

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

Minutes of the eighty sixth meeting of the National Synod of Wales
of the United Reformed Church
held on Saturday 17th October 2015 at Carno Community Centre

Attendance:

Attendance cards returned indicated 89 people present. Of these, 64 were voting members (29 church representatives, 13 active ministers, 2 CRCWs, 5 Interim Moderators, 12 Synod post holders and 3 ecumenical guests) and 25 were non-voting attendees (7 retired ministers and 18 visitors).

Apologies for absence were received from Chris Atherton, Stephen Best, Phil Challis, Clive Curtis, Alsion Dummer, Mark Dummer, Paul Floe, Jenny Garrard, Stephen Gilbert, Michael Hodgson, Ian Lloyd-Parry, John Mathias, Rob Moverley, Millie Neate, Gethin Rhys, Jill Shelton, Ann Shilaker, Joyce Smith-Draper, Ian Summers, Chris Tolley, Verena Walder, Rachel Wheeler, Angharad Williams, Hugh-John Wilson, Dee Yeadon.

Apologies were noted from the following ecumenical guests:

Phil Dunning (Committee of the Covenanted Baptist Churches), Chris Gillham (Congregational Federation), Denise Harries (Roman Catholic), Jennie Hurd (Synod Cymru), Judith Morris (Baptist Union of Wales), Marcus Wyn-Robinson (Presbyterian Church of Wales), Bryan Scrivener (Society of Friends) and Stephen Wigley (Methodist Church, Wales District).

1) Opening Worship

Opening Worship was led by the Moderator, Revd Simon Walkling.

During the course of worship, the following ministers and elders who have died since the last Synod Meeting were remembered:

Revd T. Glanville Jones	Barry
Graham Davies	Merthyr
Eryl Evans	Barry
Joyce Francis	Libanus
Alun Jones	Old Colwyn
Jack (John) Mood	Penarth
Chan Thomas	Tenby
Tudor Thomas	Parkminster
Wilf Williams	Tabernacle, Holywell

Revd David A.L. Jenkins TLS Co-ordinator

The following ministerial anniversary was marked by the presentation of a certificate marking 50 years service:

Nanette Lewis-Head

A certificate of commissioning was presented to:

Kirsty-Ann Mabbot CRCW - Bettws

2) Introductions and Notices

The following Ministers had moved into the Synod since the last Synod Meeting and those present were greeted by the Moderator:

Teddy Kalongo
Kirsty Mabbott
Leslie Noon
Neil Riches
Dee Yeadon

The following ministers who will be retiring before the next Synod meeting were mentioned:

Peter Gaskell
Shelagh Pollard

The following Elders who have been Ordained since the last Synod meeting were mentioned and those present were welcomed by the Moderator:

Judy Brew and Laura Ward-Davies	Tenby
Cindy Cromer and Anwen Noakes	Horeb, Dyserth
Patricia Darley	Keyston
Viv Davies and Iain Scott	City, Cardiff
Kevan Dickins	Rhyl
Jean Gaywood and Andrea Puttick	Parkminster
Sian Hughes	St. John's Buckley
Gina Skyner	Shotton
Christine Tidwell	Old Colwyn
John Wheeler	Trinity, Llanidloes
Sylvia Bowden, Jenette Kitto, Joan Boon and Dean Clarke	St Andrew's Cardiff

Ordained elsewhere and newly inducted:

Jennifer Jones and Lorna Tull	Llandudno
Allan Morgan	Dyserth, previously an elder in Rayleigh, Essex
Frank Salt	St. John's Buckley, previously served a Churches of Christ congregation at Saltney

The Moderator led the meeting in prayer for all those beginning new ministries.

The following ecumenical guests were welcomed:

Canon Aled Edwards	Cytûn
Revd Dr R. Alun Evans	Undeb yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg

Revd Brian Reardon
Revd Liz Varley

Presbyterian Church of Wales
 Church in Wales, Bangor Diocese

The Synod Clerk gave various notices, including the invitation for local churches to nominate candidates for the posts of Moderator of General Assembly – lay and ordained – 2018-2020. Any nominations will be dealt with at Synod Meeting in February 2016.

3) Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the four regional Synod Meetings held during Spring 2015 were accepted without amendment.

4) Matters Arising

None had been notified.

5) Synod Priorities

The Moderator introduced this matter, referring to 4.4 – 4.9 in the Book of Reports. In summary: the synod would keep the priorities that have not been completed from 2015, work on communication and look deeper at purpose and strategy.

The Moderator reported that 20% of churches had responded to the questions in the paper, designed to give a picture of participation in God's mission in the Synod. This did not give a complete picture, but provided a representative sample.

Comments and question were invited. There were none.

Synod Meeting approves the core work, guidance, and priorities for 2015-16 (as printed at 4.7 – 4.9 in the Book of Reports)

Agreed by consensus.

6) Complaints Procedure

The Synod Clerk introduced the proposed procedure.

Questions for clarification were invited. Paul Robinson asked a question about the scope of the procedure, who is included and who is not. The Synod Clerk and the Moderator jointly responded. Protocols would be put in place to ensure that complaints were dealt with in an appropriate way.

Comments and questions were invited. There were none.

The United Reformed Church National Synod of Wales adopts the Complaints Procedure as printed at 4.3 in the Book of Reports.

Agreed by consensus.

7) Budgets

In the absence of the Treasurer, Ms Helen Stenson presented the financial report. In terms of Ministry and Mission Fund contributions for 2016, approximately half of the churches in the Synod had responded to date, pledging approximately half of the amount needed. Some had pledged more than the suggested amount, and thanks were expressed. Churches were urged to respond as quickly as possible.

Ms Stenson introduced the accounts and budgets. Investment returns have been higher than anticipated.

Comments and question were invited. There were none.

Synod Meeting receives the Accounts for 2014.

Received unanimously.

Synod Meeting approves the Budget for 2016 for the Synod General Fund.

Approved unanimously.

Synod Meeting approves the Budget for 2016 for the Synod Training Fund.

Approved unanimously.

8) Wales Matters

The Moderator introduced the two perspectives on the Welsh Assembly legislation (which becomes effective on 1st December 2015) regarding presumed consent in organ donation: one from the Revd Michael Hodgson from the perspective of someone who has some deep concerns; one from Mary Jeremiah from the perspective of someone whose relative has benefited from organ donation.

The meeting broke into small groups to discuss the issue.

In plenary, questions, concerns and comments arising from the discussion were shared.

9) Big Day Out – Saturday 2nd July 2016

Revd Adrian Bulley introduced the plans for next year's Synod Day and urged churches to make use of the postcards available at the meeting to advertise the event and book the date.

10) A Story

Miss Vicky Turner spoke of her experience of being part of the Council for World Mission mission programme in the Netherlands exploring fresh expressions of church. Much of her experience of church in the Netherlands resonated with the situation in Wales. She spoke about the

Protestant Church in the Netherlands, a twentieth century union of many of the protestant churches in the country. She also spoke about the barrier that church buildings can be to new people wanting to enter, and the success of messy church in Friesland.

11) Emergency Resolution: Refugee Crisis

The Moderator invited Synod to suspend standing orders in order to consider an emergency resolution from the Synod Executive Officers on the Refugee Crisis. It was agreed to suspend standing orders in order to ponder the resolution.

Following the showing of a video from Christian Aid reflecting on the commandment to 'love the stranger' which Jesus repeated in words and lived in deeds, the Moderator invited stories of churches and communities responding to the refugee crisis.

The following resolution was considered and discussion invited.

It was noted that it is vitally important that, as well as challenging the government, the Synod and its churches also need to be challenged to pray, to give and to act in response to the refugee crisis. It was agreed to return to this later in the meeting with a separate resolution.

The United Reformed Church National Synod of Wales calls on Her Majesty's Government to:

- a. Recognise its responsibility to help protect refugees arriving in Europe**
- b. With European partners to provide safe and legal routes into Europe to tackle people smuggling and traffickers**
- c. Promote the establishment of proper, EU run processing centres at key borders**
- d. Accept its fair share of refugees who have arrived in Europe, in cooperation with other member states of the European Union**
- e. Make necessary arrangements to provide immediate shelter and support for refugees and longer term to arrange for full resettlement for those wishing to remain**
- f. To provide local authorities who are taking refugees with additional financial resources to help meet the costs**

It was agreed to note key points that were made rather than make amendments. These included: the need to challenge ourselves to respond; the need to see refugees as fellow humans and understand that a 'fair share' may still be inadequate; concern over addressing the root causes of the crisis and the contributory role of the UK in the past; and the need for a negotiated peace to allow displaced people to return home.

The resolution was approved by overwhelming agreement.

Synod adjourned for lunch with prayer led by the Moderator.

Synod reconvened at 2pm.

12) Emergency Resolution: Refugee Crisis (continued)

The Synod gave consideration to a further resolution arising from the refugee crisis:

Recognising that it is not enough only to challenge the government, the United Reformed Church National Synod of Wales calls upon local churches to pray, give and act in response to the refugee crisis.

Approved by consensus.

13) Ecumenical

Mrs Pat Davies and Revd Leslie Noon, from Sketty Uniting Church, told the story of the union of Sketty United Reformed Church and Sketty Methodist Church. A video was shown.

Revd Sue Huyton shared the roadshow prepared by The Commission of Covenanted Churches outlining the continuing thinking as part of The Gathering process. The next Gathering – to take the process further – will be held in the Spring of 2016 at the Royal Welsh Showground.

Revd Sally Thomas and Revd Sue Huyton then responded to questions.

Synod then gave further consideration to the question of whether to re-join the Free Church Council of Wales.

The National Synod of Wales resolves to become a full member of the Free Church Council of Wales.

Agreed by consensus.

14) Mission Council/General Assembly Resolutions

Synod gave consideration to four procedural resolutions referred from Mission Council and General Assembly.

The National Synod of Wales does not object to the resolutions concerning changes to membership of governance bodies.

Passed unanimously.

The National Synod of Wales does not object to the resolution concerning the Ministerial candidating process.

Passed nem con.

The National Synod of Wales does not object to the resolution regarding National Synods.

Passed unanimously.

The National Synod of Wales does not object to the resolution concerning the marriage of same-sex couples.

Passed by majority.

Revd Samantha Caton and Revd Paul Robinson asked that their dissent to this decision be registered and recorded in the minutes.

15) Standing Orders

Synod gave consideration to the resolution to amend the synod's standing orders in line with practice and to align them further to the standing orders of the General Assembly.

The National Synod of Wales adopts the Standing Orders as printed in the Book of Reports, with immediate effect.

Passed unanimously.

16) Thanks and Closing Worship

The Closing Worship was led by the Moderator during which thanks were expressed to the Revd Shelagh Pollard for six years service as Synod Clerk. Gifts were presented to Shelagh and the meeting responded with applause. Shelagh then addressed the meeting.

The Moderator then inducted Revd Adrian Bulley as Synod Clerk.

The Moderator offered thanks to those who had provided refreshments and ensured the smooth running of the meeting. He also thanked everyone who had come along to be part of the meeting.

The meeting closed at 3.55pm with the sharing of the Grace.