



The United Reformed Church National Synod of Wales



Minutes of the eighty first meeting of the National Synod
of Wales of the United Reformed Church
held on Saturday 18th October 2014 at Carno
Community Hall, Caersws, Powys

Attendance:

Attendance cards returned indicated 78 people present. Of these, 45 were voting members (30 church representatives, 15 active ministers, 2 CRCW, 4 Interim Moderators, 3 Synod post holders and 2 Ecumenical guests) and 23 non-voting attendees (4 retired minister, 16 visitors and 3 members of Synod Office staff).

This Synod meeting was convened by the Moderator the Revd Simon Walkling as all representatives were drawn together in song and prayer.

1) Opening Worship

The Moderator led the opening worship on the theme of Creation and the impact of climate change across the world, and introduced his recent visit to El Salvador.

Ministers and Elders who had died since the last meeting of the Synod were remembered in prayer:

- Philip Davey, Parkminster
- Ernest Davies, the United Church in Rhyl
- Jim Davies, Bailey Street Uniting Church, Brynmawr
- Beryl Hartnoll, Christ Well
- Llew Hughes, St David's Church, Aberystwyth
- Lyn John, Christ Well
- Gwyn Jones, Bailey Street Uniting Church, Brynmawr
- Alan Puxley, at Christ Well
- Amy Redd, Reynalton
- Rhoda Smith, Salisbury Park
- Aileen Stephens, Llandeilo
- Colwyn Williams, Parkminster
- Tony Welpton, Bethel, Llanishen

2) Introductions, Welcomes and Notices

a) The Moderator gave a warm welcome to all first time Synod attendees, and, in their absence, to new elders:

- Mrs Pat Bagguley & Mr Gavin Craigen, United Church in Rhyl
- Mrs Diane Moverley and Mrs Diana Hibbert, Van Road, Caerphilly
- Gwyn Atherton, Barbara Morgans and Linda Gibbs, Canton Uniting

- Frank Salt, St. John's URC Buckley
- Christine Hands & John Rees, Gilwern

b) The Moderator inducted two new Synod Elders from South Wales Region:

- Richard Edwards, Beulah URC
- Clive Curtis, Canton Uniting Church

c) Ecumenical guests were welcomed:

- Revd Marcus Wyn Robinson, Presbyterian Church of Wales
- Denise Harries, Cardiff Catholic Archdiocese

d) The two guest speakers from Christian Aid were welcomed:

- Tom Hackett
- Anna Jane Evans

e) New Ministers were recognised and welcomed:

- Phil Wall, St David's Uniting Church, Pontypridd
- Rachel Wheeler (Methodist), Bridgend
- Philip & Carole Challis (Methodist), Barry Uniting Church
- Chrissie Howe (Methodist), St Paul's United Church, Penmaenmawr
- Daniel Yoo, Hanover, Llanover

f) Ministers moving out of the Synod were recognised:

- Mal Breeze
- Kevin Snyman
- Kim Kerchal,
- Greg Thompson

g) **Apologies** for absence were received from: Gwynn ap Gwylim, Richard Bellingham, Molly Bond, Adrian Bulley, Marc & Alison Dummer, Paul Floe, Peter Gaskell, Jan Harris, Audrey & Spencer Harvey, Ian Lloyd-Parry, Michael Hodgson, Marcia Hurley, Barry Morgan, Judith Negus, Gethin Rhys, Ivor Rees, Paul Robinson, Liz Scarisbrick, Malcolm Scott, Ann Shillaker, Jean Silvan-Evans, Martin Spain, Liz Tadd, Verena Walder, Mair Weigh, Sue Welpton, Carol Wilkinson, Hugh-John Wilson.

Ecumenical Guests: Aled Edwards, Christopher Gillham, Llanos Gordon, Jennie Hurd, Derek Jones, Rhian Linecar, Peter Pike, Phillip Poynor, Martin Snelgrove, Revd Peter M Thomas, Stephen Wigley, Eluned Williams.

3) Synod Notices

The Synod Clerk gave notices together with venue Health and Safety information. The Synod Clerk requested that all attendees complete attendance cards and, where appropriate, expenses claims. In addition,

attention was drawn to the Bookstall and the Traidcraft stall both located at the back of the hall. Those present were urged to collect the resource packs available in envelopes – two envelopes per Church and per minister.

4) Minutes

The minutes of the series of 'regional' Synod meetings held in the spring were agreed, with no matters arising.

5) Moderator's address

The Moderator continued the theme of environmental change presenting inspiring examples of how people in the poorest communities of El Salvador are finding creative and supportive solutions to deal with the impact of an increasing number of typhoons each year.

6) Synod Elders' Report (Ref. 4.1 – 4.15)

The Synod Clerk identified a small number of amendments to information contained in the Synod Elders Report:

- 4.4 Revd Paula Parish-Foley is now representing the Synod on the Bettws CRCW management group.
- 4.5 Christians against Torture is being disbanded: no representative is therefore needed.
- 4.7 should read 'Revd Colin Foreman has retired from the Deeside pastorate. This pastorate has been dissolved and the Dee Estuary pastorate re-formed comprising three churches: Rivertown, Shotton, St. John's Flint with Bagillt and Hebron, Mostyn.'
- 4.15 The spelling of the names of Verena Walder and Jill Williams was corrected.

The Moderator asked whether there were any questions relating to the Synod Elders' Report – no questions were raised.

7) Presentation - A local church story – Hope and Market Square United Church, Merthyr

Chris Powell gave an amusing and encouraging presentation on the trials and tribulations involved in transforming Hope and Market Square United Church Merthyr into a building fit for purpose. After months and months of fundraising and hands on contribution by the congregation, the external building was refurbished, the interior building was redecorated and a Noah's Ark Garden was created – all that is needed now is a minister!

8) Leadership Development Board/Mission Resource Board Report (Ref. 5.1 – 5.20).

Attention was drawn to the availability of a form for completion by churches to request Judy Harris's help particularly for child protection training which she can deliver.

The date for the lay preaching conference was noted as the 2nd weekend in October every year.

The Moderator congratulated Revds Sue Fender and Paul Robinson on completing EM2 and presented a certificate to Sue who was present.

The Training and Development Officer post was reviewed and deemed critical as it fits with the Synod's priorities.

The Moderator explained the three stages of the resolution process (sharing information, discussion, decision making) before proceeding with the first resolution before the Synod meeting.

Resolution (Ref. 5.21)

Synod meeting agrees to the continuation of a full time equivalent Training and Development Officer post, and entrusts the Leadership and Development Board to work on the details to be approved by Synod Council, with a view to appointing a Training and Development Officer (South) as soon as possible.

Resolution passed unanimously

9) Finance and Property Report (Ref. 6.1 – 6.25)

The Synod Treasurer explained the accounts presented on the last two pages of the Synod reports. The Moderator requested further explanation of the increases in ministry and mission fund pledges for 2015.

Resolution (Ref. 6.26.1)

Synod notes the Ministry and Mission Fund targets for 2015 of £337 and £86 for ministry and mission respectively per member.

Resolution passed unanimously

Representatives questioned the reduction in financial contribution to the Synod from churches from £10k to £6K. It was noted that the figure of £6K is a practical expression of the actual figure achieved. There was recognition from the floor of the work of both Chris and Helen in bringing together the accounts.

Resolution (Ref. 6.26.2)

Synod approves the budget for 2015.

Resolution passed unanimously

The Moderator explained the nature of the next *permissive* resolution. The Charities Act requires that the best price be sought for the sale of any

building. The policy within this resolution will enable a different solution, allowing the Trust's work with partners to be consistent with the charitable objects of the church.

Resolution (Ref. 6.26.3)

Synod meeting affirms the provision of land for affordable housing whenever circumstances allow since it believes this to be consistent with its charitable objects to work towards the relief of those in need in our society.

Resolution passed unanimously

10) Presentations – Christian Aid

The Moderator returned to the theme of his worship citing El Salvador as a practical example of how people can bring health and life to their communities. The Moderator introduced two presentations from Christian Aid and encouraged 'looking wider'.

Ann Jane Evans discussed Hunger for Justice and encouraged churches to send letters (pro forma available) to MPs calling on them to place climate change on their agendas. Hunger for Justice leaflets which turn into wall posters were disseminated.

Tom Hackett discussed Commitment for Life which advocates personal giving rather than fundraising as a model. Some churches give 1% of their income. The money is split between countries identified by the World Development Movement.

The Moderator invited all participants to share with neighbours in the room how they have supported Christian Aid. A Prayer for Hunger for Justice concluded the morning session.

Lunchtime adjournment

11) Synod Council Report (Ref. 7.1 – 7.14)

The Synod Clerk discussed the collation of information with respect to Elders' interests, gifts and skills and emphasised their usefulness. The forms are to be circulated again in the future.

The Moderator provided information on Synod priorities introduced in the last year and referred particularly to section 7.8 in the Synod papers. The Moderator referenced a deployment policy review in the context of being prayerful, trying to discern where the spirit is leading; sharing the good news within the framework of the Vision2020 statements; meeting people not only in the church setting but in their need; and engaging with questions of social justice.

Questions were asked with respect to Synod operations and the support which can be offered to ministry teams. The Moderator suggested further

conversations were required. Further discussion focused on the closure of the Lightship in Cardiff Bay and the need for continuing chaplaincy.

Resolution (Ref. 7.15.1)

Synod meeting approves the priorities, core work and guidance for 2014-15 as outlined in the report.

Resolution passed unanimously

The Moderator stated that responses have been varied with respect to how ministers should be deployed. The Moderator questioned whether there was consensual approval of Synod proposals. The preparation of models/patterns/options for deployment was suggested. The Moderator advocated further conversations at regional meetings and an amendment to the resolution to reflect this.

Resolution (Ref. 7.15.2)

Synod meeting asks churches that have not responded to consider how ministers should be deployed ready for a discussion about deployment in regions. Synod Elders to consider the points raised in regional meetings.

Resolution passed unanimously

The Moderator spoke of how he had been well served by the current Synod Clerk who had been in post for the last 5 years and that a replacement would be needed next year, ideally to shadow the Synod Clerk for a period of time.

Resolution (Ref. 7.15.3)

Synod meeting agrees in principle that the Synod Clerk should be a paid post and urges Synod Council to prepare a job description so that an appointment can be made as soon as possible.

Resolution passed unanimously

12) District Council report (Ref. 8.1)

The Synod Clerk explained the legal requirement to keep a residual District Council within each Synod. The Council meets very infrequently but is tasked with closing churches where there are no members and/or church meetings.

Resolutions (Ref. 8.2)

8.2 Resolutions:

1. In accordance with the provisions of paragraph 5 of the URC Act Schedule II, Part 1, and as provided for in the Scheme of Union and the United Reformed Church Acts 1972, 1981 and 2000, Synod meeting agrees that Carmel United Reformed Church,

Nantmel is redundant as a place of worship and should be closed from the date of this Synod meeting, 18th October, 2014.

2. Synod agrees:

a. that the URC (Wales) Trust Company Limited be authorized to act after that date, and specifically in:

(i) looking after the premises (as unoccupied) and other assets until they are either sold or taken over by the wider church,

(ii) arranging for disconnection of gas, water, electrical supplies as appropriate,

(iii) gathering in all assets and sums owing to the church, settling all outstanding debts, disposing of those assets as instructed by this minute, and preparing final accounts,

(iv) liaising with the Superintendent Registrar regarding removal of registration as a place of public worship and marriages, and depositing registers

(v) depositing items of historical interest with the County Record Office

b. that the church account books be closed after all due claims have been met, and any balance passed to the Trustees

c. that any future gifts or bequests to this congregation be paid to the URC National Synod of Wales provided that the terms of the gift so permit;

d. that the burial ground be closed for further burials from the date of this resolution;

e. that arrangements be put in place to allow public access to visit graves and for the land to be maintained in an appropriate condition

f. that the Trustees be directed to dispose of the premises in

Resolutions passed unanimously

13) Marriage of same-sex couples

The Moderator spoke of the General Assembly's request for discussions to take place on the topic of same sex marriage. Facilitators are available to talk to churches. The Moderator clarified that the Synod needs to respond to the questions in the One Plus One booklet and respond to the General Assembly before next March. Under 18's participating in these conversations will need parental consent.

14) Ecumenical Officer (Ref. 9.1-9.5)

The Ecumenical officer made an enthusiastic case for the Synod to re-join the Free Church Council of Wales to ensure non-conformist inclusion. The perceived lack of clarity and purpose of the Free Church Council was discussed together with the financial implications of re-joining.

Differences of opinion were voiced together with requests for more detailed information. The Moderator suggested that the proposal be taken

back to churches for further discussion as there was hesitancy displayed within the Synod meeting.

Resolution (Ref. 9.6)

Synod meeting resolves to re-join the Free Church Council with immediate effect.

Resolution referred back

The Moderator thanked the Ecumenical Officer for all the work done on the Synod's behalf and supported continued attendance at Free Church Council meetings as an observer.

15) Rural Chaplain

What is a Chaplain? The Synod's Rural Chaplain gave an evocative and moving account of his chaplaincy work in rural Wales demonstrating how the gospel story of Legion is relevant today.

16) Spring Synod Meetings

The Synod Clerk provided information with respect to meeting dates for 2015:

Synod meetings 2015

Spring 'regional' Synod meetings

South Wales region

28th February at Elfed Avenue United Church, Penarth

Mid-Wales + East Wales + Usk/Wye regions:

7th March, at Libanus URC, Brecon

Pembrokeshire + Swansea + Bridgend regions:

14th March, at English Baptist Centre, Carmarthen

North Wales region:

21st March, at United Church, Rhyl

Exact times will be confirmed nearer the time.

Autumn all- Wales Synod meeting:

17th October at Hope Church, Newtown (NB subsequently changed to Carno Village Hall, Caersws, Powys)

Resolution

Synod meeting authorises the Synod Executive Officers to make decisions on behalf of the Synod meeting following the meetings in Spring 2015 where a decision is urgent and cannot wait till the next full meeting of the Synod. The Officers will take decisions

bearing in mind the opinions expressed at the 'regional' Synod meetings.

Resolution passed unanimously

17) Thanks

The Synod Clerk expressed thanks to all who had been involved in the day. The Moderator acknowledged the work on climate change produced by the children participating in the Synod activities workshop and encouraged them to share their thoughts on climate change as the Synod meeting drew to a close.

18) Closing worship

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