grimwade, retiring as Chief Finance Officer.

The Assembly called for the report of the ministries committee. The Deputy General Secretary, the Revd Richard Church (Discipleship), intimated that he had been asked by the General Secretary to convene the committee since the resignation of the Revd Gethin Rhys in March 2016, and thanked Mr Rhys for his work.

Mr Church apologised that the Revd Alison Micklem's name had not been included with the newly ordained Ministers in the list on page 146.

The Secretary for Ministries, the Revd Craig Bowman, read a statement from the Revd David Bedford, retiring as convenor of the Retired Ministers Housing sub-committee.

Mr Church proposed resolutions 28 and 29:

Resolution 28

General Assembly notes the projections for numbers of stipendiary ministers likely to be available and stipendiary posts likely to be fundable through the Ministry and Mission Fund until 2025, and urges synods to use the principles outlined in 'Challenge to the Church' in deploying the stipendiary posts allocated to them, alongside non-stipendiary ministers, elders, local church leaders and other lay ministries.

This was agreed by consensus.

Resolution 29

- a) Assembly reaffirms its aim of funding at least 26 stipendiary CRCWs across the URC with a minimum of two CRCWs per synod. While the total number of CRCW stipends paid remains below 26, synods may have three stipendiary CRCWs in their synod for a limited period without affecting their overall deployment numbers or number of stipends allocated for the ministry of Word and Sacraments. Each CRCW post shall require approval by the church related community work programme subcommittee on the basis of an application by the relevant synod.
- b)

Resolution 14

General Assembly agrees that the existing guidance on Presidency at the Sacraments (The Manual, Section F) be amended to read:

The pattern of presidency at the sacraments if the minister in pastoral charge is not available should be as follows:

- a) the Church Meeting may invite another Minister of Word and Sacraments (including a retired minister who has expressed willingness to do so);
- b) if such a minister is not available, the Church Meeting may invite an elder (or accredited lay preacher) authorised by the synod, in accordance with the provisions of §25 of the Basis of Union: elders of the local church and accredited lay preachers regularly conducting worship there should be considered first;
- c) authorisation for such presidency by the synod, normally of members from within the congregation concerned, should be for an initial period of three to five years (according to synod judgement), including a probationary year on first appointment, with the possibility of renewal. Before renewal there should be consultation by the synod with the congregation, and a review of its needs.

In response to questions raised in the debate, the convenor agreed to converse with the ministries committee on the question of the authorisation of church related community workers.

The resolution was passed recognising disagreement.

The convenor formally proposed resolutions 15 to 19 together:

Resolution 15

General Assembly agrees that synods are recommended to provide regular support and guidance for each church without an authorised elder within its membership; and also for authorised elders, for example by holding an annual meeting where experiences can be shared.

Resolution 16

General Assembly agrees that the ministries committee be invited to develop a specific code of conduct for authorised elders and lay preachers; and that those concerned agree to be bound by it before embarking on their ministry.

Resolution 17

General Assembly agrees that a list of those authorised elders and lay preachers whose authority to serve has been withdrawn be maintained by the General Secretariat, to a.y(a)2.6(w)-5|2.6(h)-7.3t and gui[(S)-3.2(e)-5.3-12.1(e)-ral

Resolution 19

General Assembly agrees that further attention be given by the ministries and education and learning committees to the possibility of expanding the concept of non-stipendiary ministry to include once more the original pattern of team non-stipendiary ministry.

After discussion, resolutions 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 were all passed recognising disagreement.

The Revd Alison Micklem registered her dissent from Resolutions 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19.

The Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson, took the chair.

The Assembly returned to consideration of the synod resolutions on Israel and Palestine. The Moderator invited the Revd Matthew Prett to present the report from the facilitation group. Mr Prett moved a revised form of words for resolution 37:

Resolution 37

General Assembly instructs mission committee to explore and develop further our existing work around the issues of the Israel/Palestine situation with indigenous churches, interfaith and ecumenical partners and public authorities, including:

- dialogue and action;
- peacebuilding;
- justice and security for all;

in order to enable synods, local churches and individuals to become more aware

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The chaplain offered prayer for our armed forces.

The Clerk proposed resolutions 42 and 43, unfinished business from the 2014 General Assembly, which had been agreed between representatives of URC Youth and the law and polity advisory group as a way of recognising that young people who were fully involved in the life of the United Reformed Church might not yet be Church members, but which prevented a widespread introduction of non-members onto governance bodies. The resolutions also correct an anomaly over the age defining youth. Mr Hopkins sought the permission of Assembly to move the resolutions in an amended form to that presented on the order paper, which was agreed.

Resolution 42

General Assembly resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church as described:

a) Membership of Synods:

Current wording:

2(4)(i) Two young people, being members of the United Reformed Church,

Resolution 43

General Assembly resolves to amend the membership of Mission Council agreed in Resolution 19F of General Assembly 2014, such that the United Reformed Church Youth representatives on Mission Council shall be people who are actively involved and engaged with the church at local, synod or assembly level, and have the con dence of their local church or the con dence of either United Reformed Church Youth or their synod's youth forum, committee or equivalent.

This was passed unanimously.

The Assembly called for the Address to the Throne, which was presented by the immediate past Moderator, Mr John Ellis:

To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty.

The General Assembly of the United Reformed Church meeting in Southport sends Your Majesty its warmest wishes and congratulations on the occasion of Your Majesty's 90th birthday celebrations. We express our thanks to Your Majesty for your unrelenting and steadfast service to the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth over the 64 years of your reign, and pray for the continued health of the Royal Family in the year to come.

Among the many ways in which your birthday will be celebrated this year, we particularly appreciate the reminders that you have sought to live your life as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. We join with many others in expressing our gratitude for a life lived in total dedication to the needs of others. Your Majesty's profound commitment and diligence to the call placed upon your life continues to inspire those who share your Christian faith.

Your Majesty's constancy has undoubtedly helped to bring calm and con dence to the nation at a time of continuing political change. The desire of the majority of those who voted in the recent referendum for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union presents Your Majesty's United Kingdom with one of the most signi cant changes to its political constitution during your long reign. At this time of uncertainty about what the political future of the United Kingdom may hold, we pray for wisdom; for those who now nd their livelihood in question; for those of your ministers who must now plan and implement the United Kingdom's departure from the Union; and for us as individuals, that we might be gracious with those from whom we hold di ering political views. As Christians, we will still be seeking to build bridges not barriers between peoples, whatever the political structures in operation.

The General Assembly a rmed the importance of our relationships with Christians across the continent of Europe. It also a rmed the value of being a diverse and multicultural society, and particularly the value and contribution to the United Kingdom made by European Union nationals who are now experiencing a time of uncertainty.

The United Reformed Church is deeply concerned about the political and humanitarian catastrophe taking place across the Middle East and Europe that has seen millions of Syrian, Iraqi and Jordanian people displaced as a result of con ict and civil unrest. We are distressed by the rising death toll caused by the Syrian Civil War and have called on your ministers to use their in uence and wisdom to bring an end to the hostilities in that country. Our Church is mindful that this is a crisis that has both international and domestic dimensions, and that the United Kingdom can and must do far more to welcome and relocate those eeing violence and persecution. Christ's call to love our neighbour has never felt so relevant.

We share with His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales a growing concern for the plight of religious minorities who face discrimination on the grounds of their faith in places such as Pakistan, Nigeria, Iraq and China. As Nonconformists, we are aware of the precious privilege of tolerance of religious minorities in this country, of which this Address is itself a longstanding symbol. This makes us acutely aware of the limits placed upon religious freedom by extreme interpretations of Islam, which are not

Report of an Appeal to the General Assembly by Mr Lisandro Ca aratto, against a decision of the Thames North Synod

1. Mr Lisandro Ca aratto, a member of Queen's Park United Reformed Church, appealed against the following decision of the Thames North Synod:
On 12 March 2016 Thames North Synod agreed to the closure of Queen's Park United Reformed Church on 20 March 2016.
2. In his letter giving reasons for making his appeal, Mr Ca aratto expressed concern that:
 - 'There have been a breach of URC policies and procedures during the closing process lead by synod's representatives.
 - A number of members of Queen's Park United Reformed Church have expressed their opposition to this closure on 9 March 2016.
 - There have been a breach of URC policies and procedures during the exposition and discussion of this matter at synod's meeting held on 12 March 2016.'
 (Letter to General Secretary dated 17 March 2016).

3. The appeal followed the procedure laid down under the Structure of the United Reformed Church paragraph 5 and the Rules of Procedure paragraph 9.

4. Both the appellant and the synod agreed that the appeal should be heard by a specially appointed Commission of the General Assembly, which would

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9. The hearing took place at the London Welsh Centre, 157-163 Grays Inn Road, on 22 June 2016. The Commission began at 12.30 pm and completed its business at 4.30 pm. Before the applicant was invited to make his statement the convenor explained the process, including the fact that the panel was acting on behalf of General Assembly and there was no right of appeal against the decision. The convenor invited all present to join in saying the Lord's Prayer together.

10. Mr Ca aratto presented his case, adding to his written statement with some additional background information which was included in the papers which had not been admitted.

11. The Reverend James Fields responded on behalf of the synod, occasionally seeking confirmation of facts from Mr Simon Fairnington.

12. Members of the Commission questioned both parties. The convenor thanked the parties for their time and submissions. Mr Ca aratto, Mr Fields, and Mr Fairnington were asked to leave the room while the panel considered the submissions of the parties.

13. After discussion, the parties were recalled, and the convenor read out the decision:

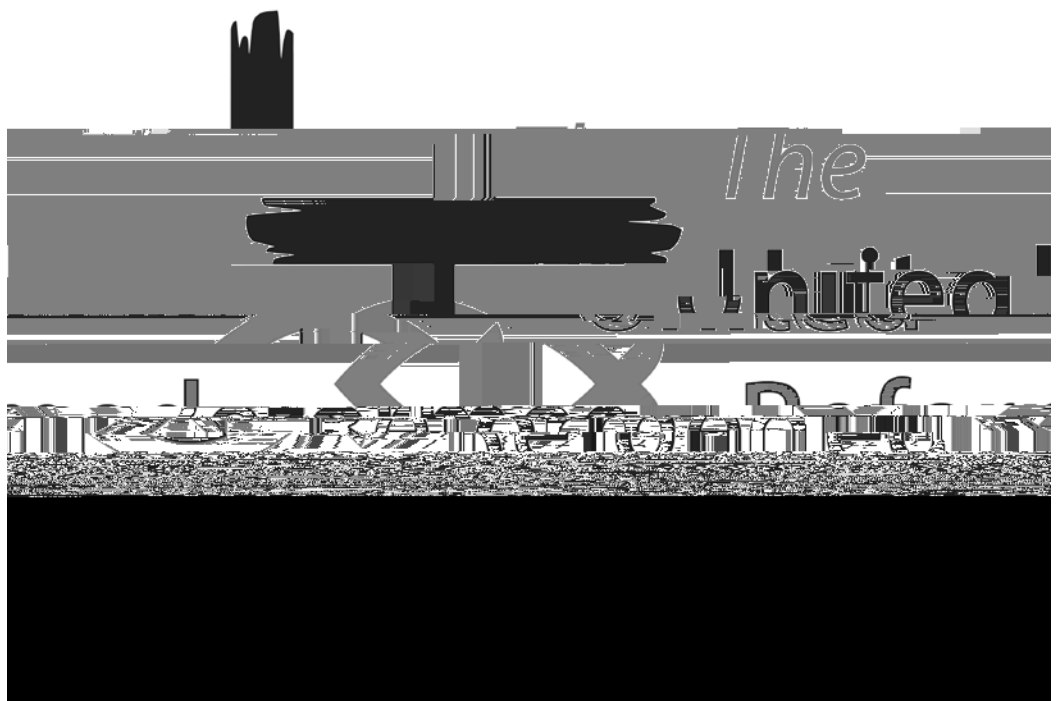
14. Opening remark

14.1 Our task has not been made easy by the lack of reliable minutes for Church Meetings leading up to the decision to close Queen's Park United Reformed Church. The Commission would have been helped had a complete set of approved minutes been available. We note that there were problems at the Queen's Park church in the minuting of meetings, and we believe that the synod could have done more to ensure that minutes were taken appropriately.

We regard appropriate administrative s]TJ T* [(s)nte7.i1.5(a0-6.9(w(a)34d18-1.3(2(h)T(in)-09dc

- 15.3 The Commission has been offered no evidence to support the claim that there has been a breach of URC policies and procedures during the exposition and discussion of this matter at the Thames North Synod meeting held on 12 March 2016.
- 15.4 The Assembly Commission, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, therefore unanimously dismisses the appeal of Mr Caratto against the decision of the Thames North Synod on 12 March 2016, regarding the closure of Queen's Park United Reformed Church, on all counts.
16. All those present stood, joined hands, and concluded the meeting by saying the Grace.

22 June 2016





Lingdale United Reformed Church

Lingdale Congregational Church came into being within a few years of the village of Lingdale being established as the residence for the miners who arrived at that time from all over the country to work at the newly-opened ironstone mine. The miners had to build their own village and community, and, with the gift of land from the

The Swedenborg Church worshipped on a Sunday afternoon in the building and shared use of the hall for social functions

The church, which met in Wilbraham St Ninian's United Reformed Church in South Manchester, and Mr Braunston, were drawn to the URC and left the Metropolitan Community Church in 2013. Following Mr Braunston's acceptance to train for URC ministry, the congregation formally united with their hosts, doubling their membership and elders' meeting. Wilbraham St Ninian's now has two congregations – a more traditional morning service and the LGBT-focused afternoon congregation which is called the Metropolitan Congregation. The mission project designation helped the congregation to become part of the URC and was seen as a betrothal which led to marriage with their hosts.

Mersey Synod Beechwood West Church

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Hallwood Parish – in Runcorn, Cheshire, consisting of St Mark's and Bethesda churches – was a thriving United Reformed/Anglican/Methodist LEP with a team of three full-time clergy and several lay preachers from the three denominations.

Beechwood West Church, having met for a monthly family service in the local school for several years, was set up by members of St Mark's in 1996 as a church plant meeting weekly with the particular aim of developing relationships with the school and uniformed organisations meeting there. Some good work with young people was done through these links, and the annual Christingle services, held in the local community centre, were always well attended – probably the highlight of their ministry. Beechwood West members have also been involved over the years in parish-based activities such as the weekly lunch club, monthly Messy Tuesday and summer prayer visiting alongside members from the other two churches.

However, the hoped-for growth did not materialise and, along with so many other churches, the membership of all three congregations in the parish has declined.

An ecumenical review of the LEP was carried out, beginning in November 2013. This was conducted by the ecumenical officers of the three constituent denominations (URC, Anglican, Methodist) who consulted widely across the three congregations and with denominational clergy. The outcome of this review was that Beechwood West would be closed.

The final service was held on 30 March 2014. We give thanks for all those who were touched by the ministry of the church and we pray that the seeds that have been planted will be fruitful.

Upton United Reformed Church

Upton United Reformed Church was founded as Upton Presbyterian Church in 1899 by members of West Kirby Presbyterian Church. The congregation grew with the growth of Upton village and surrounding neighbourhoods in mid-Wirral, and was at its most vibrant during the 33-year ministry of the Revd Victor Logan (1936-69) especially after the Second World War, which saw a large influx of migrants, especially from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, to the booming industries of Birkenhead. This was a time of large Boys' and Girls' Brigades companies, of a full range of church organisations and a broad range of leadership experience and enthusiasm to support them.

The URC years since 1972 have seen fairly continuous decline in church and organisations' membership from a peak in the early 1970s, as family social habits have

Wadsley United Reformed Church

Wadsley United Reformed Church, She eld, closed on 19 July 2014 after 105 years because of a declining membership. At the time of the nal service there were only six members in regular attendance; two of those were in their 90s, the church treasurer was 85.

The church, formerly known as Hillsborough Congregational, housed several community groups including a Scout group, which had been running for 80 years, two parent and toddler groups and a Kumon school. Fortunately, these groups were able to be accommodated at Hillsborough Trinity Methodist Church where the Wadsley congregation is now worshipping.

East Midlands Synod Chaddesden United Reformed Church

Chaddesden United Reformed Church used to be one of the Churches of Christ. When it rst opened, meetings were held at Reginald Street School in Derby. The opening service was on Sunday 9 May 1920 with 17 members. In June 1924, the church moved to the cooperative hall on Nightingale Road.

The current building in Chaddesden began being built in July 1936 with the foundation stone being laid on 16 January 1937 and the dedication taking place on 1 May 1937. Worship was held weekly until December 2014 when members decided to close. A nal service was held on 29 March 2015.

Over the years several baptisms took place in the baptistery. Infant baptisms and

During the Second World War, the service of the church was maintained by a faithful few, although at times the Sunday school scholars outnumbered the membership. After the war in 1948, Hill Top became a developing district and a piece of land was acquired with a view to extending the use of the church. At first it had a sectional building from RAF Cosford, which proved invaluable. In May 1971 the foundation stone was laid for the Sunday school – which included a kitchen, toilets, a meeting room, a hall and a stage – and was completed later that year at a cost of £12,000.

In 1996, the church celebrated its centenary with a large number of events throughout the year. In 1998 the hall roof was replaced and the hall extension had a sloping roof built to replace its flat roof.

Over the years the church has hosted or organised: Sunday school queens and captains, boats down to Barlow carnival where prizes were won, Spring and Christmas 'fayres', flower festivals, concerts, guilds, mother and toddler groups, parents associations, children's parties, keep fit classes, jumble sales, church services of all types, 'coffee, carols and candlelight' events, baptisms, weddings, funerals, a church bus for 24-hour prayer and many more events.

Over the past 20 years membership declined and the church building deteriorated – the extension roof developed leaks. The last service in the church was held on Easter Sunday, 12 April 2009, after which the premises were demolished. The fellowship continued to worship in Guideacre, just up the road, and some groups still met in people's homes.

It was decided in December 2014 that the congregation would not continue with worship at Hill Top and would transfer membership to St Andrews LEP Church at Pentand Road. Hill Top's last service was on Sunday 8 March 2015 at a member's house on Longacre Road, which was the nearest we could get to where it all started 119 years earlier. The building at Hill Top may have closed, but the members will carry on the work.

Thurnby and Bushby United Reformed Church

There were weddings of note too, like when two brothers married two sisters. The sisters were the daughters of Anstey URC's minister, the Revd Ellis Bell, and his wife, Alice, who was former matron of the Vista Kathleen Rutland Home and who duly became a member at Thurnby and Bushby URC.

Up to its closure, the church's Bible Society Action Group was still working through 'Bibles for Children'. The church merged with Abbots Road URC, Leicester on 1 February 2015.

West Midlands Synod

No closures to report in this period.

Eastern Synod

Eastwood United Reformed Church

Hugh refused to sign the Act of Uniformity in 1662, and, after being ejected from his living, he continued to lead a group of like-minded people from the parish; they met at night in local barns and this was the beginning of the Independent Chapel.

By 1700 the 'Independents' were worshipping openly and had the first Nonconformist building in the parish. By 1779, with a membership exceeding 400, the first stage of the present building opened.

A day school was opened in 1848 at the back of the chapel and, after concerted fundraising during of the Revd TB Sainsbury's ministry, the school moved into a new building next door. Older children were now accepted, although only attended when not required to gather the harvest or plait straw. This provision of education for village children continued for nearly 100 years until just before the Second World War, when the pupils were transferred to the newer C of E-assisted school in the village, or to the senior school in Pan eld Lane, Braintree.

The school room was used by the army during the Second World War, when an X-Ray unit was installed for their use. The Congregational Chapel also had its first female minister in 1941 when the Revd Hilda Pettman BA was inducted on 27 February.

The year 1948 saw another change in ministry for the church when they began to share a minister with Wethers eld Congregational Church, which continued until 1967. From then until 1988, the church had a local leader, the previous minister's widow, following which Finching eld and Wethers eld became part of a wider group of Braintree churches.

During the late 1980s, under the ministry of the Revd David Bending, much work was done to see how the building could be altered to become more adaptable and comfortable. David moved to a new pastorate in 1990 but the alterations he planned for were completed in 1991 and 1992, when he and his wife Barbara were able to return for the reopening service.

In 1997, Finching eld transferred to the Dunmow-Thaxted Group. For several years now

A playgroup and a mother and toddler group were run for local families and their children. The church hosted Brownies, Cubs, Pilots and a variety of other children's activities. An active Friday night drama group provided entertainment.

A very large and successful Bible holiday club was held at the church until it outgrew the premises and transferred to the three churches in the area – the numbers requiring the use of all three premises.

Good ecumenical relationships with both Blessed Sacrament and St Andrews saw shared Christian Aid lunches and healing services.

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Bishopsworth United Reformed Church

Morcombelake United Reformed Church

In 1830, two members of Charmouth Congregational Church, Dorset, hearing of the splendid work of the Home Missionary Society, offered to provide a portion of the necessary cost if the Society would send a missionary to work in and around the neighbourhood of the adjoining village of Morcombelake. The Revd James Hargreaves was called to this work and the chapel at Morcombelake was opened on New Year's Day 1832. Subsequently it was enlarged in 1840 and a school room added in 1863.

The Revd Hargreaves died in November 1869 and the next minister, the Revd Samuel Giblett served the church for 33 years. A succession of ministers followed, often shared with the church at Charmouth but with frequent gaps during which the church relied on the support of the Dorset Congregational Association.

The church and school room were renovated between 1963 and 1965, during the ministry of the Revd HEJ Vickery. However, by the time the church became part of the Axminster pastorate in 1996, the church building was giving cause for concern and the decision was taken (si)-3.6(r)-17.ersio2315ngg cause f(Ahrreuhod a-5.8(p)-13iisowd2-4.82.5(u)-8(r)-

After much consideration, the church determined that the best way forward was to close and put the remaining energy, talents and material resources to work in other fellowships. And so we go, to love and serve the Lord.

Newbury United Reformed Church closed on 11 April 2015.

Thames North Synod

St Mark's Church

In 1952, plans started for a Presbyterian Church plant on the new estate being built in Aylesbury. Mrs Adamson laid the foundation stone for St Mark's in 1959. It was conveniently a few minutes' walk from Aylesbury Station and the main shopping centre.

The early ministers were: the Revd AE Dalton (from 1950 to 1954), the Revd JR Alexander Crossan (from 1955 to 1962), the Revd GA Bannister (from 1963 to 1968) and the Revd IGJ Kardos (from 1969 to 1971). The next minister recorded is the Revd Dennis Ferguson, who came from the Church of Scotland and was at St Mark's from 1973 to 1987. (He died in 2013 at the age of 89.) The church was then part of the newly formed United Reformed Church.

Mr Ferguson was followed in 1989 by the Revd Alex Jacob. According to Mr Jacob, St Mark's was a lively church at that time. The membership consisted of Presbyterian Scots and a large number of second generation Bangladeshis; Mr Jacob was surprised to find that the church was so cross-cultural. At the beginning of the 90s, a large extension was built on the back to provide a hall. An outside wall of the church contains memorial plaques to many of St Mark's elders and members.

Good relationships were formed with the Anglican Church of the Good Shepherd and Southcourt Baptist Church. Mr Jacob moved to another ministry in 1997 and the church was left in vacancy. Ian Walker and his wife Christine led the church, but Ian had a full time job and they didn't live near, so the church became less active. By 2005, the Aylesbury Vale Community Church (AVCC) had set up and was looking for more permanent premises in which to meet; they started meeting at St Mark's.

When Ian Walker left, the leadership of AVCC, Alan Woodhouse and his wife, agreed to become elders of St Mark's and to help them to continue having their own services and church life. Others from AVCC also had joint membership at St Mark's. Gradually, the numbers attending St Mark's decreased and in 2013 Mr Woodhouse suggested that all services were shared with AVCC. This led to the end of St Mark's as a separate church. Some of the remaining members continued with AVCC, but most moved to the Church of the Good Shepherd. AVCC purchased the church building and manse through the Thames North Trust in 2012. The AVCC is now a thriving church on the St Mark's site.

The St Mark's accounts were closed, and, at a special Church Meeting on 9 March 2014, it was agreed that St Mark's URC had closed.

Southern Synod

Ash

In 1807, it was decided by members of the Independent Church in Sandwich, Kent, that members living in and about the village of Ash should have their own church. It would be an Independent church but Sandwich would have a guiding hand in the calling of a minister and the purchase or sale of property.

The Ash church grew in numbers and they wanted to be a church in their own right. Sandwich was not happy with this but in 1859, the declaration of faith was signed and the reorganised church was formed with the Revd John Barton Dadd becoming the minister. In 1869, the church building was enlarged to the building that now exists. The date for commencement of the building of the hall is 1882.

During its lifetime, Ash was linked with many local churches including Sandwich and Deal. In the year 2000, Ash came under the pastorate of St Andrews United Reformed Church, Canterbury. When the minister moved on, the link with Canterbury ended and Ash was offered the opportunity to join the Thanet Group. Members felt that Thanet was too distant and the Church remained independent within the East Kent Synod Area.

With in depth preaching and teaching, prayer and Bible study plus outreach into the village, members tried to grow the congregation; sadly this did not happen. With the increasing cost of repairs to old buildings, the small congregation decided they could no longer continue. A closing service was held on the 19 September 2015.

Ashburnham

Ashburnham United Reformed Church in East Sussex closed on 31 December 2013.

Robertson Street

Robertson Street United Reformed Church held its final service on 30 December 2012, where two people in particular whose families had significant impact on the life of the church were present.

The church was founded by Daniel Smith in 1856 and in the 19th century much evangelistic work was undertaken.

The old church was demolished and a new one erected in 1884 to seat up to 1,000 people. The Sunday school and other groups were housed in the Institute in Priory Street.

Robertson Street had a long history of church planting and many churches in the surrounding villages owed their origins to Robertson Street.

By 1943, membership had fallen to 238. When the Revd AE Gould came to preach with a view in December 1944, there were 65 people present at the morning service and

In 1978, the Revd Brian Bowyer came to the church and was able to see the church through difficult days when major faults were discovered in the roof. For a long while, the sanctuary was closed, with the congregation worshipping in the church hall below. An amazing fundraising effort saw the roof repaired in time for a wedding within the church family to take place in the sanctuary as planned.

A ministry team was then developed for the area and different ministries developed. However, the local churches reflected the national trend of declining numbers, and new patterns of providing ministry for the area were constantly being sought. The membership of Robertson Street fell from 42 in January 2010 to 28 at the time of closure in December 2012, mainly as a result of deaths.

From January 2012, the congregation began exploring its future, ahead of the Local Mission & Ministry Review (LMMR) process due to take place later in the year. Given that the prospects of receiving a minister were slim (due to demands on URC ministry at this time), that there were major problems with the building which would be expensive to make good, and that there were three other URCs in the town as well as churches of other denominations – all of whom would welcome new faces, the congregation began to question whether the best move might be to join one of the other churches. The congregation was divided on this issue, with some members favouring a move to another church and others favouring the closure of the church. The congregation was divided on this issue, with some members favouring a move to another church and others favouring the closure of the church.

Richmond Green

Richmond Green was initially a Presbyterian church which started as a preaching station in 1876. Its first minister, Mr Mauchlin, was ordained and inducted in January 1879. A hall was constructed by the end of 1881, followed by a new church building, which opened on 19 May 1885.

Following the premature death of Mr Mauchlin, there was a series of ministries by distinguished Scotsmen when the congregation slowly, but steadily, grew. During the First World War, the church was fortunate to have a leader able to take them through those dark days when they lost members in the conflict.

In the following years, the life of the congregation continued very much the same with peaks and troughs. After a period of decline in 1935, another young Scotsman accepted the call. The Revd John Kennedy proved to be the man for the job, setting about rebuilding the congregation, and was well suited to see the congregation through war years when again members were lost on active service.

Regrettably in 1944, Mr Kennedy died, but during successive ministries the congregation's membership grew and, as well taking a lead part in the formation of the Richmond Club for the Housebound – a precursor of day care centres for the elderly, the church extended its hall premises. Subsequently, the congregation was guided into the new United Reformed Church, having embraced this change without hesitation. In 1980, with reducing numbers and high repair costs, the congregation sought a solution; after 25 years this was achieved in August 2006 when the congregation moved into a new building.

Unfortunately, the congregation continued to decline, and in 2014, when the minister announced her retirement, the few remaining members decided to close and seek fellowship elsewhere.

Richmond Green church closed on 30 August 2015.

Robertsbridge

The decision to close the church was taken at the Church Meeting on 2 June 2013. The elders shared John 12:24 with the Meeting, which had been given to them as a challenge following much prayer. After prayer, discussion and consideration it was concluded that the church should close.

However, within two days, the minister of Hawkhurst Baptist Church in Kent, the Revd Bob Kirby, met to see if there was any way forward and at the members meeting of 14 July 2013, the previous decision was rescinded. Talks began with the Baptist Union and the end result was a decision to close as a United Reformed Church and become affiliated with the Baptist Union. Our closing service was led by the Moderator, the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith who spoke from Haggai and 1 Peter 2:1-9. The church congregation continued to meet and worship in new premises, under a different umbrella.

It is interesting to note the history of the church which opened in October 1881. Mr Edwin Piper a local builder, having left the Wesleyan Methodist Society, began a Sabbath school and service in a cottage room rented for the purpose. Twice each Sunday and once during the week, Mr Piper taught the Word of God, but realising his increasing age, and wanting to put his work on a permanent footing, he applied for Robertsbridge to be included in the group of villages under the evangelistic care of Mr Morris, Robertson Street Congregational Church, Hastings.

Mr Piper purchased land and undertook the building contract, without profit; each stone in the front was laid by him. The church opened in October 1881, and at the opening service Mr Piper shared Luke 2:29-32. His joy was complete and he died two weeks later.

An interesting fact to note about the building is that the side door is larger than normal. This was to allow the itinerant preacher who rode to the village to stable his horse in the back while the service was in progress.

A further interesting point to note about the church (people) is that it began under a Wesleyan, continued as Congregational, then URC and is now under the oversight of the Baptist Union. The witness in the village has never stopped but instead moved forward each time as the Lord led. As we focus on prayer and the Word, God will always lead and direct; we are called to obey.

Robertsbridge church closed as a URC on 5 September 2015.

Sittingbourne and Milton Regis

The Sittingbourne church traces its origin to the Great Revival and the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield. Initially, a Wesleyan Methodist Church was founded in the town but a split developed when a group began to favour the teachings of Whitefield. The latter formed a separate congregation in 1835 and eventually associated themselves with the Congregational Union.

In 1814, the chapel had to be enlarged and as numbers continued to grow. In 1860, a new building was erected. Church life continued to flourish during the last century and famous preachers such as C H Spurgeon were welcomed into the pulpit to preach. In 1972, Crescent Hall was added to the rear of the church after the local authority acquired the Sunday school site. It was also in 1972 that the Congregational Church and Presbyterians joined together to become the United Reformed Church.

The 1950s saw a period of repairs to the church and the rebuilding of the hall. The Revd Donald Hilton became the minister and in the late 1950s and early 1960s the church

was no formal act of worship. Mr John Abberley continued to keep the redundant chapel and graveyard in good order over many years. The year 2015 marked the formal closure of Carmel United Reformed Church, Nantmel.

Christchurch United Reformed Church

Nominations committee report

This committee nominates to Assembly the names of people to serve as convenors and secretaries of all Assembly committees, and as members of those committees. It also suggests names of United Reformed Church representatives on other bodies. It recommends the people to make up appointment groups for moderators of synods and Assembly appointed sta .

Convenor: Irene Wren

Secretary: Carol Rogers

Synod representatives:

1 Melanie Campbell	6 Margaret Marshall	11 Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor
2 Martin Smith	7 Paul Whittle	12 Shelagh Pollard
3 Robert Shallcross	8 George Faris	13 Morag Donaldson
4 Chris Reed	9 Sue Brown	
5 Helen Lidgett	10 Simon Fairington	

The General Secretary and a representative from the Assembly Moderators' group are also members of the nominations committee.

Current work

1.1 The main activity of the committee is routine, but in its own way demanding. The committee depends on the gifts and the goodwill of members of the Church to maintain the work of all Assembly committees and working groups; but the nomination committee have the responsibility of ensuring that invitations are issued that may result in balanced committees where every member contributes to the work of the whole.

1.2 Synod representative members encourage the churches and committees of their own synods to respond to the annual letter (sent out in early summer) which lists forthcoming vacancies, and asks for suggested nominees. Other committees are welcome to make suggestions where appropriate, recognising that often they have the clearest understanding of their own needs. To keep a healthy balance between

Monitoring

2.1 To help in maintaining balance in all the Church's committees and working groups the responses of all those who receive invitations continue to be monitored and this information is shared with the equalities committee. Important as this monitoring process is, there is a warning to be heeded against reading too much into trends detected in so small a sample.

2.2 In fact most of these observations closely follow those made in the 2014 report: no new trends are apparent.

Across those committees whose members are appointed through the involvement of nominations committee, at September 2015 membership was 56% male ordained and 44% female ordained and 47% lay male and 53% lay female.

2.3 We have again been grateful to the Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries for helping to identify a number of BME (black and minority ethnic) members, four of whom have accepted invitations.

2.4 From those who accepted invitations and indicated their age bracket it is clear that there is a need for concern about the age profile of those who are invited. It appears that there are many more who are over 55 years, reflecting our lack of success in even identifying younger people who might be approached.

2.5 All this information is dependent on invitees completing a monitoring form. In order that the figures given are as accurate as possible the secretary is grateful that the majority do, but invariably a number fail to – often it seems because a thoughtful letter of refusal appears kinder than an impersonal form and does not include the relevant information.

Committee membership

3. Each synod is represented on the committee, some by synod clerks and others by individuals with a good knowledge of their own people. The committee benefits from a gradual change in membership.

Deputy Treasurer

4. The committee brought to Mission Council last November the name of Mr Ian Hardie, to serve as the next Treasurer of the Church from 1 July 2017. Should Assembly accept Mission Council's commendation of Mr Hardie for this role, the nominations committee will move Resolution 36, which will allow Ian Hardie to work closely with John Ellis in the next year, and will then provide him with able cover and support in his own work as Treasurer.

Thanks to all who serve

5. The Church continues to receive richly from its many willing members who are part of its committee structure, or who serve on panels and working groups, or represent it on outside bodies. The formal acceptance of this report and the long list of names that follows will surely include a real sense of gratitude for all who serve in this way.

6. Assembly committees and other appointments

Notes:

1. The moderators, the moderators elect, the immediate past moderators and the general secretary are members ex officio of every standing committee.
2. Symbols have been used as follows:
 ** denotes those whom General Assembly is invited to appoint for the first time;
 † denotes those who have been invited to extend their periods of service;
3. The number in round brackets following the name indicates the member's synod: (1) Northern, (2) North Western, (3) Mersey, (4) Yorkshire, (5) East Midlands, (6) West Midlands, (7) Eastern, (8) South Western, (9) Wessex, (10) Thames North, (11) Southern, (12) Wales, (13) Scotland. This numbering is not shown where it is not relevant.
4. When a member of a committee is there as a representative of another body or a particular category this is indicated in round brackets following the name.
5. Committee membership is normally for a period of four years, though this may sometimes exceptionally be renewable. Committee convenors serve an additional preliminary year as convenor elect. In sections 1-4 of the report, appointments with a different term are noted.
6. The date in square brackets following the name indicates the date of retirement, assuming a full term.
7. In accordance with the decision of General Assembly 2000 some nominations are made directly by the National Synods of Wales and Scotland.
8. In years when General Assembly meets, new committee members normally take up their roles at the conclusion of Assembly. In years when General Assembly does not meet, they normally begin on 1 July.

1. Mission Council

Mission Council acts on behalf of General Assembly. It consists of the officers of Assembly, the Synod Moderators and three representatives from each synod, one of whom is usually, but not necessarily, the Synod Clerk, together with the convenors of Assembly committees, the Chair of the United Reformed Church Trust and three members for URC Youth, including the URC Youth Moderator, together with staff secretaries, Moderators' chaplains and others as appropriate.

- 1.1 Mission Council advisory group
 Convenor: The Moderators of General Assembly
 Secretary: The General Secretary

1.3 Law and Polity advisory group

Convenor: The Revd Prof David Thompson [2018]

Secretary: Mr Neil Mackenzie [2020]

Ms Morag McLintock [2020]

Ms Denise Fitzpatrick [2017]

Mr George Faris [2020] (Synod Clerk)

Mrs Kath Fowler (PLATO)

[ex o cio: Clerk to General Assembly, General Secretary, legal adviser]

1.4 Listed buildings advisory group

Convenor: Mr Peter West [2019]

Secretary: The Revd James Mather

The Revd Ray Angelsea (1)

Mr Michael Williams (2)

Ms Alison Lee (3)

The Revd David Figures (4)

Mrs Judith Booth (5)

Mrs Rachel Wakeman (6)

Mr Peter West (7)

Mr Roger James (8)

Mr Gerry Prosser (9)

Mr Christopher Buckwell (10)

Mr Guy Morfett (11)

Mrs Sue Cole (12)

1.5 Resource Sharing task group

Convenor: The Revd Paul Whittle [2017]

Secretary: Mr Chris Atherton

Treasurer: The Revd Dick Gray

Miss Margaret Atkinson

Mr Mike Gould

Mrs Rachel Wakeman

[ex o cio: The Treasurer]

1.6 Human Sexuality task group

Convenor: The Revd Elizabeth Caswell

Dr Jacob Addo

Ms Karen Campbell

The Revd John Hardaker

The Revd Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor (11)
 The Revd Shelagh Pollard (12) Ms Morag Donaldson (13)
 Representative of the GA Moderators' group
 The General Secretary

2.2.1 Panel for General Assembly appointments
 (Members usually serve for five years as training is required)

Retiring 2017

The Revd Stuart Brock (1)	The Revd Dr Jim Coleman (4)
The Revd Linda Elliott (12)	The Revd Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor (11)

Dr Tony Jeans (6)

Mrs Hilary Miles (11)

The Revd Peter Rand (1)

Mr David Clarkson (12)

Retiring 2018

The Revd Viv Randles (10)

Mrs Helen Renner (3)

Mr Bill Robson (13)

Mrs Lesley Richmond (13)

The Revd Liz Shaw (10)

The Revd Mike Shrubsole (9)

The Revd Martin Smith (2)

The Revd Geoffrey Clarke (5)

Retiring 2019

Mrs Sue Brown (9)

The Revd Nick Adlem (9)

The Revd Paul Bedford (9)

The Revd Sohail Ejaz (7)

The Revd Raymond Singh (11)

The Revd Reginald Mudenda (11)

Retiring 2020

Mrs Sheana Dudley (4)

Mr Clive Curtis (12)

Mrs Gwen Jennings (8)

The Revd Dick Gray (8)

The Revd Samuel Silungwe (5)

The Revd Bill Young (6)

Retiring 2021

The Revd David Sebley (7)

Mrs Val Morrison (4)

Mrs Kate Yates (10)

2.3 MIND (ministerial incapacity and discipline) advisory group

Convenor: The Revd John Durrell [2020]

Secretary: Dr Jim Merrilees [2018]

Convenor of the Assembly commission: Miss Judith Haughton

Secretary of the Assembly commission: Mrs Gwen Jennings

Convenor of the review commission of the incapacity procedure: Mr Donald Swift

Secretary of the review commission of the incapacity procedure: The Revd Ray Adams

Consultant for ministers and CRCWs: The Revd Ken Chippindale

Consultant for mandated groups: The Revd Alison Davis

Training Coordinator: Mr Keith Webster Co-opted: Mr Hartley Oldham

General Secretary, Clerk to Assembly, Secretary for Ministries, legal adviser

2.4 Disciplinary Process – commission panel

(Members serve for five years as regular training is required. They may be invited to continue)

3.1.3

[ex-o cio: Treasurer]

(Properties are managed by a company viz: Retired Ministers' Housing Society Ltd, Details of the members of the board etc may be obtained from the secretary, Mr Andy Bottomley at Church House.)

4.1.5 Assessment board

(Members usually serve for ve years as training is required)

Convenor: Dr Ewan Harley [2019]

Retiring 2017

Ms Alex Bediako (10) Mr Bill Gould (3)

The Revd Peter Henderson (8)

The Revd Shahbaz Javed (10)

Retiring 2018

The Revd Kim Plumpton (11)

The Revd Mary Thomas (9)

The Revd Ruth Allen (5)

Retiring 2019

The Revd Stuart Radclie (2)

The Revd Sohail Ejaz (7)

The Revd Peter Rand (1)

Ms Pat Oliver (9)

Retiring 2020

The Revd Leahy, Donald (9) The Revd Mary Thomas (9) (The R)3(e)hJvt2/13.4W(he or)10(d of 3.K12S3.3-10

4.3 Children's and youth work committee

Convenor: The Revd Tim Meachin [2017]

Convenor-elect: The Revd Jenny Mills [2016-2017 and, as convenor, 2017-2021]

Secretary: Head of Children's and Youth Work

Mrs Lorraine Downer-Mattis (10) [2017]

Mrs Ruth Roddison (4) [2018]

The Revd Heather Cadoux (9) [2018]

Mrs Alison Tansom (12) [2018]

Mr Alan Kendall (4) [2018]

Mr Adam Woodhouse (4) [2019]

Mr Sam Brown (11) [2019]

The Revd Jake Tatton (13) [2020] **

1 vacancy

URC Youth Moderator

URC Youth Moderator-elect

4.3.1 Pilots management subcommittee

Convenor: vacant

Members: vacant

(Other members of the subcommittee are appointed by the children's and youth work committee.)

5. Administration and Resources department

5.1 Assembly arrangements committee

Convenor: The Revd James Breslin [2020]

Secretary: Facilities Manager

Assembly Moderators

Moderators-elect

General Secretary

Clerk to General Assembly

Convenor, local arrangements committee

5.2 Communications and editorial committee

Convenor: Mr Peter Knowles [2019]

Secretary: Head of Communications

Mrs Andrea Varnavides (4) [2017]

The Revd Peter Cooper (10) [2017]

The Revd Kevin Snyman (12) [2017]

Mr Andy Jeens (3) [2017]

The Revd Kate Gray (2) [2018]

The Revd Ashley Evans (10) [2018]

Ms Rebecca Gudgeon (2) [2019]

Mrs Heather Carr (1) [2019]

Mr Tim Llewelyn (9) [2019]

5.3 Equalities committee

Convenor: The Revd Helen Mee [2018]

The Revd As1521ey Evans (10) [2018]

5.5 United Reformed Church Trust

(Members normally serve for six years. The directors of the Trust appoint new directors from those appointed as members. The members of the Trust elect the chair from among their own number and appoint a secretary and deputy secretary.)

Chair: The Revd Richard Gray [2018]

Secretary: Ms Sandi Hallam-Jones

Deputy Secretary: Mr Andy Bottomley

Members:

Group 1 (Synods 1, 2, 3, 13)

Mr Neil Mackenzie (3) [2016]

Group 2 (Synods 6, 8, 9, 12)

Mr Peter Pay (9) [2018]

Dr Ian Harrison (8) [2017]

The Revd Richard Gray (8) [2018]

Group 3 (Synods 4, 5, 7, 10, 11)

Mr Alastair Forsyth (4) [2018]

The Revd Michael Davies (11) [2018]

Mr Andrew Summers (10) [2018]

Mrs Margaret Thompson (7) [2018]

URC Youth Appointee: vacant

Mission Council nominated members: (to be appointed if necessary)

Mr Emmanuel Osae

Mrs Val Morrison [2018]

[ex o cio: Moderators of General Assembly,

General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary (Administration and Resources),

Treasurer, Clerk to General Assembly]

In attendance:

- 7.3 Conference of European Churches Assembly
Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations and one other
- 7.4 The Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council
The Revd Rowena Francis The Revd Prof David Thompson
Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries
- 7.5 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) Church Leaders' Meeting
General Secretary
- 7.5.1 CTBI Senior Representatives' Forum
General Secretary Secretary for Ecumenical and
Interfaith Relations
- 7.5.2 CTBI Environmental Issues Network
The Revd Dr David Pickering The Revd Mike Shrubsole
- 7.5.3 CTBI Stewardship Network
Mrs Faith Paulding
- 7.5.4 CTBI Consultative Group on Ministry amongst Children (CGMC)
Head of Children's and Youth Work and one other
- 7.5.5 CTBI Inter-Religious Network
Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
- 7.5.6 CTBI China Forum
The Revd John Scott
- 7.6.1 CTE Enabling Group
Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
- 7.6.2 CTE Coordinating Group for Local Unity
The Revd Kevin Watson, Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
- 7.6.3 CTE Churches Together for Healing
The Revd Deborah McVey
- 7.6.4 CTE Churches' Theology and Unity Group
Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
- 7.6.5 CTE Group for Evangelisation
Deputy General Secretary (Mission)
- 7.6.6 CTE Spirituality Coordinating Group
The Revd Sue Henderson
- 7.6.7 CTE Minority Ethnic Affairs Group
Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries
- 7.6.8 CTE Joint Liturgical Group
Vacant
- 7.7 Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) Members Meeting
[see note 7] Appointed by synod
- 7.8 National Sponsoring Body for Scotland [see note 7]
Appointed by synod

- 7.9 Churches Together in Wales (CYTUN) [see note 7]
Appointed by synod
- 7.10 Commission of Covenanted Churches [see note 7]
2 vacancies
- 7.11 Free Church Education Committee
Mr Graham Handscombe Mrs Gillian Kingston
- 7.12 European Churches' Environmental Network
Mr Charles Jolly
- 7.13 Churches' Refugee Network
The Revd Fleur Houston
- 7.14 Churches' Committee on Funerals and Crematoria
The Revd Sally Thomas The Revd Kate Hackett
- 7.15 Churches' Forum for Safeguarding
Safeguarding Officer
- 7.16 Churches' Network for Non-Violence
Head of Children's and Youth Work
- 7.17 Fresh Expressions
Deputy General Secretary (Mission)
- 7.18 Churches Visitor and Tourism Association
Mrs Valerie Jenkins
- 8. Representatives on formal bi-lateral and multi-lateral committees**
- 8.1 Methodist/United Reformed Church Liaison Group
Co-Convenor: The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith (Synod Moderator) [2020]
The Revd Kay Alberg The Revd Roy Fowler
The Revd Sally Thomas Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
- 8.1.1 Methodist/ United Reformed Church Strategic Oversight Group
General Secretary An Assembly Moderator
Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
- 8.2 Church of England/United Reformed Church/ Church of England
Bilateral Dialogue
The Revd Nicola Furley-Smith The Revd Elizabeth Welch
The Revd Tim Meadows The Revd Dr Julian Templeton
- 8.3 EMU Partnership (Scottish Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church in
Scotland and the United Reformed Church Synod of Scotland) [see note 7]
Appointed by synod
- 8.4 Conversations between the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe
and the Anglican Communion The Revd Dr Julian Templeton

- 10.6 Taunton School The Revd Ruth Whitehead
- 10.7 Bishops Stortford College Mr Anthony Trigg

11 Miscellaneous

The United Reformed Church is represented on a variety of other national organisations and committees as follows:

- 11.1 Arthur Rank Centre
The Revd Elizabeth Caswell
- 11.2 Churches Legislation Advisory Service
Mrs Sheila Duncan
General Secretary
- 11.3 Congregational Fund Board
Mr Anthony Bayley The Revd Geo rey Roper
The Revd Eric Allen Mrs Jackie Haws
The Revd Kate Hackett
- 11.4 Congregational Memorial Hall Trust
The Revd Derek Wales Mrs Margaret Thompson
Mr Graham Stacy Dr John Thompson
Dr Brian Woodhall Mr John Ellis
Mr Simon Fairnington
- 11.6 English Heritage's Places of Worship Forum
Mr Peter West (Convenor of the Listed Buildings Advisory Group)
- 11.7 Lord Wharton's Charity
The Revd Derek Lind eld
- 11.8 Methodist faith and order committee
Dr Augur Pearce
- 11.9 Retired Ministers' and Widows' Fund
Mr Ken Meekison The Revd Julian Macro
Mr Anthony Bayley
- 11.10 Samuel Robinson's Charities
Mr T 1de/T1_2man000md [2f(.EMC ieut Assocdh4JW)6(17(1sduQdsduQdsduQdsduQdsduQd9h is
Mr Ken Meekison

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