

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

**Minutes of the ninety-second meeting of the National Synod of Wales of the  
United Reformed Church held on Saturday 1st April 2017  
at Christ Well United Reformed Church, Manselton, Swansea**

**Attendance:**

Attendance cards returned indicated: 38 people present.

Of these, 20 were voting members (10 church representatives, 3 active ministers, 1 CRCW, 4 Synod Post Holders, 0 Co-opted and 2 ecumenical guests) and 18 were non-voting attendees (3 retired ministers and 15 visitors).

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Kirsty Mabbott (CRCW), Simon Walkling (Moderator), Ivor Rees (Retired Minister) and Delyth Rees (Sketty Uniting).

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

Howard Long

Methodist

In the absence of the Moderator, Adrian Bulley (Synod Clerk) welcomed people to Synod Meeting.

**1. Opening Worship was led by the Revd Neil Riches.**

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  
Enid Trollope

Tabernacle, Mumbles  
Hill, Swansea

## 2. Introductions and Notices

The following ecumenical guests were welcomed:

Andrew Holmes  
Tim Daniel

Church in Wales  
South Wales Baptist Association

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. Moderator of General Assembly**

The Revd Kevin Watson addressed the meeting from his perspective as Moderator of General Assembly and spoke of some of the churches he knew and the work they are doing.

He shared his inspiration regarding 'Walking the Way' and quoted Mahatma Ghandi urging members to 'Be the change that you want to see

in the world'. He emphasised the need to listen to others, be appreciative, explore new relationships with the community and not to fear challenges.

## 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 carried with one abstention:

**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 Synod Clerk introduced this matter. 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:

- . Agree that it's useful for Synod Pastoral Committee to make

- deployment decisions – as they have a clearer overview, but local churches would like to have a say
- . Conversations about appointments would be held at Regional Pastoral Committee level
  - . Ministers themselves, do have a say
  - . The projected 14 ministers should be used for mission – they are an expensive resource that requires regular review and flexibility
  - . The minister called needs to be an enabler: skilled at engaging the gifts and abilities of church members
  - . Churches don't want a minister imposed on them
  - . Whilst recognising the extra ministerial responsibilities, the integrity of the call needs to be preserved
  - . Church in Wales' approach is 'top down' – Bishop decides best use of resources and strategic placement of ministers
  - . A Minister can't be a 'one-man band': they need to be enablers and to encourage more people to become lay leaders
  - . Much of the envisaged new process will remain the same between local churches and ministers
  - . Conversations need to happen regarding 'how is ministry going to continue'? What are ministers for? What is the nature of ministry? What are the new patterns?
  - . Mission is central
  - . Use of IT could enhance ministers' resources and time management

## **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:

- . Brexit is likely to create new challenges for farmers in Wales
- . Rural issues are of concern to all ecumenical partners
- . CRCWs could engage with rural issues
- . Development of skills of community members would be useful
- . This does not have to be a ministerial post

- . The role requires someone with experience of rural people and the local area
- . There are currently no ministers in Mid Wales. Explore 'chaplaincy' rather than 'chaplain'
- . Need a more holistic view of ministry
- . Synod should recognise the isolation of rural areas
- . There is a need for education and campaigning
- . The URC already shares a Rural Officer ecumenically with the Methodist Church – based at the Arthur Rank Centre, near Warwick

## **10. Walking the Way**

Adrian Bulley 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**

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:

- . Members should not give advice unless they have been trained. It is OK for them to share their own experiences of parenting
- . What does 'reasonable chastisement' actually mean?
- . Most currently run courses are available through referral for 'bad' parents. Good parents can benefit from parenting education
- . URC could employ a team
- . In some circumstances perhaps reasonable chastisement could be a good thing?
- . Campaign for parenting and good behaviour to be taught in schools
- . Churches could run coffee mornings for grandparents who help with raising children
- . WAG website 'Give it Time' – advice re. parenting issues:  
<http://giveitime.gov.wales/?lang=en>
- . JH has some helpful leaflets – please contact her for more information

## **12. Past Case Review**

Kevin Watson 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 £57,000, over 4/5 years, has been received to enable exploration of how to involve people (considered to have disabilities) in church leadership. The Synod Clerk 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 Synod Clerk.

The meeting closed at 3.30pm.