

Paper O1

URC 50th Anniversary: update

Walking the Way Steering Group

Basic information

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Action required	For discussion.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Update on the work of the 50 th Anniversary planning group and questions for discussion at Mission Council.
Main points	Appointment of a planning group, updates and questions about ideas for events and resources.
Previous relevant documents	Paper I4 to Mission Council, March 2020. www.urc.org.uk/images/MissionCouncil/March2020/I4_-_MC_March_2020_-_50th_Anniversary.pdf
Consultation has taken place with...	Since March 2020 conversations have taken place with the Synod Moderators, the URC History Society, the Publications Board and the Communications Committee.

Summary of impact

Financial	Currently no task meeting costs, as all are taking place by Zoom. Future costs will depend on plans made.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Methodist colleagues have been informed of our plans. There are plans for a joint 50 th publication with the Congregational Federation, based on the past, present and future.

1. Appointment of planning group

- 1.1. Since March, the Walking the Way steering group has appointed a 50th anniversary planning group, comprising Ann-Marie Abbasah, Peter Ball, John Bradbury, Francis Brienen (co-convenor), Philip Brooks, Karen Campbell, Nicola Furley-Smith, Andy Jackson (co-convenor), Simon Peters and Sam Richards. Two more members are being sought.

- 1.2. The planning group will serve as a project co-ordination group rather and will oversee the Jubilee planning in its overall direction. Sub-groups will be formed to take on different parts of the planning. The planning group will report regularly to the Walking the Way steering group.
- 1.3 The Revds David Cornick and Robert Pope are working on a book to mark the 50th anniversary as is Steve Tomkins, editor of *Reform* and author of the critically acclaimed book about the Mayflower. The three are working together on various aspects of their books. The Revd Anne Sardeson is looking at a book about the hymnody and hymn-writers of the URC, and as *Reform* will be celebrating its 50th anniversary too, the team are starting to plan a series of articles about the anniversary of the URC.
- 1.4. The planning group would value the insights of Mission Council on the various ideas for the celebrations it is currently exploring. These include the following:

2. What form should celebrations take?

- 2.1 The planning group is envisaging the holding of a combination of local, regional and denominational events throughout the Jubilee year (2022). The first event to mark the celebration will be the URC Youth Assembly, taking place in January 2022. URC Youth's theme for 2022 is Jubilee.
 - 2.1.1. A provisional booking for Saturday 1 October 2022 has been made with the Methodist Central Hall in London, where on 5 October 1972 the Uniting Assembly took place. The day will include a programme of activities, culminating in an act of celebration and worship.
 - 2.1.2. We are also exploring the possibility of holding a service of worship at St Mary Undercroft at the House of Commons on 21 June 2022, marking exactly 50 years since the URC Bill was approved in the House of Commons.
- 2.2. The day at Westminster Central Hall would be part of a series of events to mark the Jubilee throughout the year. We hope that the event would be surrounded by regional events and activities run by synods and local churches across the denomination. A small subgroup is thinking about these further. Ideas that have been suggested include encouraging local churches to host a birthday party, having regional events that could be linked up online, having regional events that build up to the October event.

Questions to Mission Council:

- Do you think a combination of local, regional and denominational events would work?
- What suggestions can you make for any of these events?
- How do you think these events could be linked, both in content and practically?

3. Worship

- 3.1. A small group has begun thinking about worship for the Jubilee. Resources to help local churches, regional events and a central event shape worship will be important.

3.2. The idea of a hymn/song competition has also been raised.

Questions to Mission Council:

What do you think of these ideas? What other things could you suggest?

4. Looking forward

4.1. Marking the Jubilee will be an opportunity not only for looking back and giving thanks, but also for looking forward. What would we like to see as the legacy of this year of celebration? Should we aim to do 50 new things to mark 50 years as the United Reformed Church? What could these be? Activities in the community, setting up fresh expressions or new communities of faith, ways of living greener?

Question for Mission Council:

What five things would your group like to see as a legacy of the Jubilee?