

General Assembly 2021

The following represented Southern Synod:

Rev'd Jacob Bali; Rev'd Bridget Banks; Rev'd Prince Brown-Engmann; Mr John Denison; Rev'd Russell Furley-Smith; Mrs Marie Jackson; Rev'd Terry Jin; Ms Hannah Jones; Mr Alan Kirby; Mrs Sue Knight; Rev'd Hilary Nabarro; Rev'd Kim Plumpton; Mr Mark Rigby; Mr Sheerak Shahbaz; Rev'd Wendy Swan and Ms Pam Tolhurst.

A full account of the Assembly can be found on the URC website:

<https://urc.org.uk/general-assembly-2021.html>

Two matters were referred to Synods for consultation with responses no later than 31 March 2022. *(Please note that the Clerk to Assembly has confirmed that Synods only need make representation if they dissent from the proposed changes. Silence will indicate consent.)*

- a. **Safeguarding Governance:** (discussed in Session 5 on day two – see GA papers T2-4)
General Assembly passed Resolutions 44 and 45 to make changes to the Structure and Rules of Procedure to ensure safeguarding is foundational in the Church's journey to becoming a safer church and gave the authority for further action when necessary.
Proposed action: Synod Council considers there is no reason to object to the proposed change.
- b. **Ministerial Disciplinary Process and Incapacity Procedure:** (discussed in Session 11 on day three – see GA papers
In Resolution 39, General Assembly adopted a large number of amendments to the Basis of Union and Structure of the URC, the procedure for dealing with cases of incapacity involving ministers and Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs), related panels and appointments to panels and commissions, and training to those bodies. This new process replaces Section O process.
Proposed action: Synod Council considers there is no reason to object to the proposed change. Synod Council will need to form a Synod Standing Panel for new process (3 members required).

Other Matters

Attention is drawn to the change to the Basis of Union adding an additional promise to be used at the ordination and/or induction, of Elders which has now come into immediate effect (resolution 5). The text, as in the Book of Reports, has now been added to the definitive copy of the Basis of Union kept on the URC website, and the electronic version of the Worship Book will be updated as soon as possible.

Resolutions 44-49 all concerned safeguarding and are worth paying careful attention to. They bring into being a new safeguarding policy statement, a training framework, and an updated list of roles for which DBS checks and safeguarding training are required.

The new Disciplinary Process for Office Holders (resolution 23) is now in force. It is now possible for the Synod, where a local church cannot or will not deal with a matter of discipline, to take the lead.

Churches may also wish to consider the resolutions regarding Israel-Palestine, the timing and format of meetings to allow members to join from a distance outside standard working hours, and the digital charter and social media guidelines.

The whole church should uphold the work of the Church Life Review Group which was set up by Mission Council in March 2021 and which made an initial report to General Assembly. The PowerPoint presentation by the General Secretary to Assembly is available online and makes challenging viewing.

Also, please note: Synods are invited to make nominations of people to serve as Moderator of the General Assembly 2023-24 no later than 31 March 2022. Although only one Moderator serves, Synods may nominate both an Elder and a Minister of the Word and Sacraments/Church Related Community Worker.

Rev'd Russell Furley-Smith (Synod Clerk)
October 2021