

United Reformed Church South Western Synod

Minutes of the ninety first meeting of the Synod held at Westfield URC Bridgwater

Saturday 21st October 2017

Attendance: 91 people attended: 41 church representatives, 17 serving ministers, 1 local church leader, 7 retired ministers, 10 synod officers/staff and 15 visitors. There were 52 apologies: 18 church representatives, 18 serving ministers, 8 retired ministers, 4 Local Church Leaders, 3 Synod officer/ staff.

Opening worship was led by the Moderator who told the meeting about her recent trip to Zimbabwe.

1. The Moderator, the Revd Ruth Whitehead, constituted the Synod. The theme of the meeting being: "Walking the Way – first steps..."

2. The minutes of the last meeting:

The minutes were agreed as correct and signed.

3. The Moderator greeted or mentioned the following:

WELCOMES

Revd Martin Nicholls – readmitted to roll of Minister and now serving at Point in View (Assoc.) and Commitment for Life advocate.

Revd Henriette Wentink – Plymouth Trinity.

Revd Robert Weston – Tavistock.

Ms Amy Weston – South Western Youth Rep.

Methodist Ministers – Revd Heather Wilson, Revd Gill Daniel, Revd Mark Pengelly, Revd David Hart

Ms Kathryn Hemensley – Assistant Property & Trust Officer at the Synod Office from May 2017

RETIREMENT:

Revd Sue Macbeth – retired August 2017

Revd Tom Bayliss – retired June 2017 and resigned from Roll of Ministers

MOVING WITHIN THE SYNOD

Revd David Flynn – resigned from Roll of Ministers in order to become a practising Roman Catholic.

Mrs Maria Mills – finished as LCL July 2017

MOVING OUT OF THE SYNOD

Revd Ian & Mrs Julie Kirby – moving from Axminster in Dec 2017 to Brecon Beacons Pastorate

Revd Kenneth Hall (Retired) – moved from Weston super Mare to NW Synod June 2017

Revd Heather Whyte – moved to Thames North Synod to serve at Luton & Dunstable

Revd Andy Sewell (A) – moved from Boulevard, Weston super Mare to Gloucester

Methodist Ministers – Revd Cathy Arscott and Revd Andrew Hill retired

CHURCH CLOSURES/CHANGES

Yeovil URC: closed on 10th June 2017

Holy Trinity, Bradley Stoke: the URC have formally withdrawn from the LEP

The Moderator then welcomed new faces, those attending for the first time and guests.

Tellers

The meeting agreed that Mrs Hilary Bradshaw, Mrs Dinah Firmin, Ms Kathryn Hemensley & Mr Raoul Hewitt be appointed.

5. Executive Committee report:

The report had been displayed on the website prior to the meeting. The Synod clerk gave a verbal report and discussed the items in more detail.

Annual recording of data: The Synod Clerk presented a resolution addressing the annual recording of information. There is certain information where it is useful to state the current position to assist Synod Staff and others to establish Synod policy on a given date, particularly when many years have elapsed. The resolution is as agreed by Synod last March and it does not establish any new policy. It is intended to continue to bring forward a similar resolution annually.

- Resolution 1:

Synod notes the following to be applicable until further notice:

1. The synod agreed minimum ministerial housing allowance is either £4,000 per year grossed up to take account of income tax and national insurance or by annual application of the formula set down in the plan for partnership.
2. Mileage rate on synod business is 25 pence per mile or the costs of public transport.
3. Where the ownership of a manse is shared between the Synod Trust and the local church (i.e. there is an Equity Share) the local church is responsible for all expenses and repairs unless agreed otherwise. When the manse is occupied by a minister, this is in accordance with the Plan for Partnership (which is available on the URC website).
4. The Default Minimum Apportionment of the proceeds from the sale of buildings where there is a continuing local church is 60:40 between the Synod and the local church. AGREED

Formation of District Council: The Moderator explained that since the URC Acts of 1972, 1981 and 2000 all pre-date the abolition of District Councils, there are a few points of law where a District Council decision may be required (eg. If a local church's few remaining members died or were incapacitated before a closing resolution could be passed at a church meeting, only the District Council could make the decision to close). In order to make those few decisions possible, a small "District Council" needs to be formed to act in the Synod. So that there is no conflict of interest with financial decision-making, the pastoral committee could act in this capacity, with the interest of the local churches at heart.

- Resolution 2:

Synod resolves that where required under the Statutory Trust [contained in the United Reformed Church Acts of 1972, 1981 and 2000 (including the Schedules to these Acts) a District Council will be formed to comprise of the Moderator, Synod Clerk and Synod Pastoral Advisers AGREED

New Posts: Assistant Property & Trust Officer, Kathryn Hemensley had been welcomed at the start of the meeting by the Moderator and was reported to have settled in well.

Church Development Worker – in the report it was stated that this new post was currently being explored to provide for Children & Youth work. This prompted a question from the floor requesting more information about the role. The Moderator explained in more detail about how support could be provided for the local church and how this role is envisaged.

Lay Presidency Nominations: Each year the local churches are asked to nominate people to preside at communion in times of pastoral need. The nominations are taken to Pastoral Committee for agreement and the updated list is displayed on the website prior to the Synod meeting.

- Resolution 3:

The South Western Synod agrees that those listed be authorised to preside at the sacraments in cases of pastoral necessity for the next twelve months. AGREED

New members of Executive Committee: Following the completion of terms of office for Robert Jordan, Derek Jones and Brenda Jesse nominations for new members were sought and a resolution was brought to accept the names of those who had agreed to serve.

- Resolution 4:

Synod accepts the nominations of Chris Baillie, Maria Mills, and Jill Stidson who have agreed to serve, with thanks.

6. Alan Yates, Lay Moderator of General Assembly: “The most exciting things I have seen in the URC”

Alan gave an interesting and entertaining talk about things that are happening in URC churches and how in Ghana the church achieves amazing things – they run schools, clinics, care homes and climate change programmes despite possessing only 4 cars between the moderator, staff and ministers!

He reminded the meeting that the URC needs to be the right size, using and sharing resources and that smaller churches are magnifying their efforts by working in partnership usually ecumenically. We were left thinking about how the URC is not a poor church but that often it acts like one.

7. Notices:

The Synod Clerk advised the meeting about the following:

- a) Assembly Moderator’s nominations: Each Synod is entitled to nominate one minister and one elder for the Assembly Moderator’s to serve 2020 -2022. Contact will be made with churches and ministers by the Synod office in November with a clear explanation of what is required and a nomination form. These forms will need to be returned to the Synod clerk by end of February 2018 and taken to General Assembly 2018.
- b) General Assembly Representatives – each Synod is being asked to identify their Assembly Representatives for 2018. Churches and Ministers will be contacted by the Synod office at the beginning of November with a request for nominations to be provided by the end of **December 2017**. The proposed list of GA reps will then be submitted to March Synod for approval.

Raoul Hewitt spoke about the forthcoming Spring Roadshows which highlight changes about church buildings, employment and housing and health & safety.

The Synod clerk drew the meeting’s attention to the variety of resources available and forthcoming events. The meeting then broke for lunch.

8. Animation of “Walking the Way – living the life of Jesus today”

The Moderator introduced a short light hearted animation produced by the WtW group which is available on the website. It is intended to raise awareness about what is available and encourage churches to take the first steps to become involved. There was a brief discussion around the tables.

9. Finance Report

The Synod Treasurer, the Revd Dick Gray, reported that apart from exceptional income from the sale of redundant church buildings it is expected that our income to be broadly flat looking forward. On the spending side there are some significant changes ahead particularly with staffing.

Overall summary:

Overall costs	2017 £K	2018 £K	2019 £K	2020 £K
Total grants	257	168	188	188
Total Synod Activities	57	53	53	53
Total staff	284	284	292	296
Total running costs	72	62	62	62
Total costs	670	567	595	599
Total Income	984	423	423	423
Surplus/deficit	314	-144	-172	-176

- Resolution 5:

We propose for 2018 to make a contribution to inter-synod resource sharing of £20,000

AGREED

- Resolution 6:

The South Western Synod of the URC agrees the factors quoted as the rates to be used for the calculation of the 2018 M&M Local Church Guided Contribution, and commits to a total giving of £1,296,000 to the M&M fund.

AGREED

It was noted that the Ministers Housing Fund has a surplus and it was agreed to present a Resolution to Synod terminating the 10% grant

- Resolution 7:

The South Western Synod of the URC resolves to terminate the giving of 10% of the proceeds of the sales of redundant church buildings to the Retired Ministers' Housing Society as there is no longer a need for financial support.

AGREED

10 & 11 Closing Worship

Revd Gerald England led closing worship, referring to his preaching at Emmanuel, Haydon Wick on "Holy Habits" (based on Acts Ch 2) and included in memoriam:

Mr Bernard Pallett: Died 8th May 2017. Treasurer at Teignmouth URC.

Mr David Denham: Died 2nd June 2017. Synod Accredited Lay Preacher – Cornwall & Church Meeting Secretary at Riverside Looe.

Mr Roy Skinner: Died June 2017. Synod Accredited Lay Preacher – Bristol area.

Mr David Mortimore: Died 16th July 2017. Church Secretary at Heavitree URC.

Revd Robin Diffey: Died 8th August 2017. Retired minister living in Axminster.

Mr Harry Jagger: Died August 2017. A long standing member of Sidmouth Chapel Street.

Revd Ronald Blick: Died 21st August. Retired minister living in Trowbridge.

Mrs Mary Mapp, wife of retired minister, Revd David Mapp.

Michael Grigg, died 6th September, long time member of Taunton URC.

Cyril Saunders, died 9th October, long time member of Thornbury URC & lay preacher, particularly through the Itinerant Preachers Society.

The Moderator thanked everyone for attending and the meeting ended at 3.35 pm.

Next meeting: 10th March 2018 at Westfield URC, Bridgwater.