

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

**Minutes of the ninety-sixth meeting of the National Synod of Wales of the
United Reformed Church held on Saturday 19th October 2019
at The Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells**

Attendance:

Attendance cards returned indicated that 87 people were present.

Of these, 55 were voting members (29 church representatives, 16 serving ministers/CRCWs, 4 co-opted members, 3 Synod post holders and 3 ecumenical guests) and 31 were non-voting attendees (5 retired ministers, 24 visitors and 3 Synod post holders).

Apologies for absence were received from:

Phillip Benjamin (Bridgend United Area), Diane Brain (Cwmbran), Helen Bravey (Tyddyn Street, Mold), Richard Edwards, Sarah Edwards, Brian Frolely (Bridgend United Area), Judy Harris (CYDO), Sheila Jones (Llanvaches), Teddy Kalongo (Bridgend United Area), Leslie Noon (Sketty Uniting, Swansea), Monica O’Dea (Trinity, Llanidloes), Joy Parish (Bridgend United Area), Adella Pritchard (Swansea), Ivor Rees (Retired Minister), Delyth Rees, Neil Riches (Swansea Pastorate), Brenda Rushton (St John’s, Buckley), Margot Seabourne (Abergavenny), Ann Shillaker (Bridgend United Area), Martin Spain (Landsker Pastorate), Judith Stinton (Bridgend United Area), Philip Tuckett (Elfed Avenue, Penarth), Verena Walder (Tabernacle, Mumbles), Rachel Wheeler (Bridgend United Area), Joan Warner (St Paul’s, Penmaenmaer).

Apologies were noted from the following ecumenical guests:

Tim Daniel	South Wales Baptist Association
Phil Dunning	Commission of Covenanting Baptist Churches
Aled Edwards	Cytûn
Ainsley Griffiths	Church in Wales
Phillip Poynor	Methodist Church Wales Synod
Marcus Robinson	Presbyterian Church of Wales
Barry Wilson	Church in Wales

1. **Opening Worship** was led by representatives of the Brecon Beacons Pastorate.

2. **Introductions and Notices**

The following ecumenical guests were welcomed:

Noel Davies	Union of Welsh Independents
Brian Matthews	Presbyterian Church of Wales
Ian Morris	Methodist Church Synod Cymru

The following Minister was recognised for having achieved a significant anniversary since his Ordination, and a certificate was presented by the Moderator:

Irfon James	50 years
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Mr James briefly responded.

The Moderator led the meeting in prayer, giving thanks for lives given in service and the following minister and elders who had died since the last Synod Meeting were remembered:

The Revd Marshall Edwards	Retired Minister
Ian Ashton	Builth Wells
Carol Davies	Gloddaeth, Llandudno
Don Donnell	St John's, Buckley
Denis Earp	Sketty Uniting Church
Elaine Edwards	Beulah, Rhiwbina
Norma Fraser	City, Cardiff
Margaret Grayland	Cwmbran
Bronwyn Hurlow	St John's, Tenby
Glan Jones	Hope and Market Square, Merthyr
Maureen Jones	Rhos on Sea
Anthony Moore	Van Road, Caerphilly
John Peters	Talgarth United Free Church
David Phillips	Nolton Haven
Julia Richards	St John's Flint with Bagillt
Alan Rosser	Sketty Uniting Church
Peter Stevenson	Beulah, Rhiwbina

The Moderator greeted Nina Hirschuller, one of the two Time for God volunteers who are based at Christ Well, Swansea, and she introduced herself.

The following Ministers were acknowledged, and where present, greeted, having moved into the Synod since the last Synod Meeting:

Julie Kirby	Brecon Beacons Pastorate (West) Ordination/Induction: 22nd June
Monica O’Dea (PCW)	Trinity, Llanidloes Induction: July
Adella Pritchard	Swansea Church-in-Community. Commissioning: 21st September
Lesley Lawrence (Baptist)	Church of the Resurrection, St Mellons, Cardiff. Induction: 21st September
David Dean	Cardiff and Penarth Pastorate Induction: 12th October
Martha McInnes	Cardiff and Penarth Pastorate Induction: 12th October

The following appointments within the Synod were acknowledged:

John Hayton	NSM South Pembrokeshire Pastore and South-West Wales Methodist Circuit
Mathias Tchatchoua	Local Church Leader, Stow Park
Miara Rabearisoa	Mid-Wales Regional Officer
Verena Walder	Local Church Leader, Mumbles

The following elders had been Ordained since the last Synod Meeting:

Angela Grech	St Andrew’s, Cardiff
Pauline Hegarty	St Andrew’s, Cardiff
Clare Lauritzen	Gloddaeth, Llandudno
Brian Reynolds	Gloddaeth, Llandudno
Bethan Trott	City, Cardiff
Steve Winrow	Rivertown, Shotton

The following Ministers who have moved out of the Synod since the last Synod Meeting were acknowledged:

Kirsty Mabbott	to Coventry, Ansty Road and St Columba's Church in Community
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SPI Lewis	Project (in West Midlands Synod) from Valleys Pastorate to Twickenham and Hampton Hill with Synod Directed (Mission Enabler) (in Southern Synod)
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The following Minister who will shortly be moving out of the Synod was acknowledged, and a presentation made in acknowledgement for her service as Ecumenical Officer:

Sally Thomas	to Kensington and Bayswater (in Thames North Synod)
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The following Minister was recognised for completion of Education for Ministry 2:

Stephen Best

The following Interim Moderators who have concluded their service on behalf of the Synod since the last Synod Meeting were acknowledged:

SPI Lewis	Brecon Beacons Pastorate
Judy Harris	Swansea Church-in-Community
Phil Wall	Cardiff and Penarth Pastorate

The Synod Clerk drew attention to:

- a) The Bookstall, provided by Colin and Elizabeth Richards.
- b) The Fairtrade Stall, provided by Just Shopping in Conwy.
- c) General Assembly 2020, for which expressions of interest in attending are now sought from both Ministers/CRCWs and elders/lay representatives. The notice to this effect can be found at 3.2 on page 8 of the reports to Synod Meeting, and in the October eNewsletter.
- d) Planned changes to marriage registration affecting those churches and chapels whose buildings are registered to solemnise marriages and who have an Authorised Person to register the marriage. Once the legislation is implemented, probably in 2020, the process for registering a marriage will change significantly, most notably in that churches will no longer hold their own registers or issue marriage certificates. Further details regarding implementation will be communicated through the synod's eNewsletter as soon as it is received.

Additionally, those churches who have registered to conduct civil partnerships should note that the legislation extends civil partnerships to opposite-sex couples and that these provisions are

effective from 31st Dec. 2019.

3. **Minutes of Last Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 2nd March 2019 were approved without amendment and signed as a true record.

4. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

None.

5. **Mission and Discipleship Board**

The Revd Kathryn Price, Convener of the Mission and Discipleship Board, reported that climate change and climate justice will be the board's focus for 2020. The Synod aims to become an 'Eco Synod', which requires a number of churches in the Synod to be working towards, and some to have achieved, Eco Church awards.

Kathryn shared a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Resources) tool for creating a church vision statement and recommended 'Appreciating Church' as a resource.

6. **Local Church Story – Bethesda, Tongwynlais – Strengths**

The Revd Stephen Best spoke of the strengths of Bethesda, Tongwynlais. Tongwynlais is a village of about 7,000 people separated from Cardiff by the M4. About eight to ten people attend on a Sunday. The church realised that more people were coming for coffee on a Tuesday than on a Sunday. In response, they created a 'cuppa and conversation church' by removing spare chairs and seating attenders around a table. People enjoy sharing their own thoughts with the group and sharing communion around the table. Earlier this year, issues were discovered regarding asbestos tiles in the kitchen. Within a month, using members' savings, the kitchen was refurbished and a planned art exhibition was able to go ahead. The church has received more enquiries for holding exhibitions. Stephen identified that Bethesda now has a sense of self-worth, resilience, an awareness of limits without being restricted by those limits, and a willingness to do what comes naturally.

7. **Local Church Resolution: Divestment from Fossil Fuels**

Eileen Newington introduced the resolution from Beulah URC, Rhiwbina calling upon the URC (Wales) Trust Company Limited to divest from investment in fossil fuels, and encouraging all local churches to do likewise.

Resolution 9 was moved in an amended form.

In response to a question regarding the Trust's position on the issue, Chris Atherton stated that, if the resolution is passed, the Trust would be prepared to discuss its implementation at the meeting in November.

In response to a request actively to seek to invest in eco-friendly energy sources, Chris Atherton noted that CCLA is increasing its investments in clean energy start-ups.

Resolution 9: Divestment from Fossil

The National Synod of Wales requests the URC (Wales) Trust Company Limited to amend its investment portfolio at the earliest opportunity in order to divest from companies whose total turnover is more than 10% derived from the extraction and/or supply of fossil fuels, including thermal coal, natural gas and oil, and encourages other churches within the Synod to do likewise.

Resolution 9 was passed without dissent.

8. Israel/Palestine Denominational Educational Visit

The Revd Branwen Rees spoke about her recent participation in this education visit. The group of 22 included at least one representative from each Synod. Branwen described the challenges facing people living in the Occupied Territories, noting the impression that foreign visitors have more rights in Palestine than Palestinians. It can take hours to get through check points and there are frequent electricity cuts and water shortages. The group met with a headteacher, a human rights activist and a Bedouin community. Branwen recommended the Olive Tree Campaign and Embrace the Middle East, and is available to visit churches to share further about the visit.

9. Mission Development Fund

Sue Cole introduced the revisions to the Mission Development Fund policy and procedures and explained the reasoning behind them.

Resolution 1 was moved.

The meeting discussed the proposal. A key point concerned the definition of 'community audit', with some concern that the level of work required would be off-putting or unmanageable for churches. Kathryn Price suggested amending to 'evidence of appropriate community consultation or engagement'. The Clerk committed to add a footnote to the document in line with Kathryn's suggestion, which was accepted.

In addition, Ron Prosser of Stow Park, Newport, spoke warmly of the benefits to the church and community as a result of a Mission Development Fund grant.

Resolution 1: Mission Development Fund

Synod Meeting approves the revised Mission Development Fund Policy and Procedure as contained in Appendix A.

Resolution 1 was passed unanimously.

10. **Local Church Story – Dan y Graig United Church, Risca - ‘Opportunities’**

The Revd Paula Parish-Foley and Colin Harrison explained how Dan y Graig Church looks for opportunities. It is a Local Ecumenical Partnership between the URC, Presbyterian Church of Wales and the Methodist Church, and has a membership of 52, with 22 adult attenders and 16 children and young people. Messy Church began two years ago and is reviewed every six months. The church committee invited the Sunday School to elect representatives to join the committee, and Paula reported that the opinion of the young people is very valuable.

11. **URC Ministers’ Pension Fund**

Chris Atherton introduced the resolution amending the use of proceeds of the sale of redundant buildings.

Resolution 3 was moved.

There were opposing views on whether it was a conflict of interest for beneficiaries of the Ministers’ Pension Fund to vote on the resolution.

It was noted that stipendiary and retired ministers collectively declared an interest, and all members of Synod were invited to vote.

Resolution 3: URC Ministers’ Pension Fund

Synod Meeting rescinds its decision of November 2012 regarding the division of the proceeds of sale of redundant churches, and resolves that, with effect from 1st January 2020, such proceeds of sale should be divided in the following manner: 45% retained in the Synod General Fund, 45% transferred to the Mission Development Fund and 10% gifted to the URC Ministers’ Pension Fund.

The resolution was passed without dissent and one abstention.

12. **2018 Accounts**

Chris Atherton introduced the annual accounts for 2018 and responded to questions.

Resolution 4 was moved.

Resolution 4: 2018 Accounts

Synod Meeting receives the accounts for 2018 as summarised in Appendix C.

Resolution 4 was passed unanimously.

13. **2020 Budgets**

Chris Atherton introduced the budgets for 2020 and responded to questions.

Resolution 5 was moved.

Resolution 5: 2020 General Fund Budget

Synod Meeting approves the Budget for the Synod General Fund for 2020 as set out in Appendix D.

Resolution 5 was passed unanimously.

Resolution 6 was moved.

David Clarkson asked if the training fund will receive anything from the proceeds of sale of the Windermere Centre. Chris Atherton responded that the proceeds will go towards a central Discipleship Development Fund, which will be open for grants.

Resolution 6: 2020 Training Fund Budget

Synod Meeting approves the Budget for the Synod Training Fund for 2020 as set out in Appendix D.

Resolution 6 was passed unanimously.

14. **Local Church Story – St John’s Flint with Bagillt – ‘Aspirations’**

Iris Williams spoke of the church’s aspiration to provide welcome and hospitality in the sanctuary and hall. A new kitchen was installed three years ago with finance from custodial funds, and an afternoon tea was held to celebrate its completion. The church is busy with events and activities, including cake, food and drink, and Iris noted it is a good way to grow community. The church aims to be the Well Centre, where all can find refreshment for body and soul.

15. **District Council**

Synod Meeting considered a proposal regarding the Local Ecumenical Partnership at St David’s Ecumenical Church, Pentwyn, Cardiff:

Resolution 2: St David’s Ecumenical Church, Pentwyn

Synod Meeting ratifies the decision of the District Council regarding St. David’s Ecumenical Church, Pentwyn.

Resolution 2 was passed unanimously.

16. **Mission Council Resolutions**

The Clerk introduced the two resolutions which had been referred to synods from Mission Council under the procedure for constitutional amendments.

Resolutions 7 and 8 were moved.

Chris Atherton expressed a concern that there is no provision to ensure balance between ministers/CRCWs and elders as Assembly moderators. Adrian Bulley stated that Synods will be able to nominate both a minister and an elder each year.

Resolution 7: Moderators of General Assembly

The National Synod of Wales raises no objection to the Mission Council resolution concerning the number of Assembly Moderators.

Resolution 7 was carried with one objection.

Resolution 8: Mission Council

The National Synod of Wales raises no objection to the Mission Council resolution concerning the new name for Mission Council.

Resolution 8 was carried with two objections.

17. Local Church Story – St John’s, Buckley – ‘Resources’

The Revd Kathryn Price described the Weekend of Invitation held by St John’s Buckley. Everyone in the congregation was asked to invite at least one person, and the weekend was publicised on Facebook and posters displayed in the town. Events and activities included a prayer board, quiz night, Messy Church, treasure hunt and church history display. Children helped with the all age café church service on the Sunday morning, resulting in the comment, “That was lovely, just like being a family.” In response to the weekend, a pet blessing service was held and an ‘afternoon tea’ service started. The next weekend is planned for Friday 26th to Sunday 28th June, and materials are available from the Christian Publicity Organisation.

18. A More Able Church?

Adrian Bulley spoke about the Council for World Mission’s ‘A More Able Church?’ project, and the process of information gathering and education in which the small steering group has been involved since 2017.

As part of this process, a training opportunity for serving elders (and their equivalents in LEPs) is being organised for Saturday 13th June 2020 at the Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells, under the banner of ‘Equipping Elders’. The day will have a dual focus:

- Building on ‘A More Able Church?’, it will be an introduction to creating churches which are inclusive and welcoming for people of all abilities, and introduce some resources that might help churches to take stock.

- Building on the Mission Development Fund policy and procedures, it will be an introduction to auditing the local community and partnering with others to respond to mission opportunities.

Members of Synod were urged to look out for the flier, which will be distributed by e-mail before the end of October, and to encourage elders to book their places.

19. **Reports to Synod**

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

20. **Closing Worship** was led by the Moderator.

The meeting closed at 3.58pm.