

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

**Minutes of the ninety-first meeting of the National Synod of Wales of the  
United Reformed Church held on Saturday 25th March 2017  
at Rhos on Sea URC.**

**Attendance:**

Attendance cards returned indicated: 40 people present.

Of these, 29 were voting members (16 church representatives, 6 active ministers, 0 CRCWs, 3 Synod Post Holders, 0 Co-opted and 4 ecumenical guests) and 11 were non-voting attendees (3 retired ministers and 8 visitors).

**No apologies for absence were received.**

**No apologies were noted from ecumenical guests.**

The Moderator welcomed people to Synod Meeting.

**1. Opening Worship** was led by the Revd Julia Bartholomew.

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:

Judith Holliman	Methodist
Neil Kirkham	Presbyterian Church of Wales
Roger Watts	Church in Wales
Efa Wulle	Society of Friends

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. Mission Shaped Ministry**

Julia Bartholomew gave a presentation about 'becoming church for today's people' emphasising: developing a new – fresh – approach, accepting diversity and removing barriers between church and community. She invited members to take part in the MSM course which is held locally on the second Saturday of each month.

## 6. 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.**

## 7. 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.**

## 8. 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:

- . That Pastorates might change is already a given - with Ministers' time allocated to wider church responsibilities
- . Ministers could be assigned to specific churches and have additional wider, specialised roles
- . There would be more flexibility if Synod was to call ministers
- . Ration people by time rather than by geography
- . Getting local churches to agree amongst themselves may be difficult as pastorates get bigger and decision making gets more complex
- . This is not an exercise to give Synod more control
- . Ministers don't necessarily need to be viewed as 'leaders'
- . Develop churches as self-governing communities of skilled people supported by a team of specialised ministers (e.g. mission drivers)
- . Develop awareness amongst congregations regarding serving in new and different ways
- . There needs to be 'right fit'
- . Bigger pastorates don't work. It is better to adjust expectations and train and enable congregations to take on new roles
- . Develop collaborative mission teams
- . Formulate a plan to provide necessary skills
- . Some churches may need to close
- . 'Mission Shaped Ministry' can help pastorates develop their thinking
- . Develop communities of 'disciples'

## 9. 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:

- . The ongoing farming crisis is being dealt with by other organisations (such as Farming Community Network)
- . The Rural Officer post could be re-defined as a lay post
- . Why is a specific 'rural' officer considered more necessary than an 'urban' officer?
- . Brexit is going to have an adverse effect on farming in Wales
- . Could the Rural Officer post be ecumenically funded?
- . Could the role become part of a pastorate's responsibility?
- . Make more use of the National Rural Officer for the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church

## **10. Walking the Way**

Kathryn Price introduced 'Walking the Way' and gave a brief presentation to Synod outlining some of the ideas behind – and plans for – this initiative.

## **11. Positive Parenting**

David Salisbury 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:

- . The new legislation highlights children's rights to equality
- . Churches can provide a safe space/sounding board for parents
- . Some churches are already running Toddler Groups/Messy Church – these could be adapted to be more parent-focussed as well as child-focussed
- . It takes time to build up trusting relationships: perhaps allocate members to existing groups, with the remit to talk and build relationships
- . Support could be offered to grandparents who are often child carers.
- . Create informal meeting places
- . Develop outreach education
- . Signpost
- . Often badly behaved children who are told off, do not want to return to church
- . Churches could offer themselves as venues for professional parent training
- . Some churches have run positive parenting courses

**12. 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).

**13. 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.

**14. Reports to Synod**

There were no further matters arising from the printed reports.

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

The meeting closed at 3.35pm.