

## FRIDAY 6 JULY

### New moderators inducted

The United Reformed Church inducted two new moderators of General Assembly – the Revd Nigel Uden and Mr Derek Estill – on the opening day of Assembly. Mr Uden is Minister of Fulbourn URC and Downing Place URC, in Cambridge, and Mr Estill is church secretary and elder of Westbury Gardens URC, Blackburn. Both men will continue to fulfil their existing roles alongside their General Assembly moderatorial duties. The Immediate-past Moderators of Assembly, the Revd Kevin Watson and Mr Alan Yates, were thanked for their service during their two-year term.

### The hostile environment

The 'hostile environment' statement, incorporating Resolution 39, was presented to Assembly on Saturday. Francis Brienen, the Deputy General Secretary (Mission) explained how recent governmental policies had contributed to discrimination, job losses and social disunity, encouraging the URC to challenge these policies so that people of any nationality or background could live freely. She said: 'Recently we have witnessed, with shame, the treatment of members of the "Windrush generation" who have lost their homes, jobs and access to NHS treatment. Their treatment is just the tip of the iceberg.' Resolution 39 was passed by consensus. [bit.ly/jpithp18](http://bit.ly/jpithp18)

## SATURDAY 7 JULY

### 'Charter for children' Community awards

Assembly was asked to recommit to the 'charter for children', concerning the place of children in the URC, which was affirmed by the 1990 Assembly. Hannah Jones, URC Youth Assembly Moderator, gave an impassioned speech in favour of re-evaluating the charter for the 2020 Assembly, after full consultation with the wider Church, including children and young people. The amended motion was carried.

### Election changes

Resolution four, changing the way in which Assembly Moderators are elected, was presented by Hannah Jones, Youth Assembly Moderator. The proposed process is based on the procedure for electing the Youth Moderator, each candidate reading out their 'pen portrait' and answering a question. After some rewording, the resolution was passed by consensus, recognising disagreement. It will be referred to Mission Council, and the process used at the 2020 Assembly.

In a first for the URC's community project awards, four initiatives were declared joint winners: the Ask Centre, a poverty advice service linked to Rhyl United Church; Northallerton URC's 'secret garden'; The Meeting Place, a social cafe for isolated people in Stocksbridge; and Trinity Learning, which provides workshops for school staff and pupils in Abingdon. The scheme is sponsored by Congregational, the church insurer, which awards £2,000 and a plaque to each project.

### Faith and order

The Revd Dr Alan Spence, convenor of the faith and order committee, presented Resolution 25 on new forms of church membership. Under this proposal, each synod identifies local churches to hold the membership of people who are no longer able to attend a local church. Assembly responded warmly, while expressing concerns about pastoral care and undermining ecumenism. The resolution was passed.

### In brief

- On Friday, during the Communion service, the Revd John Proctor, URC General Secretary, led a commemoration of 97 ministers, missionaries and Church Related Community Workers who had died since the last Assembly in 2016. The names can be found at [bit.ly/urcdd18](http://bit.ly/urcdd18).

- Assembly members were formally welcomed to Nottingham by the Lord Mayor of the city, Councillor Liaqat Ali. Ecumenical guests and global partners were also welcomed.

- The '12 Faces of Hope' exhibition opened at General Assembly on Friday as part of an international tour. The exhibition launches last year to mark 50 years of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. [bit.ly/fchope](http://bit.ly/fchope)

- The URC's first church related community work (CRCW) project began in 1981. Saturday's presentation honoured 30 years since the 1987 Assembly, where CRCW was 'duly recognised'.

- A fuller report on some special interest meetings will be published in due course online at [urc.org.uk/news](http://urc.org.uk/news).

- Saturday night worship was led by URC Youth on the theme of pilgrimage. The creative service had all participants making paper aeroplanes to cast away things they were sorry for.

*This round up summarises business up until Sunday evening only. Fuller reports on Assembly business are available online at [www.urc.org.uk/news](http://www.urc.org.uk/news). Reports will also be made available in the July/August News Update and the September edition of Digest. All Assembly reporting, including this round up, is bought to you by the URC communications team. We've been working against the clock, so please forgive any errors.*

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## SATURDAY 7 JULY (CONTINUED)

### Discerning God's call

The Revd Paul Whittle, convenor of the ministries committee, presented Resolution 28 encouraging a flexible approach to ministerial calls. Mr Whittle said ministers are called in a variety of ways, so the committee is exploring whether the locus of call should move away from the local church, with calls being issued by groups of churches. The resolution was passed by consensus, recognising disagreement.

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## SUNDAY 8 JULY

### Global commitment

Resolution 31, committing to global and intercultural ministries, was presented on Saturday. When conversation turned to exploring how resources would be deployed to support this, it became clear that the resolution's intent had become lost in translation. The resolution was referred to the facilitation group and came back to Assembly on Sunday morning. The amended resolution, directing Mission Council 'to reflect and report ... on how the Church lives out this global and intercultural commitment' was passed by consensus.

### Interfaith conversation

Mr Derek Estill, Moderator of the United Reformed Church General Assembly, chaired an engaging interfaith conversation

about discipleship with three faith representatives on Sunday. The conversation focussed on the Assembly theme, 'Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today'. The film shown at Assembly about interfaith work is online at [bit.ly/intfaith18](http://bit.ly/intfaith18).

### Safeguarding

The Revd Richard Church, Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship), presented reports on safeguarding and the feedback from phase two of the URC's past case review. He praised the courage of those who had come forward, creating opportunities for learning, listening and, he hoped, healing. Mr Church introduced Ioannis Athanasiou, the URC's Safeguarding Officer, heartily commending his work. Mr Athanasiou spoke to Assembly about improvements to safeguarding in the Church.

### Assembly enjoys nine speakers

*The 2018 Assembly enjoyed nine engaging speakers over the four days. For more about these speeches, visit the web links below*

**Nigel Uden** spoke on Friday, saying: 'Let's listen to one another's melodies, each of us adding richness to the harmony.' [bit.ly/nuspeech](http://bit.ly/nuspeech)

**Kevin Watson** said in his Friday address: 'Now I know why I was to challenge us all to be generous of Spirit – because we have so much to give!' [bit.ly/kwspeech](http://bit.ly/kwspeech)

**Collin Cowan**, General Secretary of the Council for World Mission (CWM) addressed Assembly on Saturday morning, inviting the URC to persist with the CWM family on its 'journey of hope in which we are audacious'. [bit.ly/ccowanspeech](http://bit.ly/ccowanspeech)

**Amanda Mukwashi**, Christian Aid's Chief Executive, urged Christians to 'show a broken world that Christianity can heal,' on Sunday

**John Proctor** delivered a thought-provoking sermon on Sunday morning, urging Assembly members to go on 'a journey that offers hope'. [bit.ly/jpspeech](http://bit.ly/jpspeech)

**Yvonne Campbell**, General Secretary of the Congregational Federation encouraged cooperation during her Sunday speech.

**Jatinder Singh Birdi** addressed Assembly on Sunday, outlining interfaith work

**Alan Yates** and **Derek Estill** both spoke on Monday morning (after we printed *News round up*). The text of their speeches can be found at [bit.ly/urcGA](http://bit.ly/urcGA)

### *In brief continued...*

- The Revd Clare Downing and Mr Peter Pay were elected Moderators of General Assembly for 2020 to 2022.

- Assembly's Sunday morning offering raised £3,142, excluding gift aid, for the work of Church Action on Poverty.

- Assembly celebrated Training for Learning and Serving (TLS) on Sunday.

- The synod moderators' report was commended to Assembly on Sunday as a resource to help the whole Church declutter and refocus.

- Assembly watched a PowerPoint commemorating the 41 churches that had closed between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2018. [bit.ly/ccppt18](http://bit.ly/ccppt18).

- Resolutions 1-3 (nominations), 23 (Equalities and URC Youth), 26 (annual accounts), 27 (active ministers), 32 (nominations) en bloc resolutions were passed on Sunday.

- Resolution five, proposing that elders promise to seek the Church's wellbeing, purity and peace, was passed. The General Secretary explained that this resolution needed to be referred to synods and local churches.

- The 20s to 40s task group reported on of four years' work on Sunday, finding that the age range was missing from the institutional church but not the church of God. The group urged churches to engage with the report at local and regional levels, then act on its conclusions.

- A formal statement was made on Sunday about relations between the URC and the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The statement can be read online at [bit.ly/urcpci18](http://bit.ly/urcpci18).

- Assembly heard reports from the safeguarding advisory group and the past case review team on Sunday.

- Forty-four young people addressed General Assembly on topics important to them, including education, refugees, homelessness, bullying and gender issues. Assembly praised the young people for their presentation.

- The 2020 Assembly is scheduled for 10 to 13 July at Aston University, Birmingham.