

The **United Reformed Church**
National Synod of Wales

Yr **Eglwys Ddiwygiedig Unedig**
Synod Cenedlaethol Cymru

Cyfarfod Synod y Gwanwyn
Spring Synod Meeting

Saturday 18th March 2023

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83574399591?pwd=U05WUXdXb3RIQ0VTa1pVFJFL1kwZz09>

Meeting ID: 835 7439 9591

Passcode: Synod12

Yr Eglwys Ddiwygiedig Unedig Synod Cenedlaethol Cymru
The United Reformed Church National Synod of Wales

Synod Office | Minster Road | Roath | Cardiff | CF23 5AS
Ffôn | Tel.: 029 2019 5728

www.urcwales.org.uk

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Resolutions

Resolution 1: Reaching Net Zero by 2030

Synod Meeting notes the United Reformed Church Environmental Policy 2022 and supports the reduction of carbon emissions across the whole of church life, with the aim of reaching net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2030. It commends the Environmental Policy to churches for their consideration and action (Resolution 17b [General Assembly 2022](#)).
The United Reformed Church Synod of Wales Environmental Policy will be updated inline with the 2030 target.

Resolution 2: Changes to the Mission Development Fund

Synod Meeting resolves to include carbon emission reduction and Eco Church participation in the application criteria for Mission Development Fund grants, to increase the development grant to £10,000 and to increase the main grant to £40,000.

Resolution 3: Quiet Spaces in churches

In line with the More Able Church initiative, the National Synod of Wales Youth Rep strongly encourages churches to introduce a quiet space for people to use when they feel overwhelmed.
The National Synod of Wales Youth rep also urges churches to make the space accessible to help people of all ages with engagement in worship.

1. Meeting Arrangements

SESSION 1

09:00 – 09:30

Gathering in breakout rooms for conversation

SESSION 2

09:30 – 10:30

Opening Worship and Commemorations
Including Commissioning of the Lay Preaching Advocate

Synod Stepwise
Lay Worship Ministry
Whole People of God

SESSION 3

10:40 – 11:20

Reaching Net Zero by 2030 ([Resolution 1](#))
Mission and Development Fund ([Resolution 2](#))
Synod Ecumenical Strategy

SESSION 4

11:30 – 12:30

Hearing Children's Voices
Quiet Spaces in churches ([Resolution 3](#))
Reports to Synod
Closing worship

2. Synod Support Team

FOR DECISION:

2.1 Moderator of General Assembly 2024-2025

Two nominations have been received. A vote will be held to determine whether Synod Meeting wishes to put them forward to General Assembly.

2.2 Resolution from Assembly Executive

A **constitutional resolution** has been referred to Synods for consideration:

The resolution concerns **changes consequent upon moving to one Moderator of General Assembly** and is proposed to resolve the issue that the reduction to one Moderator for one year reduces the number of former Moderators available for chairing both parallel sessions and those sessions that the Moderator is unable or unwilling to chair. If ratified at this year's General Assembly, the Immediate Past Moderator of the General Assembly shall be an Assembly Officer, with immediate effect.

Whilst it is not a requirement to discuss this, the link to the relevant Assembly Executive Paper A1 is below, if anyone has any reasons to object, then please email the Synod Clerk, megan.price.urc.wales@urc.org.uk by the 15th March.

If as a Synod, it is felt that we have any objections to this resolution we will need to pass a resolution that it 'be not proceeded with'.

[Link to Paper A1](#)

FOR NOTING:

2.3 General Assembly 2023

The following will represent the National Synod of Wales at General Assembly 2023 (Friday 30th June to Monday 3rd July):

Minister/CRCW

John Hayton
Stella Hayton
Adella Pritchard
Branwen Rees
David Salisbury
Simon Walkling
Kate Wolsey

Elder/Lay Person

Chris Atherton
Jo Harris †
Megan Price
Mike Ricketts Hein
Bethan Trott (TBC)
Wales URC Youth rep †
2 x under 25s TBC

† ≤25

2.4 **Representatives to the General Assembly**

There is a vacancy for one lay or ordained representative to the General Assembly. General Assembly will take place at The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire DE55 from Friday 30th June to Monday 3rd July 2023. All the costs of attending are covered, including travel, accommodation and meals. A leaflet – ‘They’ve asked me to be a Member of General Assembly’ – which gives an overview of the role and obligations of being a member, as well as the work of the General Assembly itself, can be viewed and downloaded here: bit.ly/2lkaqHe. Please contact the [Synod Clerk](#) as soon as possible if you feel you are being called to serve in this role.

FOR INFORMATION:

2.5 **Synod Membership**

The Synod may co-opt up to twenty-four additional members, being people with a particular role or responsibility within the Synod. Those who are at present co-opted members of Synod for the duration of their respective appointments are as follows:

Ian Lloyd-Parry (Convener of FPB)

Megan Price (Synod Clerk)

Judy Harris (CYDO)

Revd Gethin Rhys (Cytûn National Assembly Policy Officer)

Philip Rickards, Jill Shelton, Mathias Tchatchoua and Verena Walder (Local Church Leaders)

2.6 **Moderator Recruitment**

Work has begun on preparing a Synod Profile and assembling an Appointment Panel to recruit a new Moderator for the National Synod of Wales. The Synod Profile will be circulated for consultation following the next meeting of the Synod Pastoral Committee.

2.7 **Nominations**

The up to date (at the time of the compilation of these papers) report of Nominations is included at [Appendix A](#).

3. Synod Pastoral Committee

FOR NOTING:

3.1 **Lay Worship Ministry**

New guidance for Lay Worship Ministry has been approved by Synod Pastoral Committee. The guidance can be found at Appendix B and will be circulated to all churches.

3.2 **Whole People of God**

Whole People of God worksheets are now finalised and have been distributed to all churches. A copy has been circulated alongside these Papers.

FOR INFORMATION:

3.3 **Ministerial Changes**

Revd Paula Parish accepted a call to the Bridgend United Area starting in October 2022. It has been agreed to extend Revd Parish's ministry beyond the age of 68.

Revd Ruth Whitehead has accepted a call to the Lansdsker Patorate starting 1 April 2023.

Johnny O'Hanlon has accepted a call to be ordained to Rivertown and work in the North Wales Region starting in July 2023.

Revd Simon Walkling has accepted a call to the Swansea Area starting 1 September 2023.

3.4 **South Wales Ministry**

Revd Phil Wall left St David's Uniting and Castle Square in November to take up a role as Chaplain at Oakhill Secure Training Unit in Milton Keynes. As other churches in the area are currently without ministry, a working group has been set up to discuss the South Wales Ministry Area.

3.5 **Digital Ministry**

Following consultation with RPCs, a working group is updating the proposed job description and Special Category Ministry application form, with a view to submitting it later this year.

4. Mission and Discipleship Board

FOR NOTING:

4.1 **New Rural Advocate**

We have been pleased to welcome Revd Julie Kirby as Rural Advocate.

4.2 **Eco Friends and Net Zero**

Following General Assembly's adoption of an updated Environmental Policy which aims to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030, Eileen Newington, the Synod's Green Advocate, will be contacting churches to encourage all to appoint an Eco-Friend and offer support as we work towards this ambitious target.

FOR INFORMATION:

4.3 **Children and Youth Work Working Group**

A new Children and Youth Work Working Group is being established, led by Jo Harris, immediate past Youth Assembly Moderator, and our young people. It will support the work of our Children and Youth Development Officer and ensure that the voices of young people are heard in the Synod.

4.4 **Synod Stepwise**

As one Synod Stepwise group comes to an end, it is hoped to run another Faith Filled life group from March to May – please look out for further details.

4.3 **Mission Committee**

Mission Committee met for two days at the end of February on Zoom. As always, we covered much ground including:

JPIT's Lent Resources which should be available soon [here](#).

[Newbigin Pioneering Hub](#) which offers training for Lay Pioneers. The URC plan to start the next cohort in September this year.

The [Mission Enabling Fund](#) which is the successor to the Vision 2020 grants and is open to applications for one off grants of up to £1000 or three year developments grants of up to £6000 (maximum of £2000 per year).

The URC continues to engage with Solutions not Sides to encourage engagement with and learning about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Resources are available on the [URC website](#).

5. Finance and Property Board/Trust Company

FOR DECISION:

5.1 **Mission Development Fund**

The following changes to the Mission Development Fund (MDF) are proposed:

1. Grant applications for projects involving building works or adaptations will be required to demonstrate how the works will contribute to a reduction in the building's carbon emissions.
2. Grant applications for projects involving building works or adaptations will be required to demonstrate the congregation's active engagement with the Eco Church scheme.
3. The development grant will be increased to a maximum of £10,000 to fund professional support.
4. The main grant will be increased to a maximum of £40,000 (which will include the development grant if awarded).

FOR NOTING:

5.2 **Heads of the Valleys manse**

The sale of the former Heads of the Valleys manse at 1 Augusta Park was completed in September 2022.

5.3 **Landsker Pastorate manse**

The purchase of a manse for the Landsker Pastorate at 64 Tasker Way, Haverfordwest, was completed in October 2022.

5.4 **Aberedw URC closure**

Aberedw URC passed a resolution to close in December 2022.

Resolution 2

Synod Meeting resolves to include carbon emission reduction and Eco Church participation in the application criteria for Mission Development Fund grants, to increase the development grant to £10,000 and to increase the main grant to £40,000.

6. Reaching Net Zero by 2030

In July 2022, General Assembly adopted an updated [Environmental Policy](#) in response to the urgency of the climate emergency. The focus of the policy is on reducing carbon emissions across the whole of church life, with the aim of reaching net zero emissions of green house gases by 2030. The most significant contributors to the URC's carbon footprint are buildings, energy use, travel and how investments are used.

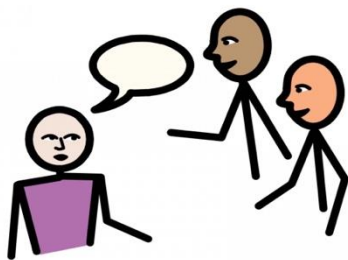
While a net zero target may seem ambitious, practically it would have a huge impact if all churches switched to renewable energy, every congregation and synod was engaging in Eco Church, plans were in place to improve the environmental performance of buildings in the Church's care, funds were not invested in fossil fuels and, as a last resort, there was carbon offsetting of necessary travel and unavoidable fossil fuel use.

The Environmental Policy asks each part of the Church, including local churches, to develop plans for reaching net zero by 2030. The Synod environmental steering group has produced a short and accessible guide to help churches identify the key steps and actions they can take, immediately and in the longer term, to reduce their carbon emissions and to implement a path to net zero. The guide can be found on the Synod website: [Reaching Net Zero by 2030](#). A Widgeit version is also available to ensure universal accessibility.

Resolution 1

Synod Meeting notes the United Reformed Church Environmental Policy 2022 and supports the reduction of carbon emissions across the whole of church life, with the aim of reaching net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2030. It commends the Environmental Policy to churches for their consideration and action (Resolution 17b [General Assembly 2022](#)). The United Reformed Church Synod of Wales Environmental Policy will be updated in line with the 2030 target.

7. Hearing Children's Voices



We have spoken before about how we hear children's voice meaningfully heard in our churches, here are some suggestions for you to consider.

Using the pen portraits ideas if you do not have any children in your church use the pen portraits to consider how your decisions may affect any child.

A template pen portrait is available from Judy Harris judy.harris.urcwailes@urc.org.uk

If you have a children's group, or Brownie or Cub pack in your church, or even ask a local primary school if you have contact with them, ask them to get involved and create some pen portraits for you to use. If you do not, maybe ask a church locally, who does have children to share some with you.



The pen portraits

Ask a child or their parent if they are under 5, to fill it in to write or drawing is fine too, and don't worry about spelling. An adult can help the child decide what to put on the sheet but remember this is about the child. There is no need to add a surname. And remember a scribble is a child's representation of their thoughts so it does not need to be an accurate drawing.

Judy can provide you with some already created, but they will not give you the idea of a child in your local community.

Have the image in a prominent place in your church meeting or elders meeting to keep the child in the centre of your thinking. Consider these questions

- How does what we are discussing affect this child?
- How could this child be part of what happens as a result of this decision?
- Will this decision have a positive impact on this child when they are grown up?

If you do have children please do ask them what they think about decisions, this can be done in fun ways.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 12: right to be listened to and taken seriously

One of the things the UNCRC does is to make it clear that human rights apply to children and young people as much they do to adults.

Children and young people don't have as much power as adults. They can't vote, and they don't have as much money. But Article 12 says that every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.

This principle recognises children and young people as actors in their own lives and applies at all times throughout a child's life.

Wales is a Rights respecting country, and the rights of children are enshrined in our legislation. As a Synod we think that it is important that we consider the voice of children in every part of our church life.

We will give churches support in achieving this and offer help and advice in the process. Over the course of the year, we will offer more ideas on how to meaningfully hear the voices of our children and young people, as we explore more about Article 12 which also says children and young people should be given the information, they need to make good decisions.

Resources you can use

Spice it Up - bit.ly/3kdmUXK this is a resource book which provides you with a range of ideas and how to use them.

8. Quiet Spaces in churches

In line with our More Able Church initiative. We would like to bring this resolution which has been passed at Youth Assembly in January 2023.

Resolution from Youth assembly “URC Youth Assembly tasks the synod representatives to strongly encourage churches to introduce a quiet space for people to go when they feel overwhelmed or want to be in a calm space, in addition, the URC Youth Assembly urge the Disability Awareness Task group to include guidance on creating these quiet spaces.”

URC youth recognise that within churches there is a diverse range of people who attend, and that some people can feel overwhelmed, for a variety of reasons. Offering a space within the sanctuary, will enable people who struggle with sensory overload, or anxiety.

We would like to emphasise that this is not for everyone, but that some people in churches may already know of people who may benefit from these spaces. They would provide a space for people to sit out and engage in worship and other church activities, by offering a variety of tools to help them. This is not a space just for children, but for anyone within the congregation.

Quiet spaces and what can be included

Fidget toys, colouring sheets, and whiteboards to write draw and reflect on what is being said.

These spaces can encourage people to listen whilst doing something; providing ways of people to calm themselves when feeling overwhelmed; it may be that providing noise cancelling headphones in these spaces may help when singing of hymns is too much for people who struggle with audio sensory overload. Within the space there could be more comfortable seating or have a table for people to sit and use colouring sheets or doodling mats. It may be that a small jigsaw is provided for people to do as they listen and participate in worship.

More guidance will be provided to help churches to develop these spaces please contact [Judy Harris](#) and the Children and Youth Working group for more information.

Questions to consider

- Who would this help?
- What could we include?
- How can we do this?
- Where would it be?

Resolution 3

In line with the More Able Church initiative, the National Synod of Wales Youth Rep, strongly encourages churches to introduce a quiet space for people use when they feel overwhelmed.

The National Synod of Wales Youth rep also urges churches to make the space accessible to help people of all ages with engagement in worship.

Appendix A: Nominations Report

Synod Support Team

Synod Moderator

Simon Walkling 2012 – 2023

Synod Clerk

Megan Price 2022 –

Trust Company Secretary and Synod Treasurer

Chris Atherton 2006 –

Training and Development Officer

Jason Askew 2020 –

Children and Youth Development Officer (CYDO)

Judy Harris 2014 –

Safeguarding Officer

Diana Taylor 2021 –

Deputy Safeguarding Officer

Judy Harris

Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

Martin Spain 2021 –

Moderator's PA, Office Manager and Cashier

Joel Sainsbury

Property Officer and Assistant Company Secretary

Claire Boot

Finance Assistant

Gaynor Morgan

Synod Office Chaplain

Stephen Best

Synod Boards and Committees

The Synod Moderator and Synod Clerk are ex-officio members of all Boards and Committees

Synod Pastoral Committee

Representatives of Regional Pastoral Committees:

North Wales	Paul Robinson
East Wales	Branwen Rees
Cardiff and Penarth	Martha McInnes
Valleys and Vale	<i>vacant</i>
Swansea	Verena Walder
Pembrokeshire	Stella Hayton
Mid Wales	<i>vacant</i>
Bridgend United Area	Richard Gillon
Brecon Beacons	Julie Kirby

Northern College (co-opted) Graham Adams

Ex officio

Training and Development Officer
Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
Lay Preaching Advocate
In attendance: Synod Chaplain

Finance and Property Board

Convener	Ian Lloyd-Parry	2008 – 2023
Secretary	Property Officer	
Members:	Sheila Jones	2018 – 2023
	Lyn Oelmann	2018 – 2021
	Alison Tansom	2021 – 2023

Ex officio

Trust Company Secretary and Synod Treasurer
Office Manager and Cashier
Property Officer

Mission and Discipleship Board

Convener	Branwen Rees	2021 – 2023
Members:	Julia Bartholomew	2021 – 2023
	Judith Dolben	2018 – 2023
	Martin Spain	2021 – 2023

Ex officio

Training and Development Officer
Children and Youth Development Officer
Representative to URC Mission Committee
Green Advocate
Rural Advocate

Synod Office Management Group

Synod Clerk (Convener)
Office Manager (Secretary)
Trust Company Secretary and Synod Treasurer

Wales District Council

Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations (Convener)
Synod Clerk (Secretary)
Synod Moderator
Synod Treasurer
Together with others drawn together relevant to the location of the church being considered.

Safeguarding Reference Group

Safeguarding Officer (Convener)
Trust Secretary
Heather Salsbury

Other Appointments

To General Assembly Councils/Committees/Panels, etc.

Nominations Committee	Synod Clerk	
Mission Committee	Branwen Rees	2018 – 2026
Listed Buildings Advisory Group	Property Officer	
Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel	Martha McInnes	
Disciplinary Investigation Panel	Martin Spain	

To other URC networks, etc.

Green Advocate	Eileen Newington	
Rural Church Advocate	Julie Kirby	
Lay Preaching Advocate	Maggie Kirkbride	
PLATO	Property Officer	
URC Youth Representative	Nathanial Stinton	
Pilots Officer	Children and Youth Development Officer	
Stepwise Co-ordinator	Training and Development Officer	

URC (Wales) Trust Company Limited

Convener Ian Lloyd Parry

Company Secretary Chris Atherton

Assistant Secretary Property Officer

Trustees:

Trust Appointed:

Colin Grimes annual appointment

Ian Lloyd-Parry annual appointment

Synod Appointed:

Chris Byrne 2021 – 2023

Ian Kirby 2018 – 2023

Diane Moverley 2021 – 2023

Sandra Wallace 2017 – 2022

1 vacancy

Synod Panel for Interviewing Ministerial Candidates

Co-ordinator: Training and Development Officer

Members:
Julie Kirby
Kathryn Price
Christine Roberts
Jill Shelton

Ecumenical Appointments Made by Synod

Christian Aid	Ceri George	2019 – 2024
Commission of Covenanting Churches	Synod Moderator Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Pat Davies	2018 – 2023
Commission of Covenanting Churches – Faith and Order Group	Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations	
Cytûn Trustee	Synod Moderator <i>changing to</i> Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations at the Cytûn AGM	
Cytûn Racial Justice Network	Megan Price	
Cytûn Laser Group	Chris Atherton	
URC/PCW Liaison Group	Synod Moderator Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Lynda Bull Mike Dugdale Wendy Tansill Mathias Tchatchoua	2020 – 2022 2017 – 2022 2021 – 2023 2020 – 2022
URC/Methodist Liaison Group	Synod Moderator Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Noel Davies Colin Harrison Stella Hayton	2021 – 2023 2016 – 2021 2021 – 2023
Church in Wales Governing Body	Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations	
Covenanted Baptists	Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations	

Appendix B: Lay Worship Ministry

Introduction

In the URC National Synod of Wales, lay worship ministry is highly valued:

1. Church members who exercise this ministry, unlike visiting preachers, bring a particular and relevant, local dimension to the role, as they are often more connected with, and intimately aware of, the pastoral and missional context in which they are conducting worship.
2. We are a denomination committed to lifelong learning and continuing personal development. Those who exercise a lay worship ministry embody this commitment and are also responsible for inspiring members of their congregations to do the same.
3. Churches have never relied solely on Ministers of Word and Sacraments to lead worship, and their numbers are reducing further. A greater responsibility to deepen, explore and expound the theology which underpins our life together increasingly falls now upon lay leaders of worship.

Responsibility for worship

The local church (normally the elders meeting) is responsible for arranging and providing worship. Churches are encouraged to discuss and regularly review their worship, to ensure it continues to meet their needs and expectations.

Guidelines on conduct and behaviour

The URC has guidelines on conduct and behaviour for all leaders and conductors of worship (in-house or visiting). A suggested pro-forma is appended.

Pathways within lay worship ministry

The pathways are not hierarchical. They acknowledge that different people are called to different circumstances and different roles at different times in their journeys of faith. The URC has developed **Marks of Ministry** for those who are in lay worship roles and these can be found here https://urc.org.uk/images/MissionCouncil/March-2021/DH1_Worship_Leading_and_Lay_Preaching.pdf

Not all lay worship ministry is the same and the Marks explicitly acknowledge this.

The URC National Synod of Wales urges and encourages all who are engaged in lay worship ministry to consider prayerfully how they can develop their own particular role and grow in discipleship and service for the good of the church.

1. Those who lead or contribute to worship locally

By far the majority of those who currently exercise lay worship ministry are neither accredited nor recognised, but do so in their local church and/or elsewhere by invitation, with the approval and blessing of that locality.

Summary of Pathway	Aspirations
<p>It is for the local church to decide on what is appropriate for individuals, but is likely to include some or all of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communicating guidelines (a suggested pro-forma is appended) 2. A self-certification form 3. Any appropriate checks or reviews 4. Completion of a URC recommended basic safeguarding course (available online) 	<p>Those who exercise this ministry are encouraged to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertake Stepwise “Faith filled Life” and “Faith Filled Worship” 2. Develop worship leading skills and safeguarding awareness 3. Access URC Discipleship Development Grants (£200.00) 4. Attend annual AALP/LRWL conference & related events

2. Pathways to accreditation and recognition

For those who feel so called, the URC offers two developmental pathways (Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher and Locally Recognised Worship Leader). A summary and a useful booklet can be found here:

<https://urc.org.uk/your-church/taking-a-role-in-your-church/become-a-worship-leader-lay-preacher/>

Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher (AALPs)

Summary of Pathway	Scope	Aspirations
<p>Undertaken with the support and approval of your local church</p> <p>DBS sought through local church and checked by Ministries</p> <p>Completion of Approved Course run by Northern College</p>	<p>AALPs are recognised across the URC and would normally lead worship in a number of churches</p>	<p>AALPs are expected to embrace the URC's "Marks of Ministry" and are encouraged to:</p> <p>Access annual URC Education & Learning Grants of £300.00</p> <p>Actively engage with, learn from and support others in this ministry</p> <p>Attend annual AALP/LRWL conference & related events</p> <p>Attend/take part in at least two councils of the church (local/national)</p> <p>Take up other offers of training & personal development including :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Those offered by RCL's Northern College and Westminster College 2. Those offered by URC National Synod of Wales

Locally Recognised Worship Leaders (LRWLs)

Summary of Pathway	Scope	Aspirations
<p>Undertaken with the support and approval of your local church</p> <p>DBS sought through local church and checked by Ministries</p> <p>Formation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # Completion of Stepwise Faith-filled Life # Completion of Stepwise Faith-filled Worship # Compilation of a Portfolio # Drafting an Essay or giving a Presentation # Taking an Assessed Service <p>Completion of a URC recommended basic safeguarding course (available online)</p> <p>Exceptionally Synod may consider on an individual basis conferring recognition in a different way</p>	<p>LRWLs are recognised in their local pastorate where they would normally lead worship. They sometimes conduct worship in other churches by invitation.</p>	<p>LRWLs are expected to embrace the URC's "Marks of Ministry" and are encouraged to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access URC Discipleship Development Grants (£200.00) Actively engage with, learn from and support others in this ministry Attend annual AALP/LRWL conference & related events Attend/take part in at least two councils of the church (local/national) Take up other offers of training & personal development including : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Those offered by RCL's Northern College and Westminster College 2. Those offered by URC National Synod of Wales

Guidelines

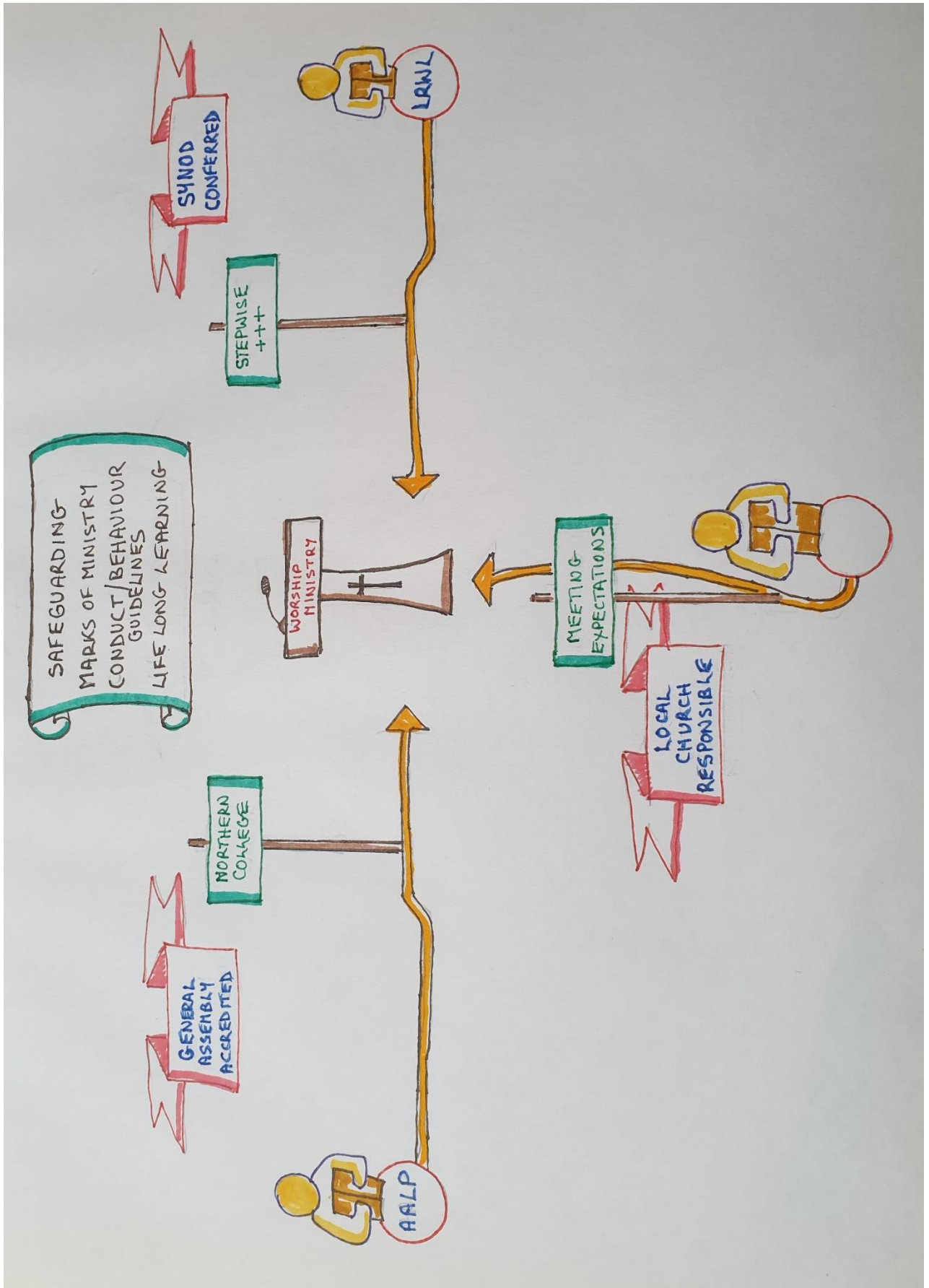
The URC has published Guidelines on conduct and behaviour for AALPs and LRWLs and these can be found here

<https://urc.org.uk/urc-ministries/guidelines-on-conduct-and-behaviour-for-accredited-and-recognised-lay-preachers/>

Support

We are committed to supporting all those who feel a call to this ministry both at local church/pastorate and at national level and are always looking at how we might improve this.

If you are interested in exploring lay worship ministry further, please speak with those already engaged in this ministry or contact your church Elder, a Minister of Word & Sacraments, the Synod's Lay Preachers' Representative or the Synod's Training & Development Officer.



Appendix C: Standing Orders for Virtual Meetings

Standing Orders for Virtual Meetings of General Assembly of the United Reformed Church

1. Records of Virtual Meetings

- 1.1 Any streaming and/or recording¹ 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.
 1. Meetings should not normally be recorded, in order to comply fully with both safeguarding and data privacy policies.

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.² 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.
- 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

2. 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.

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.

10. 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.
- 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 10.6, 10.7 and 10.8 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.
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 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.
- 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 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.