



Minutes of the ninety-eighth meeting of the National Synod of Wales of the United Reformed Church held virtually on Saturday 17th October 2020

Attendance:

Fifty-nine people were present during the meeting which was held virtually due to the Covid-19 virus, social distancing measures and local lockdowns in Wales.

Apologies for absence were received from:

Margery Davies (Sardis, Llangynidr) Revd Linda Elliott (Retired Minister), Judith Negus (Abergavenny), Adella Pritchard, Revd Gethin Rhys, Revd Colin Richards (Retired Minister), Revd Malcolm Shapland (Retired Minister), Revd Martin Spain.

1. **Opening Worship** was led by the Moderator and included the Induction of the Revd Dr Jason Askew as Synod Training and Development Officer.

The worship included thanksgiving for lives given in service and the following elders who had died since the last Synod Meeting were remembered:

Jean Baxter	Gloddaeth, Llandudno
Joy Davies	United Church in Rhyl
Colin Eagles	St David's, Aberystwyth
Haydn Goodfellow	St David's Uniting, Pontypridd
Bronwen Jenkins	Crundale
Marina Kennard	Cwmbran
Michael McCawley	Rhos on Sea
Gerald Meek	City, Cardiff
Allen Powell	St Andrew's, Cardiff
Tony Scullard	St John's, Tenby
John Ifor Swales	Crundale

2. **Introductions and Notices**

The following ecumenical guests were welcomed:

Noel Davies	Undeb yr Annibynwyr Cymraeg
Major David Evans	Salvation Army
Peredur Griffiths	Cytûn
Peter Hussey	Society of Friends
Venerable Alan Jevons	Church in Wales
Brian Matthews	Presbyterian Church of Wales
Ian Morris	Methodist Church Synod Cymru
Phillip Poynor	Methodist Church Wales District
Venerable Dr Barry Wilson	Church in Wales

The following appointment within the Synod was acknowledged:

Jason Askew	from Bridgend United Area to Synod Training and Development Officer
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The following Interim Moderator had concluded their ministry on behalf of the Synod and was acknowledged:

Malcolm Shapland	Valleys Pastorate
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The Synod Clerk drew attention to the following:

- a) It has been decided that the Spring 2021 Synod Meeting will be another virtual meeting, held on Saturday 6th March.
- b) General Assembly 2021, for which expressions of interest in attending are now sought from both Ministers/CRCWs and elders/lay representatives. All expressions of interest should be communicated to the Synod Clerk by 31st December 2020. The notice to this effect can be found at 2.1 on page 5 of the Synod Reports, and in the October eNewsletter.
- b) General Assembly Moderator 2022-23, for which nominations are invited from churches (see pages 5 and 37ff of the Synod Reports and the September and October eNewsletters). All nominations should be communicated to the Synod Clerk by 31st December 2020.

3. **Minutes of Last Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 29th February 2020 were approved without amendment and signed as a true record.

4. **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

None.

5. **An Introduction to the Education, Training and Development Framework** was given by Jason Askew and followed by breakout groups to react and

respond. The Education, Training and Development Framework is reproduced in Appendix B of the Synod Reports.

6. **2019 Accounts**

The 2019 Accounts had been delayed due to the difficulties associated with conducting the audit during lockdown and social distancing. The audit had taken place within the last week, and the accounts will be presented to the Spring 2021 Synod Meeting.

7. **2021 Budgets**

Chris Atherton introduced the budgets for both the General Fund and Training Fund. He noted that 2020 had been a challenging year for setting budgets, due to changes in Synod staffing and the wider uncertainties caused by Brexit and Covid-19.

Resolution 1 was moved.

Resolution 1: 2021 General Fund Budget
Synod Meeting approves the Budget for the Synod General Fund for 2021 as set out in Appendix D.

Resolution 1 was passed unanimously.

Chris Atherton noted there is a separate Training Fund Budget as the Synod holds a number of funds designated for and restricted to training purposes only.

Resolution 2 was moved.

Resolution 2: 2021 Training Fund Budget
Synod Meeting approves the Budget for the Synod Training Fund for 2021 as set out in Appendix D.

Resolution 2 was passed unanimously.

8. **Draft Synod Environmental Policy**

This draft document (reproduced in Appendix C of the Synod Reports) was introduced by Kathryn Price, Convener of the Mission and Discipleship Board, and commended to local churches. The document will be presented for approval to the Spring 2021 Synod Meeting. She noted that the National Synod of Wales has registered as an Eco Synod, which requires the adoption of a Synod Environmental Policy detailing commitments by the Synod, officers and local churches to improve the way we relate to the environment.

Rob Moverley asked how the aims of the policy will be reported and monitored, for example in relation to the Synod's annual carbon footprint.

Kathryn Price responded that the Mission and Discipleship Board will be monitoring the policy's outcomes and will report regularly to Synod Meeting.

9. **Eco Church/Eco Synod**

Eileen Newington, Synod Green Advocate, gave a presentation on the situation with regards Eco Churches in the Synod, and progress towards achieving Eco Synod status. Eileen stated that a percentage of local churches must have an Eco Church Award before the Synod can become an Eco Synod, and noted that Uniting Church Sketty had achieved a Silver Eco Church Award during lockdown. She highlighted the Synod's series of online seminars with guest speakers, including Caroline Pomeroy of Climate Stewards and Cynan Llwyd of Christian Aid in Wales, based on the five focus areas of Eco Church. The first session is available on the Synod's YouTube channel (<https://bit.ly/3cnTaPS>) and the next session takes place on Wednesday 2 December. Eileen noted work undertaken by Judy Harris and the Children and Youth Development Officers team to produce Eco Church questionnaires suitable for children and young people. The presentation and links to online resources is available at www.urc.wales.org.uk/eco-church/ and churches are encouraged to contact Eileen via meetingsupport@urc.wales.org.uk.

10. **What have we learned through the pandemic?**

Breakout groups discussed this question and subsequently fed back to the plenary meeting. The following points were made:

- The resilience of fellowships to work in new ways, particularly in terms of pastoral support and togetherness
- The vulnerability of small fellowships and congregations, and the need to support them through Regional Pastoral Committees
- Zoom had brought pastorates together and phone call ministry had brought churches together, which had joined people together more than before
- Synod group gatherings had been supportive. A session could be arranged to explore how we cope with, and respond to, all the media and information we are being exposed to
- Communication from the Synod Office with support and advice in the light of changing government guidelines had been really helpful and appreciated
- Will carbon reduction be prominent in the life of the Synod, specifically with regard to Synod meetings?
- Today's experience in the breakout groups enabled people to talk with people they might not otherwise have spoken to at a Synod

Meeting. It offers real democratization

- People can log on to Zoom services happening elsewhere, and be less precious about services having to happen in one particular place
- The church building isn't important, the community is. There are parallels with the early church's experience, in that the pandemic has reignited a sense of belonging and a yearning to be part of something

11. **Reports to Synod**

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

Judy Harris provided information about Advent Boxes, a new intergenerational initiative. The boxes are designed to fit through letterboxes and are full of resources for each week through Advent to Epiphany. The boxes cost £4 each and churches can apply to the Daphne and Bethan Fund for help with funding.

12. **Mrs Sue Cole**

The Moderator greeted and thanked Sue Cole on the occasion of her retirement after twenty-nine years' service to the Synod as Property Officer.

Sue Cole thanked everybody for the gifts and messages she had received, noting it had been a pleasure and a privilege to help the Synod to achieve its dreams and move its mission forward.

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

The meeting closed at 3.40pm.

The next Synod Meeting will take place on **Saturday 6th March 2021** and will be a virtual meeting using Zoom.