

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

**Minutes of the ninety-fifth meeting of the National Synod of Wales of the
United Reformed Church held on Saturday 2nd March 2019
at The Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells**

Attendance:

Attendance cards returned indicated that 87 people were present. Of these, 57 were voting members (30 church representatives, 15 serving ministers, 3 co-opted Members, 5 Synod Post Holders and 4 ecumenical guests) and 30 were non-voting attendees (3 retired ministers, 1 Minister not in Pastoral Charge, 1 Ordinand, 21 visitors and 4 Synod Post Holders).

Apologies for absence were received from:

Ian Ashton (Horeb, Builth Wells), Revd Brian Clarke, Mrs Margery Davies (Sardis, Llangynidr), Revd Colin Foreman (Retired Minister), Revd Teddy Kalongo, Revd SPI Lewis, Revd Leslie Noon, Revd David Poulton, Revd Brian Reardon, Revd Malcolm Shapland (Retired Minister), Revd Martin Spain, Mrs Verena Walder (Tabernacle, Mumbles).

Apologies were noted from the following ecumenical guests:

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| Revd Tim Daniel | South Wales Baptist Association |
| Mr Peredur Owain Griffiths | Commission of Covenanting Churches |
| Mr Peter Hussey | Society of Friends |
| Revd Dr Ian Morris | Methodist Church, Synod Cymru |
| Revd Aled Davies | Baptist Union of Wales |

1. **Opening Worship** was led by a group of lay preachers and worship leaders. The focus of worship was the *Emmaus Road*. During the worship the Prayer Response was given in sign language: "Travelling with God Together".
2. **Introductions and Notices**

The following ecumenical guests were welcomed:

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|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Canon Aled Edwards | Cytûn |
| Revd Chris Gillham | Congregational Federation |
| Revd Brian Matthews | PCW |

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|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Revd Philip Poyner | Methodist Synod, Wales Synod |
| Venerable Barry Wilson | Church in Wales |

Revd John Proctor, General Secretary of the United Reformed Church (URC) and Mr Andy Jackson the URC's Head of Communications were also welcomed.

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

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|---------------------|----------|
| Branwen Rees | 5 years |
| Phil Wall | 5 years |
| David Yeo Poulton | 15 years |
| Christopher Coe | 20 years |
| Mo Roberts | 25 years |
| Daniel Yoo | 25 years |
| Shirley Mountcastle | 30 years |
| Pamela Lewis | 35 years |
| John Huntington | 45 years |
| Irfon James | 50 years |
| Colin Richards | 60 years |

The Moderator presented Colin Richards with a certificate marking his jubilee.

The following Elder has been Ordained since the last Synod Meeting:

| | |
|--------------|---------------------------------|
| Peter Davies | St. David's Uniting, Pontypridd |
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The Moderator led the meeting in prayer, giving thanks for lives given in service and the following elders who had died since the last Synod Meeting were remembered:

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|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Jim Banks | United Church in Rhyl |
| Alwyn Batley | Llandrindod Wells |
| Betty Jones | Brecon Beacons Pastorate |
| John McNee | City, Cardiff |
| Roy Marchant | Tabernacle, Pennorth |
| Gwyneth Pritchard | St. John's, Flint with Bagillt |
| Gordon Rees | Mount Zion, Hook |
| Mary Squirrel | St. John's, Tenby |

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|---------------|---------------------------|
| Brenda Tanser | United Church in Rhyl |
| Julia Thomas | Hebron, Mostyn |
| Tony Vinall | Beulah, Rhiwbina, Cardiff |

The Synod Clerk drew attention to:

- a) Bookstall provided by Churches Together Books in Cardiff.
- b) Fairtrade Stall provided by Just Shopping in Conwy.
- c) 2019 Synod Yearbooks.
- d) Changes to Synod e-mail addresses.

3. **Minutes of Last Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 20th October 2018 were approved without amendment and signed as a true record.

4. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

None.

5. **Bible Study**

The Revd John Proctor led Bible study on the theme of 'Saints: God's Holy People'. We are all called to be Saints. John Proctor also explained his role to the meeting and encouraged members to read his interview in Reform. Small group discussions were held to reflect on John's words

6. **Local Church Story: Proclaiming the Gospel**

The Revd Phil Wall of St. David's Uniting, Pontypridd gave a brief presentation on the church's work to proclaim the Gospel through the Living the Questions resources (see <https://livingthequestions.com>) and through Film and Chat Evenings. Dr Wall also mentioned Rob Bell's Nooma videos and the TV series Rev as resources that could be used to initiate conversations about faith.

7. **Reflecting on Transitional Ministry**

The Moderator explained and introduced the report on Transitional Ministry found on page 12 of the Synod Papers. He introduced the following questions:

Synod Meeting divided into small groups to consider three questions:

1. Think of a positive change in your church. What helped it to happen?
2. What advice would you give to Synod Officers and other churches when wider church resources affect local church ministry?

Feedback from the meeting included:

- Ministry was not only done by ministers of Word and Sacraments
- Encouraging other people to develop worship groups has helped
- Cultural shifts mean that we should be looking at opportunities beyond Sundays
- External facilitators could help the discussions
- There needs to be clear and realistic expectations of ministers and churches
- There needs to be time for changes to settle, perhaps 5 years
- There needs to be realism about the timescale because demographics are causing rapid changes
- New roles require work on expectations and possibilities
- Better questions would be about how to set members free to engage in ministry and how stipendiary ministers can supplement that work

The Moderator asked the meeting whether the conversations should be occurring through Regional Pastoral Committees or Synod Meeting. The meeting did not reach consensus, although the majority indicated that local conversations were important. The meeting did not have time to address the question:

3. How can we use our discussions about arrangements for future ministry to better connect with the communities we are called to serve?

8. **Local Church Story: Serving Communities**

The Revd Stella Hayton of St. John's, Tenby gave a brief presentation on the church's work to serve their community through a recent Creative Arts Project.

9. **District Council**

Synod Meeting considered a proposal regarding the closure of the Local Ecumenical Partnership at St. David's Church, Bettws:

Resolution 2

Synod Meeting ratifies the decision of the District Council regarding St. David's Church, Bettws.

Resolution 2 was passed unanimously.

10. **Stepwise and Walking the Way**

The Revd Gareth Dyer introduced Stepwise and Walking the Way, and offered a facility for people to sign-up for Stepwise during the lunch break.

11. **Local Church Story: Transforming Injustice**

Mrs Linda Gibbs of Tabernacle, Pembroke gave a brief presentation on the church's work to transform injustice through an initiative with Syrian refugees. She thanked Synod for its support in the refurbishment of Tabernacle, Pembroke.

12. **Big Day Out 2019**

Mrs Judy Harris spoke of the plans for the Big Day Out on Saturday 29th June 2019 at the Royal Welsh Showground in Llanelwedd. Further information will shortly be sent to the Church Secretaries, and will be available on the Synod website.

Churches are invited to use their imagination in producing a large poster to represent how they are Walking the Way. What has been helpful? What sustains their discipleship? How do they see the future? Large sheets for this purpose were available for collection, along with further instructions for using them.

13. **Report of the 20-40 Task Group**

This report was introduced at the Autumn 2018 Synod Meeting with encouragement for local churches and chapels to consider the report by using the questions for reflection and discussion at the end.

In small groups, Synod Meeting reflected on the following questions:

- What has your church done about this report?
- What do you think the Synod could do about the issues raised?

Feedback from the discussion included:

- The Synod might organise an event aimed at 20+ age group, with appropriate resources and taking advice from churches that have successfully engaged with that age group
- Stories about the breadth of experience in the age group and ways local churches were involving them
- Andy Jackson told the meeting about the 'Reach Out' materials (available through the URC's Online Store - <https://urcshop.co.uk>) which include advice on using social media
- It was noted that Sunday did not suit everybody, and not everyone wanted to be treated as a newcomer

The Moderator summarised the discussion as:

- seeing connections and practical means
- Possibly having events or resources that encourage events

- Encouraging each other to continue to engage with others outside as well as those already in the church

14. **Local Church Story: Sustaining the Environment**

The Revd Phil Challis of Barry Uniting Church gave a brief presentation on the church's work to sustain the environment through the development of their church garden.

15. **Gift Aid: Funding and Appeals**

The Treasurer, Mr Chris Atherton, encouraged Churches to apply for financial assistance from the Mission Development Fund when appropriate.

Synod Meeting considered a proposal from the Finance and Property Board:

Resolution 3

Synod Meeting resolves that, effective from 1st January 2020, no Mission Development Fund application or Ministry and Mission Fund appeal will be accepted from a church that has not submitted a Gift Aid claim to HMRC in the preceding twelve months.

Following the presentation of the resolution, questions were raised and answered by the Treasurer. He said that options for supporting people in claiming repayment of Gift Aid were being considered, through remote support or a video demonstration. Information was also available on the 'excepted' charity status of churches.

Resolution 3 was passed unanimously.

16. **Local Church Story: Working with Partners for the Common Good**

The Revd Paul Robinson of The Uniting Church, Rhyl, gave a brief presentation on the church's work with partners through the ASK Project involving the Citizens Advice Bureau. Paul also thanked the Mission Development Fund for its support.

17. **The National Synod of Wales and our part in God's Mission**

Synod Meeting reviewed this document, which was included as Appendix A of the Synod Reports, and considered the proposal:

Resolution 1

Synod Meeting adopts the document 'The National Synod of Wales and our part in God's Mission' and commends it to local churches as a tool for reviewing church life.

After the presentation of the resolution a short discussion was held. The points included:

- It was a helpful document with practical examples
- It would be helpful to circulate the document to the churches with some commentary about how to use it
- It would be helpful for the Mission and Discipleship Board to have a steer on what the Board should be doing with the document
- The Lambeth Conference's 'Five Marks of Mission' included 'making disciples', which did not appear explicitly in the document, but the document was under the umbrella of 'Walking the Way' and being a community of disciples who make disciples
- Mission is key to the existence of the Church
- The environmental issues are important

Resolution 1 was passed without dissent.

18. **Reports to Synod**

There were no matters raised from the printed reports for this meeting.

There was a question as to whether URC representatives on Local Ecumenical Partnership Sponsoring Bodies should be included in the nominations list. It has not been the Synod's practice to include those names.

19. **Closing Worship** was led by a group of Ministers on the theme of moving out and on in mission.

The meeting closed at 3.45pm.