

**Eglwys Ddiwygiedig Unedig  
Synod Cenedlaethol Cymru  
The United Reformed Church  
National Synod of Wales**

**Minutes of the ninetieth meeting of the National Synod of Wales of the  
United Reformed Church held on Saturday 11th March 2017  
at Llanfair Church, Penrhys**

**Attendance:**

Attendance cards returned indicated: 31 people present.

Of these, 25 were voting members (8 church representatives, 6 active ministers, 0 CRCWs, 8 Synod Post Holders, 1 Co-opted and 2 ecumenical guests) and 6 were non-voting attendees (0 retired ministers and 6 visitors).

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Sue Fender (Elfed Penarth and Betheda'r Fro), Shelagh Pollard (City, Cardiff) and Malcolm Shapland (Bethany, Ystrad Mynach).

**Apologies were noted from the following ecumenical guests:**

Margaret Davies	Union of Welsh Independents
Sangkhumma Hmar	Presbyterian Church of Wales
Christine Trevett	Quakers

The Moderator welcomed people to Synod Meeting.

- 1. Opening Worship** was led by the Revd Peter Noble and members of the church at Penrhys.

During the course of worship the following Ministers and Elders who had died since the last Synod Meeting were remembered:

Revd Paul Floe	Retired Minister
Revd John Ll Humphreys	Former Synod Moderator
Revd Chris Tolley	Retired Minister
Harry Edwards	Hanover, Llanover
Anne Escott	Beulah, Rhiwbina
Ann George	Tabernacle, Llanvaches
David Gwynne	Plough, Brecon
Russell Howells	St. David's Uniting, Pontypridd
Thomas Owen John	Bethel, Wolfsdale
Eunice Jones	Trinity, Llanidloes
Sue Jones	Beulah, Rhiwbina

Joan Roberts	Rivertown, Shotton
Dennis Smith	Tabernacle, Mumbles
Enid Trollope	Hill, Swansea

## 2. Introductions and Notices

The following ecumenical guests were welcomed:

David Brownutt	Baptist
Christopher Smith	Church in Wales

The following Ministers were recognised for having achieved significant anniversaries since their Ordinations:

15 years	Paula Parish-Foley
20 years	Kathryn Price
25 years	Peter Cruchley Barbara Flood-Page Stephen Gilbert Simon Walkling
30 years	Russell Gordon Michael Hodgson Colin Foreman
35 years	Kim Fabricius Neil Riches
40 years	Michael Gudgeon Clive Lloyd-Jones
50 years	John Heywood-Thomas
55 years	Malcolm Shapland
65 years	Tom Owen

The following Ministers who had moved into the Synod since the last Synod Meeting were recognised:

SPI Lewis	from South Western Synod to Valleys Pastorate
Kathryn Price	from South Western Synod to Alun Vale Pastorate

One minister is expected to retire before the next meeting of Synod:

Stephen Gilbert	Christchurch/Caebach, Llandrindod Wells (retiring Easter Sunday)
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The following minister will be moving out of the Synod before the next Synod Meeting:

Michael Hodgson	from Brecon Beacons Pastorate to Walton-on-Thames and Weybridge URCs (Wessex Synod)
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The following Elders have been Ordained since the last meeting of Synod:

Margaret Morris	St. David's Uniting, Pontypridd
Bethan Walkling	St. David's Uniting, Pontypridd

The Synod Clerk drew attention to:

- a) The CWM 'Face to Face' Programme for young adults which is being held in the UK this summer with the theme 'Freedom from the Clutches of Empire - Face to Face with Migration and Human Trafficking'.  
Wales are to host two participants for their placements:  
9th-23rd June based in Pontypridd  
26th June – 10th July based in Cardiff
- b) The Future of General Assembly Task Group has produced an online survey in which churches and individuals are invited to participate. The link to the survey is <http://bit.ly/gasurvey2017>, or hard copies are available from Adrian Bulley.
- c) Big Day Out at Warwick Castle on 20th May. Bookings close 31st March so please book if you haven't already. A short promotional video by the organising group was shown.

### **3. Minutes of Last Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 15th October 2016 were approved without amendment and signed as a true record.

### **4. Matters Arising**

None.

### **5. Draft Welsh Language Policy**

The Synod Council proposed that Synod Meeting adopt this policy to show respect for the Welsh Language. The policy's aim is to encourage movement towards increased use of the Welsh language in the life of the Synod. There are no budgetary implications at this stage. This policy applies to URC Wales Synod and not individual churches, although

churches are free to embrace the policy. The following resolution was passed unanimously:

**Synod Meeting adopts the Welsh Language Policy as printed in the Synod Reports.**

## 6. District Council

The circumstance that gave rise to the convening of the District Council in January this year was the decision last year of Caersalem United Church to declare itself solely a Baptist Church. There being no remaining United Reformed Church members at the church, it falls to the District Council – in the absence of a functioning Church Meeting – to take the decision necessary to formally close Caersalem United Church from the URC perspective. Following questions and clarifications, the following resolution was passed unanimously:

**Synod Meeting ratifies the decision of the District Council regarding Caersalem United Church.**

## 7. Calling Ministers: Honouring Past and Future

The Moderator explained that our URC culture is that we vote yes or no. Is how it currently works still appropriate?

It came from an understanding of a minister giving pastoral and spiritual support in a given geographical area.

Now churches share ministers, are more diverse and may be theologically very different. Such issues make the current process of calling a minister problematic.

As a whole church we're recognising that the current system is under stress.

How could we introduce changes that would give permission for some churches to work in a way suitable for them?

Synod was invited to discuss three questions in small groups:

i) Who is calling whom to what when a minister is called to serve in a pastorate?

Suppose it were the wider church that issued the call and the pastorate gave concurrence,

ii) What would any new arrangement look like and what steps should it include?

iii) Should these arrangements be used to fill all pastorate vacancies?

Responses included:

- . Educate congregations as to what concurrence means

- . Develop a new framework of understanding
- . Increase flexibility while ensuring the right person is appointed
- . Bear in mind that people are already starting to take more responsibility
- . Re-define 'ministry': move towards seeing the minister as an enabler
- . Develop missional congregations and move towards discipleship
- . Emphasize mutual support and team work
- . Signpost more training opportunities (e.g. TLS) and make more use of non-stipendiary ministers
- . Create locally-based training opportunities
- . Try to understand congregations' expectations of ministers and encourage a broader vision of ministry
- . Research ecumenical implications re changes to process

## **8. Rural Chaplaincy**

Mindful that the Rural Chaplain, Chris Coe, has had to take early retirement on medical grounds and that we are needing to reduce the numbers of stipendiary posts across the Synod over the coming years, tables were asked to discuss:

- i) How should the Synod engage with rural issues?
- ii) What experience do you have of the work of the Rural Chaplain with local churches, ecumenical partners, the farming community, rural areas and the Synod itself?
- iii) How do you respond to the position of the Learning, Leadership and Mission Board regarding the future of this post?

Responses included:

- . Farmers are often isolated and face unpredictable income. They are especially vulnerable in view of Brexit uncertainties
- . Identify needs
- . Train members of congregations as volunteers to support those in rural areas
- . Build on Chris Coe's valuable experience and the ecumenical links that he has already developed
- . Allocate specific times to invite farming community to attend church
- . There needs to be a point of reference/an accountable body and a strategic place of reference
- . How does URC relate to the existing Farming Crisis Network and the Farming Community Network?
- . Encourage the local community to fulfil the support role
- . While Cytûn would not be able to take full responsibility for fulfilling role, if requested, Cytûn could coordinate the next step

- . East Anglia had a rural 'advocate' (lay person) who networked and produced newsletters
- . Elizabeth Clark is National Rural Officer for the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church and can be used as a resource
- . Often in rural settings, the church is the community
- . Further develop cross-denominational links re. training, support and shared community resources
- . Retired people are a valuable resource
- . Delay decision regarding Rural Officer Post until issues have become clear

## 9. Walking the Way

Adrian Bulley gave a brief presentation to Synod outlining some of the ideas behind – and plans for – this initiative.

## 10. Positive Parenting

Judy Harris introduced this matter for discussion.

For consideration:

- i) How, as churches, can we support families who struggle with behaviour issues of their children?

Responses included:

- . Churches could run parent support groups
- . Signpost people to find appropriate support
- . Avoid imposing expectations (as long as parenting is 'safe')
- . Be a listening ear and share own experiences
- . Avoid being judgemental
- . Avoid criminalising parents (e.g. if they smack their children)
- . Encourage schools to build positive parenting into curriculum – campaign for this
- . WAG website 'Give it Time' – advice re. parenting issues:  
<http://giveittime.gov.wales/?lang=en>
- . Cultural changes take time
- . JH has some helpful leaflets – please contact her for more info

## 11. Past Case Review

The Moderator briefly outlined the current stage of the Past Case Review. Members were requested to put up the posters which have been posted out and read out the Review 'statement' which had also been circulated (this is available from JH if members did not receive it).

## **12. More Able Church**

A grant from the Council for World Mission of £85,000, over 4/5 years, has been received to enable exploration of how to involve people (considered to have disabilities) in church leadership. The Moderator explained how this initiative will be taken forward in the Synod.

Church members are invited to contact Adrian Bulley if they have relevant experiences to share.

## **13. Reports to Synod**

There were no further matters arising from the printed reports.

**Closing worship** was led by the Moderator.

The meeting closed at 3.45pm.

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