

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

Minutes of the eighty seventh meeting of the National Synod of Wales
of the United Reformed Church
held on Saturday 27th February 2016 at Carno Community Centre

Attendance:

Attendance cards returned indicated 71 people present. Of these, 54 were voting members (26 church representatives, 11 active ministers, 2 CRCWs, 2 Interim Moderators, 8 Synod Post Holders, 4 ecumenical guests and 1 Co-opted member) and 17 were non-voting attendees (3 retired ministers and 14 visitors).

Apologies for absence were received from: Chris Atherton, Revd Julia Bartholomew, Joyce Challis (Rhyl), Revd Phil Challis, Jen Cox (Torfaen), Clive Curtis (Synod Elder), Pat Davies (LLMB), Revd Alison Dummer, Revd Dr Mark Dummer, Revd Linda Elliott, Revd Paul Floe, Revd Keith Forecast, Revd Stephen Gilbert, Marcia Hurley (St. David's Uniting), Revd Neil Kirkham, Ian Lloyd-Parry (FPB), Revd Shelagh Pollard, Graham Powell (Tenby), Malcolm Scott (Holywell), Revd Martin Spain, Liz Tadd, Revd Phil Wall, Revd Steven Whiting, Verena Walder (Tabernacle, Mumbles), John Warner (Penmaenmawr), Angharad Williams (Fairwater), Viv Williams (Llanidloes) and Revd Dee Yeadon.

Apologies were noted from the following ecumenical guests:

Phil Dunning (Covenanted Baptist Churches), Aled Edwards (Cytûn), Chris Gillham (Congregational Federation), Jennie Hurd (Synod Cymru), Judith Morris (BUW), Joao Paulo Ramos (Salvation Army) and Christine Trevitt (Quaker).

1) Opening Worship

Opening Worship was led by the Moderator, Revd Simon Walkling who used the theme of encouragement.

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

Jean Bateson	Old Colwyn
Avril Burrell	St. John's Buckley
Raymond Elliot	Ystrad Mynach
Megan Evans	Brecon Beacons Pastorate
Geoffrey Hill	Beulah
Eileen Hughes	St. John's Flint with Bagillt
Gwenno Lewis	St. David's, Aberystwyth
D. Hugh Morgan	Beulah

Doris Newns

Stow Park

The following ministerial anniversary was marked by the presentation of a certificate marking 60 years' service:

Ivor Rees

The following ministerial anniversaries were noted:

David Morgan	55 years
Paul Floe	40 years
Susan Roberts	40 years
Tom Arthur	35 years
Adrian Bulley	30 years
Jennifer Marsh	25 years
Shelagh Pollard	20 years
Judy Harris	15 years
Robert Pope	15 years
Rosie Buxton	10 years
Sue Fender	5 years
Paul Robinson	5 years

2) Introductions and Notices

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

Jason Askew

Bridgend United Area

The following Minister will have moved out of Synod by the time of the next Synod Meeting.

Peter Cruchley-Jones CWM Secretary for Mission Development

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

Alison Dummer

Parkminster

Mark Dummer

Canton

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

Anne James, Harley Jones,**Viv Jones and Ian McDowell**

Beulah

John Wheeler

Trinity, Llanidloes

Ray Vincent

St. David's Uniting

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

Patrick Hickey was inducted to the office of Synod Elder and was welcomed by all.

The following ecumenical guests were welcomed:

R. Alun Evans	Undeb yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg
Denise Harris	Roman Catholic
Ian Morris	Synod Cymru
Phillip Poynor	Methodist Synod
Elizabeth Varley	Church in Wales

The Synod Clerk gave various notices, including thanks to the Bookshop and Fairtrade stallholders.

The next Synod eNewsletter is due out on 1st March 2016. Members are requested to forward it and encourage others to sign up to receive it by email as it is a very valuable means of communication.

Megan Marston-Phipps name was added to the list of representatives to General Assembly 2016.

The Synod Clerk drew attention to the response received from the Home Office to the resolution on the refugee crisis passed at the October 2015 Synod meeting.

Sally Thomas mentioned a Human Rights Day which had been held in the Hayes on 10th December 2015. It is hoped this will take place annually.

3) Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th Saturday October 2015 were accepted as circulated.

4) Matters Arising

None had been notified. The Moderator mentioned in prayer various issues arising from the last Synod meeting.

5) Mr John Ellis (Moderator of General Assembly) was invited to address the gathering. He took up the theme of reality, courage and hope particularly in relation to the current issue of ministerial deployment.

6) Nomination of Moderator of General Assembly (Ministerial) 2018-20.

Questions were invited regarding this Resolution. None were received.

Synod Meeting nominates the Revd John LI. Humphreys as Moderator of General Assembly 2018-20.

Passed by agreement.

7) Big Day Out, 2nd July 2016

Adrian Bulley shared information about this forthcoming free event. Free coaches will be provided thanks to sponsorship obtained by Chris Atherton to the sum of £4,500. The day will provide an opportunity for churches to reflect on their journey past and future. Some Yellow Bags were distributed today and all Churches will receive one in due course, into which they can place items relevant to their church's journey: what has sustained you? What resources have been valued? Bags will be collected and re-distributed on 2nd July so that each church examines the contents of a different bag. The aim is for church members to reflect on the contents and what future changes they may be inspired to make. What might God be saying to you? Two opportunities for reflection were therefore offered: when putting items into the bags and when perusing the contents of the bag you receive on the day.

8) Living Wage Accreditation

A presentation was given by Simon Walkling and a short video shown entitled 'It's Time to Close the Gap' which illustrated how inequality harms us all. The Living Wage Foundation, have calculated a figure of £8.25 per hour as being the sum appropriate to create a viable work/life balance. This is not the same as the National Living Wage (£7.20 per hour which replaces the Minimum Wage of £6.50). The Trust has agreed that they should pay the Living Wage to those it employs at a Synod Level.

Questions were invited. Neil Riches from Christ Well in Swansea addressed the gathering and said that while he was supportive of the Resolution it was however currently unsustainable for Christ Well to adopt this policy in relation to all 10 of their employees and stressed the vital importance of volunteers in enabling their work. The Moderator affirmed that the Synod would not be imposing the new pay rate. Chris Coe shared the opinion that everything possible should be done to enable churches to comply with this Resolution.

Synod Meeting, rejoicing that the United Reformed Church (Wales) Trust Company Limited has accredited as a Living Wage Employer, calls upon all local churches that employ people – whether directly or indirectly – to consider accrediting themselves.

The Resolution was agreed by Consensus.

9) Cytûn: Reflections on the Welsh Government Elections

The Revd Gethin Rhys (Cytûn's National Assembly Policy Officer) addressed Synod. Two videos (one about urban and one about rural affairs in Wales) were shown relating to the forthcoming Assembly elections on 5th May. Ministers responses are available on the Cytûn website. GR urged members to vote and to also encourage others to vote. GR's job is to facilitate engagement with the Welsh Assembly. GR affirmed that the Welsh Assembly does listen to the Church voice. GR pointed out that many Assembly members will be stepping down voluntarily this year. Informative briefing papers touching on education, environment, housing, rural life, immigration and poverty are available on the Cytûn website: www.cytun.org.uk. GR encourages local, ecumenical Hustings meetings to be organised locally and can give advice regarding this. If members organise hustings meetings, please pass details to GR when available. GR said that papers are available on request for anyone who does not have access to the internet. There will be a 'How to Organise a Hustings' meeting at Bethel Community Church in Newport on Wednesday 2nd March at 7pm.

Nanette Lewis-Head informed members of the opportunity to meet Welsh Assembly ministers at a meeting organised by the Multiple Sclerosis Society on 16th March 2016 at the Pierhead building, Cardiff Bay to discuss social and health care. This will be held between 11.45am – 1.45pm and will include lunch.

Ivor Rees invited members to supply him with biographical notes relating to any local candidates as he is compiling a book.

10) Legacy Giving

Peredur Griffiths (Christian Aid Legacies Co-ordinator, Wales) addressed the gathering. He highlighted that providing legacies to churches is not a popular option (coming after health, social services, animal welfare, etc.) and pointed out that 80% of congregations give regularly but less than 20% tend to donate via legacies. He urged members to check that their wills are valid. Peredur offered his services to churches: he is available for talks and can offer training. He can be contacted on 029 2084 4658 or powengriffiths@christian-aid.org.

Synod adjourned for lunch with prayer led by the Moderator.

Synod reconvened at 2pm.

11) Introducing Good Practice 4

Judy Harris gave a presentation and drew attention to the updated resource 'Good Practice 4 Children and Adults at Risk'. The adults and risk part of the resource is available to download from the website but will also be sent out soon. If churches have not received Good Practice 4 they should let Judy know. Judy emphasised that abuse can happen anywhere and there needs to be a high level of awareness. It is important to create a healthy church community. The booklet is very comprehensive. Judy is happy to come and do training – please contact her.

Rob Caton shared his own personal experience and affirmed how important it is that we listen to people when there are allegations of abuse.

Other groups using church premises need to either adopt the church's Good Practice policy or show evidence of their own.

The Welsh Assembly has launched a consultation to discuss whether there is a need for organisations working with children to register with them (this would apply to churches that run holiday clubs). Gethin Rhys as Cytûn Policy Officer will respond and would like feedback from members regarding this.

12) Engaging with Education

Paul Robinson (Rhyl) addressed the gathering to share his experience of success using fun methods to engage children in schools and stated that patience is needed to build up good relationships.

Rob Moverley from Caerphilly shared the success of their church which offers 'Christmas Unwrapped' and 'Easter Cracked' events annually. This has proved very popular with local schools.

Michael Hodgson also shared his experience of making learning fun.

Richard Edwards (who serves on a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) as a union official) addressed the meeting. Many URC members serve on SACREs throughout the 22 local authorities in Wales, together with faith representatives and teaching union reps and elected members. The role of the SACRE is to support local authorities in offering training, analysing reports, offering advice regarding the teaching of RE and reviewing RE syllabuses. SACREs can also provide resources for events such as Holocaust Day. Details of consultations are available from SACRE's Annual Reports online.

The Moderator suggested research would be useful to locate where URC members serve on SACREs.

Ann Bulley (Inclusion Manager and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator at Moorland Primary School in Splott, Cardiff) shared successes they have experienced working in a multi-cultural, diverse school setting especially regarding normalising and integrating children with disabilities/autism. Ann highlighted the usefulness of being non-judgemental, respecting potential and modelling values.

13) Reports to Synod (Synod Council, Synod Elders, Finance and Property Board):

Questions and comments were invited from members regarding the reports presented to Synod. No comments or questions were forthcoming.

14) Mission Development Grants:

The Mission Development Fund was established in 2007 and has been in need of review. Rob Moverley offered thanks on behalf of Llanfair, Penrhys for the £10,000 grant awarded by the MDF and confirmed that this financial assistance has enabled 12 people to become involved in a nurture programme.

Synod Meeting accepts the revised procedure for applying for Mission Development Grants, including the provision for bridging funding.

The Resolution was passed by Consensus.

15) Thanks and Closing Worship

Closing Worship was led by the Moderator.

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 3.30pm with a reminder of the today's theme of encouragement and the sharing of the Grace.