

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

Yr **Eglwys Ddiwygiedig Unedig**
Synod Cenedlaethol Cymru

Cyfarfod Synod y Gwanwyn
Spring Synod Meeting

Saturday 21st March 2026

Albany Church,
Haverfordwest SA61 1QF

or

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83907323887?pwd=1Zla8HuZpTcP9Yl1f1U2uIXbo9Yf2S.1>

ID: 839 0732 3887

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
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Contents

| | | |
|--------------------|---|---------|
| Section 1: | Notices | page 5 |
| Section 2: | Agenda | page 7 |
| Section 3: | Synod Support Team | page 8 |
| Section 4: | Synod Pastoral Committee | page 10 |
| Section 5: | Mission and Discipleship Board | page 11 |
| Section 6: | Finance and Property Board/Trust Company | page 13 |
| Appendix A: | Nominations Report | page 15 |
| Appendix B: | Faith in Action Terms of Reference | page 21 |
| Appendix C: | Synod Aspirations | page 22 |
| Appendix D: | Synod and Trust Safeguarding Policy | page 24 |
| Appendix E: | Synod Green Team role descriptions | page 32 |
| Appendix F: | Standing Orders | page 39 |

Resolutions

Resolution 1: Synod Aspirations

Synod Meeting approves the Synod Aspirations outline as set out in [Appendix C](#) as the operational model for the Synod Support Team.

Resolution 2: Synod and Trust Safeguarding Policy

Synod Meeting approves and adopts the Synod and Trust Safeguarding Policy as set out in [Appendix D](#).

Resolution 3: Mission and Discipleship Board name and remit

Synod Meeting approves the renaming of the Mission and Discipleship Board to Synod Faith in Action Committee and adopts the updated terms of reference for the committee as set out in [Appendix B](#).

1. Notices

1.1 Venue

The meeting will take place at Albany Church, Haverfordwest. Look out for the URC logo signs.

1.2 Food and Drink

A complimentary lunch will be provided. If you have any special dietary requirements (other than vegetarian), please let Joel Sainsbury (joel.sainsbury.urcwailes@urc.org.uk) know before Monday 16th March. In addition, tea and coffee will be available on arrival and during the lunch break.

1.3 Directions:

By rail:

We encourage you to travel via public transport where possible.

Haverfordwest railway station is approximately 15 minutes on foot (0.7 miles) from Albany Church. Lifts can be arranged.

By road:

Albany Church is located on Hill Street in Haverfordwest. The church's post code is SA61 1QF.

1.4 Car Parking

Pay and Display parking is available in St Thomas Green car park across the road from the church.

Click here to find the car park on Google Maps:

maps.app.goo.gl/SwqbseV9PnpkqqCY8

1.5 Visitors

Everyone is welcome to attend and participate in the Synod Meeting, although only members of Synod will be able to vote. All speakers are asked to identify themselves by name and local church.

1.6 On Arrival

- a) For Synod representatives: Please collect a label, to act as your name badge, and an expenses claim form. You may claim the cost of public transport, or car travel at variable rates depending on the number of people in the car. Please complete your expenses form with your bank details and leave it in the box before you leave: payment will be made electronically soon afterwards. If you would like the Synod to claim Gift Aid on all or part of your expenses claim, please complete the relevant

section of the form. Please exchange your completed attendance card for three voting cards, which should be returned at the end of the meeting.

If you require a printed copy of the meeting papers, please contact Megan Price at megan.price.urcwailes@urc.org.uk by Tuesday 18th March. Printed copies will only be available for those who have requested one.

b) For visitors: Please collect a label, to act as your name badge.

1.7 **Quiet Space**

A Quiet Space will be available for anyone who feels overwhelmed or needs a moment of quiet during the day. This will be signposted at the venue or speak to a member of the Synod Support Team to find out more.

1.8 **Bookshop**

We will have a selection of items from the URC Bookshop for sale. We will be able to take card payments and would prefer that you pay in this way if possible.

1.9 **Photography**

Please note that we will be taking photographs throughout the day for use on our website and social media channels. If you would prefer not to appear in any photographs used for any reason, please speak to a member of the Synod Support Team.

1.10 **Synod eNewsletter**

If you are not already subscribed to the synod's monthly eNewsletter – with news of people and places, information and requests, events, resources, etc. – you may do so by following this link: bit.ly/2MGqveS.

1.11 **Forthcoming Synod Meetings are as follows:**

| | |
|--|--|
| Saturday 17th October 2026 | a hybrid meeting at The Priory Centre, Abergavenny and on Zoom |
| Saturday 13th March 2027 | a hybrid meeting at Barry Uniting Church and on Zoom |
| Saturday 16th October 2027 | a hybrid meeting at The Priory Centre, Abergavenny and on Zoom |

2. Agenda

It would be helpful to those involved if any questions on the reports that are not the subject of resolutions could be supplied in advance to the Synod Clerk (megan.price.urcwailes@urc.org.uk).

- 10.30 **Gathering and Refreshments**
- 11.00 **Opening Worship**
- Commemorations and Ministerial Anniversaries**
- Introductions and Notices**
- Minutes of Autumn Synod Meeting [[click here to download](#)]**
- Matters Arising from the Minutes**
- Safeguarding**
- Synod Faith in Action Committee**
- Doing the Small Things – Faith in Action on the Ground part 1**
- 13:00 **Lunch** (see [Notices](#) 1.2)
- 14:00 **Synod Aspirations**
- Doing the Small Things – Faith in Action on the Ground part 2**
- Reports to Synod**
- Closing Worship**
- 15:30 **Finish**

3. Synod Support Team

FOR DECISION:

3.1 **Synod Aspirations**

The Synod Support Team have prepared a document outlining the operational model of the team (see [appendix C](#)). This is presented to Synod Meeting for approval. [[Resolution 1](#)]

3.2 **Synod and Trust Safeguarding Policy**

A joint Synod and Trust Safeguarding Policy has been prepared, utilising the template included in Good Practice 6 (see [appendix D](#)). The Policy has been approved and adopted by the Trust and now comes to Synod Meeting for approval and adoption. [[Resolution 2](#)]

FOR NOTING:

3.3 **General Assembly 2026**

The following continue to represent the National Synod of Wales at General Assembly 2026 (Fri 3 – Mon 6 July 2026):

Minister/CRCW

Martha McInnes
David Salsbury
Simon Walkling

Elder/Lay Person

Claire Boot
Donna Jones
Maggie Kirkbride
Leo Munnik †
Megan Price
Bethan Trott
† <26

3.4 **Moderator of General Assembly 2027-2028**

No nominations were received by the deadline of Wednesday 7 January 2026.

FOR INFORMATION:

3.5 **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)
- Maggie Kirkbride (Synod Lay Preaching Advocate)
- Hunyoung Park, Carolyn Ridding, Pete Fawcett, Jill Shelton, Verena Walder and Helen Dowdell (Local Church Leaders)

3.6 **Nominations**

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

Resolution 1

Synod Meeting approves the Synod Aspirations outline as set out in [Appendix C](#) as the operational model for the Synod Support Team.

Resolution 2

Synod Meeting approves and adopts the Synod and Trust Safeguarding Strategy as set out in [Appendix D](#).

4. Synod Pastoral Committee

FOR INFORMATION:

4.1 **Lay Leader appointment**

Helen Dowdell was commissioned as Local Lay Leader for Stow Park on 30 November 2025.

4.2 **Church closures**

Tabernacle, Llanvaches held their final service, a carol service on 7 December 2025, and formally closed on 31 December 2025.

4.3 **Vacancies**

A vacancy for a URC minister has been declared in the Bridgend United Area.

4.4 **Pioneer Minister**

The Committee continue to discuss how best to discern where a Pioneer post might be needed most in Wales, as allocated by General Assembly 2025 Paper H2: *Criteria for the 13 new pioneering posts to intentionally grow new Christian communities.*

5. Mission and Discipleship Board

Mission and Discipleship Board continues to meet 4 times a year both in person and on Zoom.

We cover a wide range of topics that affect the United Reformed Church here in Wales including family, youth and children's work; rural matters; the work of Cytun; Eco and Rural matters; social justice, A More Able Church and Discipleship programmes.

FOR DECISION:

5.1 **Committee Name**

Following changes to the committee structure in Church House, Mission and Discipleship Board have been reviewing their name and remit.

As such the board are proposing changing their name to reflect the changes denominationally so Mission and Discipleship Board would become Synod Faith in Action Committee. An updated Terms of Reference for the committee can be found at [Appendix B. \[Resolution 3\]](#)

FOR INFORMATION:

5.2 **A More Able Church**

The latest webinar was held in January and was entitled 'How Can We Help' and looked at practical ways to help churches become places where more disabled people can access the Gospel, experience Jesus' transforming love, belong in community, and share God-given gifts and skills. This and all previous webinars are available to watch on the Synod You Tube channel.

5.3 **Children, Young People and Families**

4 young people attended Youth Assembly and there is interest in the 1T4 event in May.

5.4 **Synod Stepwise**

A Faith Filled Worship stream started on 12th February.

5.5 **Eco Roadshows**

The next roadshow will have taken place for East Wales on 28th February 2026 at Cwmbran URC. Mid Wales then will follow later this year.

5.6 **Green Advocate Roles**

New role descriptions have been developed for Church Eco Friends, Synod Green Advocates and a new regional Eco role. These can be found at Appendix E.

5.7 **Racial Justice Advocate**

A Racial Justice Advocate is also being sought through safer recruitment

Resolution 3

Synod Meeting approves the renaming of the Mission and Discipleship Board to Synod Faith in Action Committee and adopts the updated terms of reference for the committee as set out in [Appendix B](#).

6. Finance and Property Board/Trust Company

FOR NOTING:

6.1 **Grant for remedial works**

In October, a grant was agreed for remedial works at the Valleys Pastorate Manse.

6.2 **Mission Development Fund**

A development grant from the Mission Development Fund was made to Beulah URC towards refurbishment work.

6.3 **Daphne & Bethan Fund**

In October, grants from the Daphne & Bethan Fund were agreed for The United Church in Rhyl and for the purchase of Advent packs for the synod.

6.4 **Policies**

Policies regarding reserves and investments were agreed in December.

6.5 **Church Closure**

In January, a resolution for closure from Tabernacle URC, Llanvaches, was received.

6.6 **Health and Safety Fund**

A grant from the Health & Safety Fund towards the installation of toilet and kitchen facilities at Bethesda'r Fro URC, St Athan, was agreed in January.

6.7 **Digital Ministry Fund**

A grant from the Digital Ministry Fund for Stow Park Church, Newport, was agreed in January.

FOR INFORMATION:

6.8 In October, it was agreed that the synod would fund the expenses budget for the Mid Wales Ecumenical Minister post.

6.9 A new Safeguarding Officer, Lee Whyman, was appointed in November.

6.10 In January, it was agreed to provide a grant to Rivertown URC, Shotton, to assist with the costs of the church's redevelopment project.

6.11 In January, it was agreed to seek the appointment of a Chief Finance Officer for the synod.

Appendix A: Nominations Report

Synod Support Team

Synod Moderator

David Salsbury

From 1 April 2024

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

Lee Whyman

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

Administration Officer

Maggie Kirkbride

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 | Clare Nutbrown-Hughes |
| 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: representative of the Youth and Children Working Group, Synod representative to the Commission of Covenanted Churches Faith and Order Group

Finance and Property Board

| | | |
|-----------|--------------------|-------------|
| Convener | Ian Lloyd-Parry | 2008 – 2026 |
| Secretary | Property Officer | |
| Members: | Alison Tansom | 2021 – 2027 |
| | <i>3 vacancies</i> | |

Ex officio

Trust Company Secretary and Synod Treasurer

Office Manager and Cashier

Property Officer

Mission and Discipleship Board

| | | |
|----------|-------------------|-------------|
| Convener | Branwen Rees | 2021 – 2026 |
| Members: | Julia Bartholomew | 2021 – 2026 |
| | Judith Dolben | 2018 – 2026 |
| | Martin Spain | 2021 – 2026 |
| | <i>1 vacancy</i> | |

Ex officio

Training and Development Officer
 Children and Youth Development Officer
 Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations
 Representative to URC Mission Committee
 Green Advocate
 Rural Advocate
 Lay Preaching 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)
 Deputy Safeguarding Officer
 Trust Secretary
 Line managers of Synod Safeguarding roles
 Pat Davies
 Lyn Evans
 Liz Jones
 Bethan Trott

Other Appointments

To General Assembly Councils/Committees/Panels, etc.

| | |
|--|---|
| Assembly Commission for Discipline Panel | Martha McInnes |
| Disciplinary Investigation Panel | Martin Spain |
| Interfaith enabling group | Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations |
| Safeguarding Committee | Safeguarding Officer |

To other URC networks, etc.

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Green Advocate | Eileen Newington |
| Rural Church Advocate | Julie Kirby |
| Lay Preaching Advocate | Maggie Kirkbride |
| Racial Justice Advocate | <i>appointment in progress</i> |
| A More Able Church Advocate | Julie Kirby |
| PLATO | Property Officer |
| URC Youth Representative | Leo Munnik |
| Synod Mission Enabler | <i>vacant</i> |
| URC Spirituality representative | <i>vacant</i> |
| Pilots Officer | Children and Youth Development Officer |
| Stepwise Co-ordinator | Training and Development Officer |

Appointments made by General Assembly

| | |
|--|---|
| Resource Sharing Task Group | Chris Atherton (secretary) |
| Net Zero Task Group | Judy Harris (for URC Children) Eileen Newington (for Synod Green Apostles) |
| Equalities, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee | David Salisbury (secretary) |

URC (Wales) Trust Company Limited

| | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Convener | Ian Lloyd Parry | |
| Company Secretary | Chris Atherton | |
| Assistant Secretary | Property Officer | |
| Trustees: | <u>Trust Appointed:</u> | |
| | Colin Grimes | annual appointment |
| | Ian Lloyd-Parry | annual appointment |
| | <u>Synod Appointed:</u> | |
| | Donna Jones | 2025 – 2027 |
| | Diane Moverley | 2021 – 2027 |
| | Sandra Wallace | 2017 – 2026 |
| | Simon Walkling | 2025 – 2027 |
| | <i>1 vacancy</i> | |

Synod Panel for Interviewing Ministerial Candidates

| | |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Co-ordinator: | Training and Development Officer |
| Members: | Julie Kirby |
| | Judith Negus |
| | Kathryn Price |
| | Branwen Rees |
| | Christine Roberts |
| | Jill Shelton |
| | Margot Seabourne |

Ecumenical Appointments Made by Synod

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Christian Aid | Ceri George | 2019 – 2027 |
| Commission of Covenanting Churches | Synod Moderator Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations <i>Vacancy</i> | |
| Commission of Covenanting Churches – Faith and Order Group | Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Susan Durber | |
| Cytûn Trustee | Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations | |
| 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 Julie Davies Helen Dowdell Wendy Tansill <i>Vacancy</i> | 2020 – 2028 2025 – 2027 2025 – 2027 2021 – 2028 |
| URC/Methodist Liaison Group | Synod Moderator Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Noel Davies Colin Harrison Stella Hayton | 2021 – 2025 2016 – 2025 2021 – 2025 |
| Church in Wales Governing Body | Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations | |
| Covenanted Baptists | Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations | |

Appendix B: Synod Faith in Action Committee Terms of Reference

Membership:

- Convener (*appointed by Synod*)
- Synod Moderator (*ex officio*)
- Synod Clerk (*ex officio*)
- Training and Development Officer (*ex officio*)
- Officer for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations (*ex officio*)
- Children and Youth Development Officer (*ex officio*)
- Mission Enabler (*ex officio*)
- Green Advocate (*ex officio*)
- Rural Advocate (*ex officio*)
- Racial Justice Advocate (*ex officio*)
- A More Able Church Advocate (*ex officio*)
- four representatives from across the Synod (from nominations; chosen to ensure balance)

Meeting:

Quarterly

Responsible for:

The Synod Faith in Action Committee supports the National Synod of Wales' development and outreach in terms of:

- implementation of synod priorities and mission strategy
- evangelism and witness
- public issues
- community engagement
- pioneering
- ecumenical and interfaith relations
- intergenerational worship
- global and intercultural ministries
- racial justice and legacies of slavery
- ministry among children, young people and young adults, intentionally listening to their voices
- eco church and net zero advocacy
- lay learning
- world justice through the URC's Commitment for Life programme
- reporting to Synod Meeting

Appendix C: Synod Aspirations

The National Synod of Wales is made up of the members of the churches of the United Reformed Church, including Local Ecumenical Partnerships, who are supported by a team of officers and staff known as the Synod Support Team.

Together we serve the communities of Wales, travelling together as **the Whole People of God** to fulfil **our part in God's Mission**.

The Synod Support Team utilise a variety of tools and an Appreciative Inquiry mindset to CONNECT, SUPPORT and ENABLE churches in their work, recognising that those on the ground are best placed to understand the needs of their own local communities.

Connect

Relationships are at the heart of what it means to be a Christian. We are one body in Christ and our connections make us stronger and more resilient. We are greater than the sum of our parts and love is the power that binds us.

We CONNECT churches with each other, with the wider church, with other denominations and with the wider world through:

- Sharing good news
- Worship
- Networks
- Meetings
- Gatherings
- Road shows
- Ecumenical Partnerships
- Partnerships with
 - CYTUN
 - Liaison groups with PCW and Methodist Church in Wales
 - Free Church Council of Wales
 - Commission of Covenanted Churches
 - Interfaith Council for Wales
 - Presbyterian Church of Korea
 - The wider URC
 - Wales Christian Safeguarding Forum

Support

Some things are essential to the wellbeing of any church and the Synod Support Team provides direct practical support to any local church that needs it.

We SUPPORT churches to serve to the best of their abilities by providing guidance and practical help with:

- Training
- Property
- Safeguarding
- Intergenerational work
- Ecumenical relations
- Governance
- Finance
- Lay Leadership
- Projects
- Pastoral care
- Funding
- Leading worship
- Rural Advocacy

Enable

By giving people the right tools, resources and opportunities, we can enable them to live out their own discipleship and contribute to the mission of the local church.

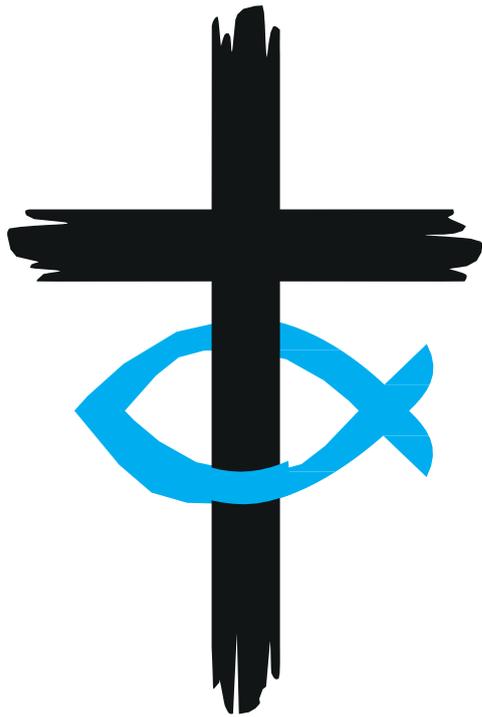
We ENABLE churches to grow together and widen their outlook by instigating or engaging with relevant programmes and organisations such as:

- [Eco Church](#)
- [A More Able Church](#)
- [Stepwise](#)
- [LyCiG](#)
- [Inclusive Church](#)
- [Children & Youth Friendly Church](#)
- [Roof Breakers](#)
- [Place for Hope](#)
- [Trussell](#)
- [Christian Aid Cymru](#)
- [JPIT](#)
- [Legacies of Slavery](#)

Key documents

All this work is underpinned by the following policies and procedures:

- [Our part in God's Mission](#)
- [The Whole People of God](#)
- [Good Practice](#)
- [Synod Ecumenical and Interfaith Policy](#)
- [Synod Environmental Policy](#)
- [Welsh Language Policy](#)



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

**National Synod of Wales,
and
The URC (Wales) Trust
Safeguarding policy**

Safeguarding policy



The United Reformed Church
National Synod of Wales

Yr Eglwys Ddiwygiedig Unedig
Synod Cenedlaethol Cymru

1. Aims and purpose of this policy

The aim of this policy is to promote and highlight safeguarding, prevent abuse, provide support to the survivors of abuse, and protect all vulnerable people (both children and adults) at Synod level, and in the work the Synod carries out for local churches. This ensures that we have clear procedures for taking appropriate action following the raising of safeguarding concerns involving children or adults within our Synod, or those who attend our activities and events. It also ensures that there is an understanding within the Synod and its local churches of safeguarding issues and to seek assurance that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place within its local churches.

Safeguarding is integral to the mission of the United Reformed Church and a part of its response and witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ. Safeguarding is underpinned by Jesus' command to his followers to 'love one another as I have loved you' (John 13:34-35). Because Jesus' ministry is continued in and through the Church, it is our call to 'to live out, in joyful and sacrificial service to all ... that ministry of caring, forgiving and healing love which Jesus Christ brought to all whom he met' (The Manual A11). As such, we, National Synod of Wales, and the URC (Wales) Trust aspire to be a loving community, offering a welcoming environment in which people can flourish, safe from harm.

The policy should be read in line with the URC's Good Practice 6 Wales edition guidance and resources which can be found [here](#).

2. Who this policy applies to

This policy applies to both National Synod of Wales, and the URC (Wales) Trust Company Ltd.

Where the term 'Synod' is used within this policy, it refers also to the URC (Wales) Trust. It is therefore relevant to Synod trustees, paid Synod staff, volunteers and those who supervise them. It is also helpful as guidance to local churches within the Synod, as it clarifies the relationship between churches and the Synod relating to safeguarding, as well as the responsibility that the Synod has to both support and monitor the safeguarding practice within local churches.

3. Definitions

National Synod of Wales is the regional administrative grouping of United Reformed Churches across Wales.

There are 72 churches in this grouping. A small team of staff support the functioning and ministry of these churches.

The URC (Wales) Trust Company Ltd. is a Charitable Trust and accountable Synod body. It oversees financial governance and probity of the Synod, employs Synod staff, and ensures that the Synod is complying with Charity Law and carrying out its responsibilities appropriately and in the public interest. Safeguarding is an important aspect of these responsibilities.

Children includes anyone aged under 18 years. The Children Act 2004 (section 11) places a duty on a range of organisations to have in place arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Please also refer to The [Wales Safeguarding Procedures](#) that help practitioners apply the legislation [Social Services and Wellbeing \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) and statutory safeguarding guidance [Working Together to Safeguard People](#).

Adults at risk includes any adult of any age, who may be vulnerable due to a permanent or temporary illness or disability, or who have been made vulnerable by their circumstances which include domestic abuse and discrimination. Statutory guidance describes adults at risk who need safeguarding as those who:

- have needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and
- are experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect: and
- as a result of those care and support needs are unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

4. Statement of safeguarding principles

Safeguarding is taken seriously by the National Synod of Wales, and The URC (Wales) Trust. We believe that children and adults have a right to live in a way that does not cause them harm or impede their human rights, and we support the URC's denominational Safeguarding Statement which can be found [here](#).

We therefore acknowledge their right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, or beliefs. We will follow legislation, statutory guidance and recognised good practice. We believe that domestic abuse in all its forms is unacceptable and inconsistent with a Christian way of living.

Within the Synod we will:

- encourage good practice in safeguarding in local churches within the Synod.
- seek to establish a caring environment in which there is an informed vigilance about the dangers of abuse.
- appoint a Synod Safeguarding Officer (SSO) to advise churches and Synod, whilst recognising that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- organise Synod activities in such a way as to promote a safe environment and minimize the risk of harm to children and adults.
- follow a safer recruitment process for the selection and appointment of people to work with children or adults at risk, whether voluntary or paid, lay, or ordained.
- provide appropriate support and supervision, resources, and training, to those who work with children and adults.
- use rigorous and careful supervision to protect people from the risks associated with known offenders within the Synod.

All concerns and allegations of abuse will be responded to appropriately, including referring to the Police and Social Care if necessary, either Adult or Children's. We will co-operate with the Police, Children's and Adult's Services in any investigation, will follow multi agency decisions and will maintain confidentiality of any investigations to those directly involved.

All concerns or allegations concerning Synod activities, staff, or volunteers should be addressed to one of the Synod Safeguarding personnel:

Synod Safeguarding Officer:

Name: **Lee Whyman**

Contact phone number: **07883361093**

Email address: lee.whyman.urcwailes@urc.org.uk

Deputy Synod Safeguarding Officer:

Name: Judy Harris

Contact phone number: 07967 951727

Email address: judy.harris.urcwailes@urc.org.uk

Lead Safeguarding Person

Name: Chris Atherton

Contact phone number: 07836 264223

Email address: chris.atherton.urcwailes@urc.org.uk

5. Duty of care and confidentiality

We have a duty of care to beneficiaries of the Synod, either adults or children. We will maintain confidentiality except in circumstances where to do so would place the individual or another individual at risk of harm.

6. Promoting and monitoring safeguarding in local churches

General Assembly 2021 passed resolutions to make additions to the structure which included:

Functions of Synod:

- a) to appoint a Synod Safeguarding Officer or equivalent.
- b) to have oversight of, and to support, monitor and report safeguarding related activities and issues within local churches, and amongst ministers, officers, and staff of the Synod.
- c) to take all necessary powers and actions positively to promote implementation of good practice in accordance with the safeguarding policy statement adopted by the General Assembly.
- d) to adopt best safeguarding practice for all its own activities and events.

Addition to rules of procedure for Synod:

- a) to appoint a Synod Safeguarding Officer with the necessary experience, qualifications and current knowledge.
- b) to arrange for safeguarding training as appropriate.
- c) to collate church safeguarding returns and forward them to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The Synod Safeguarding Officer (SSO) and Deputy Safeguarding Officer will be available to offer advice and support to local churches on safeguarding matters.

The Synod will also have a Safeguarding Reference Group made up of comprising of the SSO, the Deputy SSO, the lead Trustee for Safeguarding, and at least 3 or 4 suitably qualified or experienced people, (with a professional background in social care, nursing, safeguarding, governance, police, probation etc.) who serve within the National Synod of Wales or who are independent to the National Synod of Wales but can hold it to account in a professional capacity.

Where those who may present a risk to others are identified within local churches, the Synod Safeguarding Officer will work with the church to draw up an appropriate agreement with all relevant parties, following Good Practice Guidance.

The National Synod of Wales will encourage all local churches to adopt and implement good practice policies for safeguarding children and adults, in line with the latest edition of the United Reformed Church's good practice guidelines. The rationale for encouraging all churches to do this is as follows:

- Churches actively working with children or adults should do this in order to safeguard the vulnerable, reassure parents / carers and partner organizations, and protect leaders from false allegations.
- Churches not currently working with children should still be prepared with a policy so that they are ready as and when children get involved in the church.
- In order to keep up the reputation of the National Synod of Wales and United Reformed Church as a whole, and therefore its member churches, the National Synod of Wales is a body which takes safeguarding seriously and is seen to do so.
- To align with the National Wales Safeguarding Training Learning and Development framework and to implement relevant General Assembly Resolutions, the National Synod of Wales will offer and publicise safeguarding training opportunities to those in local churches who work with children or adults around the Synod, encouraging them to undertake appropriate safeguarding training every three years. Ministers will complete safeguarding training every three years to at least Intermediate/Group B level. All training will be in line with the Social Care Wales National Safeguarding Training, Learning and Development Framework, and the URC training matrix which can be found by clicking [here](#).

Safeguarding good practice in local churches and the Synod will be monitored. This will be overseen by the Synod Safeguarding Officer and reported to the Synod Executive and Synod Trust meetings. Churches will be asked to complete an Annual Church Safeguarding Return. Once the returns have been collated, a report will be provided to the Trust to consider the findings and agree what action needs to be taken.

7. Preventing abuse and harm in Synod events and activities

Activities will be organized in accordance with URC good practice guidelines so as promote a safe environment and healthy relationships whilst minimizing opportunities for harm and misunderstanding or false accusation. For each event, risk assessments will be carried out, appropriate consent forms will be used for activities with children and young people, appropriate records will be kept (see URC Record Keeping policy for further details, available from Synod office), and adequate insurance will be in place for each event.

We are committed to safer recruitment and appointment of all paid staff and volunteers and will ensure that these procedures are followed, which include:

- asking applicants to complete an application form
- providing workers with role/job descriptions and person specifications
- obtaining Disclosure and Barring checks where legally entitled to do so
- taking up two references (not family) and
- interviewing candidates.

Training in safeguarding will be provided and volunteers and paid staff will be given support related to safeguarding in their role by the Synod Safeguarding Officer and Deputy Safeguarding Officer

All trustees, paid staff and volunteers will agree to work within a Code of Conduct (see [here](#) for working with Adults; and [here](#) for working with under 18's) and understand that there may be action taken if this code is not followed, possibly involving suspension or termination of working/volunteering with us.

Synod staff and volunteers communicating with children and young people online (e.g. through social media or use of video calls) as part of Synod initiatives (such as Synod Youth Exec) should comply with the guidelines set out in <https://urc.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-good-practice/> Wales edition.

8. Recognizing and responding to concerns of abuse

What are we protecting from? A copy of the definitions of abuse relating to children and adults can be found in Good Practice 6 Wales edition (page56) by clicking [here](#).

How to recognize abuse It is important to be aware of possible signs and symptoms of abuse. A list of such possible signs and symptoms in relation to children and in adults can be found in Good Practice 6 Wales edition (page56) by [here](#). Some signs could be indicators of a number of different categories.

It is essential to note that these are only indicators of possible abuse. There may be other, innocent, reasons for any of these signs and/or behaviour. They will, however, be a guide to assist in assessing whether abuse of one form or another is a possible explanation for a child or adult's behaviour or appearance.

What to do if a worker notices indicators of possible abuse?

If indicators of possible abuse give cause for concern, then the worker should inform the person responsible for safeguarding at the event as soon as possible. This is often the leader in charge of an event. Alternatively inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer directly. **Do not discuss with anybody else.**

Make a **written** record of the allegation, disclosure or incident and **sign and date** this record and pass this onto the person responsible for safeguarding at the event, who will liaise with the Synod Safeguarding personnel to decide what action needs to be taken. There is a proforma in the resources of *Good Practice 6*. Any such records will be stored securely on the URC's case management system.

If any of the Synod safeguarding personnel are implicated in the allegation, refer to the Synod Moderator. In the case of the Synod Moderator being implicated, refer to the General Secretary of the URC at Church House.

What to do if there is a disclosure or allegation of abuse

If a child or an adult makes a disclosure that they are being abused and/or an allegation of abuse against someone, it is important that the person being told:

- stays calm and listens carefully
- reassures them that they have done the right thing in telling you
- does not investigate or ask leading questions
- does not promise to keep secret what they have been told
- explains that they will need to tell someone else.

Inform the person responsible for safeguarding at the event as soon as possible. This is often the leader in charge of an event. Alternatively inform the Synod Safeguarding Officer directly. **Do not discuss with anybody else.**

Make a **written** record of the allegation, disclosure or incident and **sign and date** this record and pass this onto the person responsible for safeguarding at the event, who will liaise with the Synod safeguarding personnel to decide what action needs to be taken. [Resource F1](#) from *GP6 Wales edition* provides a template for recording concerns. Any such records will be stored securely on the URC's case management system.

If any of the Synod safeguarding personnel are implicated in the allegation, refer to the Synod Moderator. In the case of the Synod Moderator being implicated, refer to the General Secretary of the URC at Church House.

Procedure in the event of a concern

If there is an immediate threat of harm, the police should be contacted.

Where it is judged that there is no immediate threat of harm the following will occur:

- The concern will be discussed with the Synod Safeguarding Officer and a decision made as to whether the concern warrants a referral to statutory agencies.
- A confidential record will be made of the observations and/or conversation and the surrounding circumstances. This record will be kept securely in a locked filing cabinet at the Synod Office. A copy will be passed to statutory agencies if a referral is made.
- The person about whom the allegation has been made must not be informed by anyone in the Synod if it is judged that to do so would place a child or adult at increased risk of further harm.

Who to contact in the case of a concern

Synod Safeguarding Officer

Name: Lee Whyman

Contact phone number: **07883361093**

Email: lee.whyman.urcwailes@urc.org.uk

The Synod Safeguarding Officer will refer concerns to the Adult and/or Children's Social Care Department of the relevant local authority depending on the particulars of each case.

If someone working on behalf of the Synod (paid or volunteer) is alleged or known to have harmed children or adults

The Synod Safeguarding Officer will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer/ Designated Officer for Safeguarding. A decision will be taken about when to inform the member of staff or volunteer. The timing and method will be discussed and agreed with the LADO/DOS and the Synod should follow this decision.

The Synod Safeguarding Officer will inform the Moderator, relevant Synod staff and the safeguarding coordinator of the local church to which that person belongs and advise on the implications for that person's involvement with children or adults at risk in the local church and in Synod activities, both during any investigation and following the outcome of any investigation. Information will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis.

In accordance with the law, a referral will be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

if the church withdraws permission for an individual to engage in Regulated Activity OR would have done so had that individual not resigned, retired, been made redundant or been transferred to a position which did not involve Regulated Activity because the employer believes that the individual has engaged in relevant conduct or satisfied the harm test or has committed an offence that would lead to automatic inclusion on a barred list.

As a registered charity, the Synod is required to notify the Charity Commission of any safeguarding serious incidents.

Sources of advice, guidance, and support to Synod

United Reformed Church Safeguarding Team:

Tel. 0207 520 2729

Email: safeguarding@urc.org.uk

9. Complaints

Should anyone have any concerns or complaints about safeguarding in Synod, please contact the Synod Moderator:

Name: Revd David Salsbury

Synod Office: Minster Road, Cardiff CF24 5AS

Telephone: 07547 983063

Email: david.salsbury.urcwailes@urc.org.uk

It would be preferable to have complaints in writing, as this avoids any possible misunderstanding about what the issue is. However, whether verbal or in writing, complaints will be acted upon.

10. Review

This policy should be reviewed annually by the Synod* amending and updating it as required in the light of such changes as: Synod safeguarding personnel and contact details; changes to URC Good Practice guidance; changes to statutory safeguarding requirements; changes to procedure arising from review of safeguarding cases.

Date of most recent review:

Date of next review:

Signed:

(on behalf of Synod)

Role:

Appendix E: Synod Green Team role descriptions

Caring for Creation in the National Synod of Wales

The National Synod of Wales affirms that care for creation, a just and sustainable relationship with the earth, and an active concern for the whole of God's good creation are fundamental Gospel commitments.

We know that human activity is responsible for the degradation of the earth through climate change. This is not the way that God would want it to be. It is harming the web of life, the balance of nature, and impacting most heavily upon the poorest people of the world.

We seek to care for creation and to enable the earth to flourish by considering the ecological impact of everything we do and minimising our carbon footprint, in accordance with the [URC Environmental Policy](#)

National Synod of Wales

Caring for God's creation is one of the Synod's mission criteria and in 2023 we were delighted to achieve an Eco Synod Bronze Award in recognition of the commitment to creation care demonstrated by our churches and the Synod overall.

Currently the Wales Synod has seventeen churches, plus the Synod office, with Eco Church awards – two gold, four silver and twelve bronze. There are another eleven churches registered and working towards bronze awards.

Synod Meeting took the decision in 2019 to divest from fossil fuels.

The Synod Creation Care Steering Group (CCSG) has created resources to help churches with many different aspects of their creation care action. Please take a look at the Eco Church section on the [Synod website](#)

Green Team

We are hoping to build a team of committed volunteers across the Synod to enable good communication, collaboration and support for each other as we seek to increase creation care awareness and action and grow together as Eco Churches and an Eco Synod.

Ideally the **Green Team** will include one or more Synod Green Advocates, Regional or Pastorate Eco Friends, and at least one Church Eco Friend in every congregation.

Role Description for Synod Green Advocate

Role Description

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Role Title | Synod Green Advocate |
| Main Points of Contact | Synod Creation Care Steering Group Synod Faith in Action Committee Synod Support Team |
| Connected Roles | Member of Synod Creation Care Steering Group Member of URC Green Apostles Group |
| Sources of Support | Synod Support Team A Rocha's Eco Church Resources URC Synod of Wales website |
| Location | National Synod of Wales |
| Time Commitment | Flexible, depending on the needs of the role and the capacity of the role holder. |
| Remuneration | Volunteers are not remunerated. The URC will ensure financial expenses incurred by volunteers while engaged in work related to this role will be reimbursed, in accordance with the URC expenses policy. |

Background:

The National Synod of Wales affirms that care for creation, a just and sustainable relationship with the earth, and an active concern for the whole of God's good creation are fundamental Gospel commitments.

We know that human activity is responsible for the degradation of the earth through climate change. This is not the way that God would want it to be. It is harming the web of life, the balance of nature, and impacting most heavily upon the poorest people of the world.

We seek to care for creation and to enable the earth to flourish by considering the ecological impact of everything we do and minimising our carbon footprint, in accordance with the [URC Environmental Policy](#).

Role Summary:

We are building a team of committed volunteers across the Synod to enable good communication, collaboration and support for each other as we seek to increase creation care awareness and action and grow together as Eco Churches and an Eco Synod. Ideally the Green Team will include one or more Synod Green Advocates, Regional or Pastorate Eco Friends, and at least one Church Eco Friend in every congregation.

Every synod has at least one Green Advocate (or Apostle) appointed by synod officers. You would have some freedom to shape your own role outside some central expectations.

Principal responsibilities and duties

A Synod Green Advocate is expected to

1. work as part of the Wales Synod Creation Care Steering Group
2. work alongside Regional/Pastorate (R/P) Eco Friends and Church Eco Friends to promote, encourage and enable A Rocha's Eco Church scheme in local churches
3. attend Synod Meetings to cultivate connections with Eco Friends, and to report and celebrate Eco Church successes and dedicated creation care action in local churches
4. become a member of the URC Green Apostles' Group (meets twice a year on zoom to share news, ideas and information)

A Synod Green Advocate is encouraged to

- report to the Synod Faith in Action Committee (meets four times a year on zoom or in person)
- contribute to the Synod newsletter and encourage contributions from churches
- collaborate with Synod Support Team to report and celebrate Eco Church progress and to monitor, where possible, carbon emissions across the Synod
- meet regularly on zoom with Regional/Pastorate Eco Friends
- keep informed of new campaigns and initiatives (e.g. Christian Aid, Green Christian, Climate Cymru) and share information with Regional/Pastorate Eco Friends
- promote the URC Environmental Policy 2023 with Regional/Pastorate Eco Friends and highlight useful guidance for churches e.g. A Rocha resources, CCSG resources on Synod website

Expected Standards

1. Promote a culture of open and effective communication.
2. Actively foster an environment which nurtures equality and cherishes diversity.
3. Take responsibility for own personal development and develop skills and knowledge applicable to this role.
4. Ensure compliance with safeguarding practice.

This role description reflects the overall scope and responsibilities of the role. However, it may change and evolve over time in order to meet organisational needs and this role description will therefore be subject to periodic review and change if required.

Role Description for Regional/Pastorate Eco Friend

Role Description

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Role Title | Regional/Pastorate Eco Friend |
| Main Points of Contact | Synod Green Advocate Synod Creation Care Steering Group |
| Connected Roles | n/a |
| Sources of Support | Synod Green Advocate Synod Support Team A Rocha's Eco Church resources URC Synod of Wales website |
| Location | National Synod of Wales |
| Time Commitment | Flexible, depending on the needs of the role and the capacity of the role holder. |
| Remuneration | Volunteers are not remunerated. The URC will ensure financial expenses incurred by volunteers while engaged in work related to this role will be reimbursed, in accordance with the URC expenses policy. |

Background:

The National Synod of Wales affirms that care for creation, a just and sustainable relationship with the earth, and an active concern for the whole of God's good creation are fundamental Gospel commitments.

We know that human activity is responsible for the degradation of the earth through climate change. This is not the way that God would want it to be. It is harming the web of life, the balance of nature, and impacting most heavily upon the poorest people of the world.

We seek to care for creation and to enable the earth to flourish by considering the ecological impact of everything we do and minimising our carbon footprint, in accordance with the [URC Environmental Policy](#).

Role Summary:

We are building a team of committed volunteers across the Synod to enable good communication, collaboration and support for each other as we seek to increase creation care awareness and action and grow together as Eco Churches and an Eco Synod. Ideally the Green Team will include one or more Synod Green Advocates, Regional or Pastorate Eco Friends, and at least one Church Eco Friend in every congregation.

The Regional/Pastorate Eco Friend is a new post which we hope will increase communication and collaboration between churches taking creation care action. Connecting with other churches and their creation care leads, both within the URC and other denominations, is an invaluable part of the Eco Church journey for any church.

Principal responsibilities and duties

There would be some freedom for you to shape your role depending on the size and geography of your region, but ideally you would:

1. actively encourage and enable engagement with the Eco Church Starter Questionnaire and A Rocha's Eco Church scheme within the churches in your region/pastorate
2. meet regularly on zoom with the Green Advocate and act as a link between the GA and local churches
3. if possible, meet on zoom or in person with the Eco Friends or creation care leads in your churches
4. share Eco news within relevant Regional or Pastorate meetings

Some suggestions on how further to support your churches:

- encourage churches to appoint at least one Eco Friend
- as necessary, help churches with registration onto the Eco Church scheme
- share creation care resources with lay preachers and worship leaders and encourage a creation care focus within worship when appropriate e.g. Season of Creation, celebrating the seasons of the year, special worship times throughout the year
- keep informed about annual initiatives (e.g. Show the Love, Great Big Green Week, Caring for God's Acre) and share with churches

Expected Standards

1. Promote a culture of open and effective communication.
2. Actively foster an environment which nurtures equality and cherishes diversity.
3. Take responsibility for own personal development and develop skills and knowledge applicable to this role.
4. Ensure compliance with safeguarding practice.

This role description reflects the overall scope and responsibilities of the role. However, it may change and evolve over time in order to meet organisational needs and this role description will therefore be subject to periodic review and change if required.

Role Description for Church Eco Friend

Role Description

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Role Title | Church Eco Friend |
| Main Points of Contact | Synod Green Advocate Regional/Pastorate Eco Friend |
| Connected Roles | n/a |
| Sources of Support | Synod Green Advocate Regional/Pastorate Eco Friend Synod Support Team A Rocha's Eco Church resources URC Synod of Wales website |
| Location | National Synod of Wales |
| Time Commitment | Flexible, depending on the needs of the role and the capacity of the role holder. |
| Remuneration | Volunteers are not remunerated. The URC will ensure financial expenses incurred by volunteers while engaged in work related to this role will be reimbursed, in accordance with the URC expenses policy. |

Background:

The National Synod of Wales affirms that care for creation, a just and sustainable relationship with the earth, and an active concern for the whole of God's good creation are fundamental Gospel commitments.

We know that human activity is responsible for the degradation of the earth through climate change. This is not the way that God would want it to be. It is harming the web of life, the balance of nature, and impacting most heavily upon the poorest people of the world.

We seek to care for creation and to enable the earth to flourish by considering the ecological impact of everything we do and minimising our carbon footprint, in accordance with the [URC Environmental Policy](#).

Role Summary:

We are building a team of committed volunteers across the Synod to enable good communication, collaboration and support for each other as we seek to increase creation care awareness and action and grow together as Eco Churches and an Eco Synod. Ideally the Green Team will include one or more Synod Green Advocates, Regional or Pastorate Eco Friends, and at least one Church Eco Friend in every congregation.

Some Eco Friends have been caring for creation within their church and community for years. Others are just starting out. Wherever your church is on its Eco Church journey and whatever your capacity for action, please consider becoming an Eco Friend – we would welcome you onto the Green Team.

Principal responsibilities and duties

As a Church Eco Friend, we would like you to:

1. be the hopeful and persistent voice for creation care and climate justice within your church
2. promote the Eco Church Starter Questionnaire and take first steps with your church
3. register your church on A Rocha's Eco Church scheme
4. speak to your Regional/Pastorate Eco Friend and/or the Synod Green Advocate - share your news, challenges and ideas and ask for help whenever you need it

Here are some more ideas to help you take the creation care lead in your church:

- collaborate with your minister, Elders and lay preachers
- invite different groups to lead worship, setting Eco Church and creation care at the heart of church services
- engage with young people in your church or community - listen to their concerns and ideas and give them opportunities to get involved
- encourage discussions on how to reduce your church's carbon footprint and look at the appropriate guidance and resources
- engage ecumenically with local churches and partner with other local groups
- consider approaching your MS, MP and councillors about environmental issues
- remember your Regional/Pastorate Eco Friend or the Green Advocate are happy to answer any questions

Expected Standards

1. Promote a culture of open and effective communication.
2. Actively foster an environment which nurtures equality and cherishes diversity.
3. Take responsibility for own personal development and develop skills and knowledge applicable to this role.
4. Ensure compliance with safeguarding practice.

This role description reflects the overall scope and responsibilities of the role. However, it may change and evolve over time in order to meet organisational needs and this role description will therefore be subject to periodic review and change if required.

Appendix F: Standing Orders for Hybrid Meetings

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

1. The agenda of the Assembly

1.1 At its meetings the Assembly shall consider reports and draft motions prepared by its committees which include the Assembly Executive or by Synods, and motions and amendments of which due notice has been given submitted by individual members of the Assembly.

2. In-person, virtual, and hybrid meetings

2.1 A meeting may be in-person, virtual, or hybrid. The boundaries between these descriptions are not always clear. A generally in-person meeting may have a minority of members joining the meeting by virtual means. A virtual meeting may have some participants gathered together in one place. In any event, what is always strictly essential is that all participants, both in-person and virtual, can fully see and hear each other in all directions, and that the Moderator is totally confident that participants are able to see and hear each other effectively. The Moderator must also be content and comfortable that they can manage full and proper participation from all participants in the meeting.

3. Records of meetings

3.1 Any streaming and/or recording of meetings, including subtitles or captions, does not replace the formal minutes of the meeting and is not a record of the decisions made. Formal minutes shall continue to be maintained and retained.

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

4. Operating procedure

4.1 Meetings will commence when the Moderator opens the meeting, within the requirements set out in the Rules of Procedure.

4.2 At the start of any meeting the Moderator shall make reasonable efforts to confirm that any members attending virtually can see and hear, and be seen and heard. The meeting shall not start until the Moderator is so satisfied.

4.3 Where available, participants joining a meeting virtually should normally use video as well as audio. Where video is not available, or it is not safe for the attendee to use video, then audio only may be used.

4.4 The Meeting will finish when the Moderator formally closes the meeting.

4.5 All microphones should be set to mute at the start of the meeting, apart from the Moderator and any necessary technical staff. Microphones should only be unmuted when a participant is speaking.

4.6 The Moderator has absolute discretion to pause or adjourn the meeting at any time, and to remove any attendees from the meeting if their conduct falls short of the standards expected in church.

4.7 In all but the smallest meetings, it is helpful if the Moderator is not also the online 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 meetings.

4.8 In any event, no technical failure shall invalidate any decisions made.

5. Attendance

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

6. Interpretation of Standing Orders

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

7. Presentation of business

7.1 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.

7.2 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.

7.3 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 7.2 above.

7.4 A member of the Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion (which notice must include the name of a seconder) to be included in the Assembly agenda. If the subject matter of such a notice of motion appears to the General Secretary to be an infringement of the rights of a Synod through which the matter could properly have been raised, the General Secretary shall inform the member accordingly and bring the matter before the Business Committee which shall advise the Assembly as to the procedure to be followed.

7.5 Proposals for amendments to the Basis and Structure of the URC, which may be made by the Assembly Executive 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.

7.6 It shall not be in order at any time to move a motion or amendment which:

7.6.1 contravenes any part of the Basis of Union, or

7.6.2 involves the Church in expenditure without prior consideration by the appropriate committee, or

7.6.3 pre-empts discussion of a matter to be considered later in the agenda, or

7.6.4 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

7.6.5 is not related to the report of a committee and has not been the subject of 21 days' notice under Standing Order 7.4, or

7.6.6 simply reaffirms existing work.

The decision of the Moderator (in the case of 7.6.1, 7.6.2, 7.6.3, 7.6.5, and 7.6.6) and of the Moderator with the Clerk and the General Secretary (in the case of 7.6.4) on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.

7.7 In advance of the meeting, the General Secretary shall, in consultation with the Moderator and Clerk, prepare a proposal for a Facilitation Group for that meeting, for appointment at the beginning of the meeting. Some or all of the members of the Facilitation Group may be called upon by the Moderator at any time to help the Assembly reach a mind upon a question. The Assembly may add or remove members of the Facilitation Group at any time. The Facilitation Group may consult with whoever they deem it appropriate. Draft revised wording of motions should be checked by the Clerk, and by the Legal Advisor where appropriate, before being proposed to the Assembly.

8. En bloc business

8.1 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 six 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.

9. Business requiring discussion

9.1 It is not possible to use full Consensus Decision-Making during many meetings, since Consensus Decision-Making relies upon the Moderator being able to sense the mood of the meeting, and the members also being able to sense that and trust the Moderator, which requires senses not always available in online meetings or meetings with online participants. However, all meetings should still be conducted in the spirit and ethos of seeking consensus.

9.2 To ensure that all meetings always operate to the same procedure, noting the blurred boundaries referred to in Standing Order 2, all meetings will use the information session and the discussion session from Consensus Decision-Making, and then take a vote for the actual decision-making.

9.3 All decisions shall be made by vote, using the procedure set out in Standing Order 10. 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, using the principle

that routine formal decisions such as agreeing the minutes of the previous meeting might reasonably be taken on a simple majority, whereas matters of policy require a greater level of support than a simple majority. This Standing Order does not override any other provision for a specific majority set out elsewhere in the Standing Orders, particularly procedural motions.

10. Information and discussion sessions

10.1 The first stage is the information session. During the information session, members of Assembly may ask questions only to seek clarification or further information.

10.2 Once the Moderator decides that the information session has ended, the Assembly moves into the discussion session, in which the substance of the matter may be discussed.

10.2.1 The methods used may include prayer, buzz groups, group discussions, speeches to the whole Assembly, time for thinking during a break, etc. The Moderator may invite Assembly to indicate opinions by the use of coloured cards at this stage or electronic equivalent, and shall ensure that the full ranges of voices are given opportunity to contribute.

10.2.2 Minor changes of wording may be agreed as the discussion proceeds. If a proposed change is, in the opinion of the Moderator upon the advice of the Clerk, a major change, then a proposer and seconder are required and it is an amendment.

10.3 When the Moderator senses that the Assembly may be ready to reach a decision, the Moderator shall state that Assembly is moving into the decision session.

11. Decision session

11.1 All decisions shall preferably be made by vote. Those participating virtually should normally use any built in voting mechanism in the software. In a very small meeting, where the Moderator can see everyone at once, it may be possible to resolve this informally.

11.2 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.

12. Business and procedural motions

12.1 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.

12.2 A report presented to the Assembly by a committee or Synod, under Standing Order 7.1, shall be received for debate, unless notice has been duly given under Standing Order 7.4 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.

12.3 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.

- 12.4 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 12.12, 12.13, and 12.14. The procedural motions in Standing Orders 12.12, 12.13, and 12.14 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.
- 12.5 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.
- 12.6 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 or as a further motion.
- 12.7 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.
- 12.8 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.
- 12.9 The mover may, with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly, alter the motion or amendment proposed.
- 12.10 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.
- 12.11 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.
- 12.11.1 When such draft alternative motions have been received by the General Secretary, the Moderators may ask the General Secretary to convene a meeting (in-person 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.
- 12.11.2 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.
- 12.11.3 After any amendments duly moved under Standing Order 12 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.

12.11.4 Once a sole motion remains, further discussion is permissible and votes for and against that motion shall be taken in the normal way.

12.12 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. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. Should the motion be carried, the business shall immediately end and the Assembly shall proceed to the next business.

12.13 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.

12.14 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.

13. Timing of speeches and of other business

13.1 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.

- 13.2 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.
- 13.3 Save by the prior agreement of the Business Committee, speeches made in support of the motions from any Assembly committee, including the Assembly Executive, or from any Synod, shall not exceed five minutes per resolution, and in aggregate not exceed 15 minutes (e.g. a committee with four motions may not exceed 15 minutes), unless a longer period be recommended by the Business Committee or determined by the Moderator.
- 13.4 Each subsequent speaker in any debate shall be allowed five 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.
- 13.5 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.
- 13.6 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. Staff should not normally seek permission from the Moderator to speak outside their area of responsibility.
- 13.7 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.
- 13.8 The foregoing Standing Order (13.7) 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.
- 13.9 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.

14. Questions

- 14.1 A member may, if two 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.
- 14.2 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.
- 14.3 Questions asked under Standing Order 14 shall be put and answered without discussion.

15. Points of order, personal explanations, dissent

- 15.1 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.

- 15.2 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.
- 15.3 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.
- 15.4 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.

16. Admission of the public and closed sessions

- 16.1 Only those who are members of the meeting, staff members in attendance, or invited guests may join a meeting. However, a meeting in open session may allow guests or be shown as a live stream.
- 16.2 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.
- 16.3 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.
- 16.4 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.
- 16.5 Members of Assembly who leave during a closed session may not be re- admitted.

17. Communications during the course of debate

- 17.1 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.

18. Record of the Assembly

- 18.1 A record of attendance at the meetings of the Assembly shall be kept in such a manner as the Business Committee may determine.
- 18.2 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.
- 18.3 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.
- 18.4 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.

19. Suspension and amendment of Standing Orders

- 19.1 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.
- 19.2 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 Assembly Executive). The Clerk of the Assembly may from time to time suggest amendments.

Person responsible for editing document: Clerk of the General Assembly

Date of last revision: August 2022