

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

Minutes of the eighty third meeting of the National Synod of Wales  
of the United Reformed Church  
held on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at Libanus URC, Brecon

### **Attendance:**

Attendance cards returned indicated 52 people present. Of these, 34 were voting members (16 church representatives, 9 active ministers, 0 CRCW, 4 Interim Moderators, 5 Synod post holders and 0 ecumenical guests) and 18 were non-voting attendees (3 retired ministers and 15 visitors).

### **1) Opening Worship**

The Moderator led the opening worship on the theme of sharing. During the worship Ruth Henriksen was re-commissioned as the Synod Elder for Mid Wales. In groups the meeting thought about how we can share together as congregations, local communities and Synod.

The following Elders who had died since the last Synod Meeting were remembered:

Les Bowring, Canton Uniting Church  
Carmen Davies, Beulah  
Cordelia Davies, Tabernacle, Mumbles  
Dennis Frost, Beulah  
Spencer Harvey, Crane Street, Pontypool  
Llew Hughes, St David's, Aberystwyth  
Charles Lintonbon, Stow Park  
Roy Morton, Mynyddislwyn  
Margaret Rawle, Bethesda'r Fro  
Kenneth Roberts, Tabernacle, Mumbles  
Gwen Williams, Rhyl

Ministers celebrating significant anniversaries this year were recognized:

David Salisbury 15  
Peter Gaskell 20  
Samantha Caton 25  
Alison Dummer 25  
Gethin Rhys 25  
Grenville Fisher 30  
Kenneth Graham 50  
Stuart Jackson 50  
Nanette Lewis-Head 50  
William Campbell 55  
Keith Forecast 55  
David Owen 55  
John Bridson Cribb 60  
Marshall Owen Edwards 60

## 2) Introductions and Notices

Ministers who are retiring before the next Synod meeting:

Paul Floe  
Gordon Sollis

New Elders were welcomed:

Christine Hands & John Rees – Gilwern  
Matthias Tchatchoua - Stow Park  
Anne Wilkes & Mary Edwards – Beulah  
Alan Axford, Yvonne Gulley, Mike King, Tina Taylor & Margaret Worrall - St David's, Aberystwyth

Apologies had been received from:

Margery Davies  
Chris Atherton  
Richard Bellingham  
Jill Deans

## 3) Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were available on the website and were accepted without amendment.

## 4) Synod Council

3.10 should read 'Rural Chaplain' not 'Rural Officer'.

The resolution '**Synod meeting expresses its gratitude to Revd David Salsbury for his ministry as Training & Development Officer (North) and appoints him to this post for a further period of five years from November 2015.**' was unanimously agreed.

## 5) A Local Church Story

The meeting was given a presentation about the "Teapot Club" at Sardis Community Chapel, Ynysddu. This is a club for all people and welcomes between thirty and forty people every month.

## 6) Ministerial Deployment

The question asked was "How do we share twenty-two Ministers through the whole of Wales?" The meeting was given examples of different models of ministry and was then asked to go into two groups to discuss this. Attendees from Mid Wales and East Wales formed two separate groups and those from the Usk/Wye Region were split between the two groups to show how a pastorate can work and how ministry can be shared.

## 7) A Local Church Story

After lunch the meeting was given a presentation from Ebenezer URC, Pontnewynydd. They had an old hall which had been built in 1907 and which needed to be upgraded. After they had put in place various grants the work began. The hall is now very usable with parking available for about eighteen cars. There is a full diary of events and the church wished to thank Russell Davies, Sheila Jones, Shem Morgan and Sue Cole for their invaluable help.

## **8) Council for World Mission**

The Moderator brought to the meeting's attention some of the resources available on the CWM website for churches and leaders.

The work of the Livingstone Trust was highlighted. This was set up to fund projects and exchange visits between the Wales Synod of the United Reformed Church and Churches outside Europe, giving priority to Churches which are members of the Council for World Mission. This enables people to learn more about the workings of other communities.

The Moderator drew the meeting's attention to helpful resources available on the CWM website, including a mission toolkit.

## **9) A Local Church Story**

Caebach chapel is 300 years old this year and will be celebrating with a series of events over the weekend 3 -5 July to which all are invited.

## **10) National Synod Task Group**

A draft resolution to be taken to the next meeting of Mission Council was shared with the meeting: *Mission Council resolves to make the following amendment to the Structure of the URC:*

*Reword paragraph 2(4)A(xxii) to read:*

*to seek to expand the range and deepen the nature of the Christian common life and witness in each local community, and (b) in Scotland and Wales to speak and act on behalf of the whole United Reformed Church in public affairs or the conduct of ecumenical relationships specific to the nation concerned, in the General Assembly's name but without prejudice to the Assembly's right to speak and act in the same field on behalf of the church either in England or throughout Great Britain.*

Given increasing devolution to Wales and Scotland, it was recognised that there may be times when Wales, Scotland and England will each want to do things differently in the best interests of their nation. After discussion there was a fair degree of consensus for the resolution.

## **11) Marriage of Same-Sex Couples**

The Synod meeting addressed the consultation question: *'Should local URC congregations who want to offer and host same-sex marriage*

*services be allowed by the Church to do so?'*, the same question as that addressed to local churches.

The ecumenical dimension of this question needs to be taken into account, especially in LEPs and where congregations share buildings. After discussion in groups it was decided on balance that local churches should have the freedom to make the decision. However there was still a feeling among some attendees that on no account should the marriage of same sex couples be permitted in church, and a concern for divisions that might arise within and between local churches. It was suggested that this should be shown in the section for any other comments.

## **12) Pilots**

A Pilots Big Day Out has been arranged for Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May to the West Midlands Safari Park. All were encouraged to attend.

## **13) A Local Church Story**

The meeting was given a presentation by Stow Park Church. There are many things happening at this church but it was the details of their work with homeless people at Christmas which were described. At this time of year the services run by Councils shut down, although the night shelter is open. It was therefore agreed to open the doors of Stow Park Church from 10am to 3pm every day. Breakfast and lunch were served as well as Christmas Dinner on Christmas Day and also shelter was found for those in need. This was very successful and was of importance to the helpers as well as to the visitors as many of the helpers would otherwise be alone for Christmas Dinner themselves. It is hoped that this project will continue next year.

## **14) Synod Day**

It was agreed to hold a Synod Day in 2016. Representatives were asked to speak to or email Simon or Shelagh if they have any ideas for the format of the day, or if they are willing to be part of a planning group.

## **15) Written reports**

There were no questions on the written reports.

## **16) Closing Worship**

Despite the late start the meeting was ready to start closing worship at 3.30pm. The people of Libanus URC were thanked for their hospitality and a cup of tea was provided before the journey home.