

**MINUTES** of the meeting of **WESSEX SYNOD** on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2018 at The Church on the Heath, Elvetham Heath, Fleet.

The Moderator, the Revd. Clare Downing, welcomed members to the meeting and constituted the Synod. A welcome was offered by the church and information about fire and safety arrangements was given. The Revd. Patrick Butler thanked his church team for facilitating the day at this four-way LEP, then led worship.

#### **Attendance**

35	URC Ministers and CRCWs
45	Church representatives
2	Ministers of other denominations
3	Retired Ministers
0	Ordinands
15	Others holding Synod appointments
14	Visitors
<b>114</b>	<b>Total</b>

**18S23 Ecumenical visitors and new members of Synod:** The Moderator brought apologies from several ecumenical visitors but was pleased to welcome the Revd. Conrad Hicks, the South East Methodist District assistant chair and a new minister in the URC by virtue of his appointment at the newly established LEP (The Spire) in Farnham, alongside the Revd. Michael Hopkins.

The Moderator invited Patrick Wintrebert to speak, to bring greetings from the Nord Normandie Region of the Eglise Protestante Unie de France. He read an update from the Synod Clerk of that Region. The Moderator drew attention to the Breakfast Club which had been held before the start of Synod and encouraged people to attend if this event is held at future Synod meetings. She then welcomed those attending Synod for the first time.

#### **18S24 Ministry and pastoral news:**

- a. The Moderator welcomed the Revds. Duncan Goldie (Sherborne and Shaftesbury, with oversight of Mere URC & Wincanton Methodist Church), Joshua Thomas (Petersfield & Liss, with Bordon), Helen Garton (St. Columba's & Cumnor, Oxford), Mike Thomason (High Cross Church, Camberley), Mark Robinson (South West Hants Group) and Tessa Henry-Robinson (Southampton East Group), who had been inducted since the last Synod meeting. She also mentioned the Revd. Jonathan Clark, who had been inducted at Christ Church, Chineham but was not present. The Moderator led Synod in prayer.
- b. The Moderator noted other changes, especially the uniting of Farnham URC and Farnham Methodist Church to become The Spire Church, Farnham.
- c. She also noted changes due to take place before the next Synod: Sarah McClelland (CofE) will be licensed at St. Francis, Valley Park, Chandler's Ford on 2<sup>nd</sup> December and Pat Oliver (CRCW) will retire from Southampton: Avenue St. Andrew's & Freemantle on 28<sup>th</sup> February. Finchdean URC has decided to close in the New Year and will hold a closing service on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2019. The Moderator requested prayer for church members, for whom this has been a difficult decision.
- d. The Moderator congratulated the Revd. Julian Macro on reaching the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination and presented him with a certificate.
- e. The Moderator mentioned the obituaries of two ministers who had died, the Revds. Albert Molineaux and Stella Sivyour. Synod remained silent in their memory, then the Moderator led in prayer.

The Moderator explained how consensus decision making works.

#### **18S25 Apologies** were received from

12	URC Ministers
22	Church representatives
1	Ministers of other denominations
0	Ordinand
12	Retired Ministers

6	Others
<b>53</b>	<b>Total</b>

**18S26 Minutes of the last meeting:** The Minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2018 were approved by consensus and signed as a correct record. There were no matters arising.

**18S27 Order of business:** The Synod Clerk explained that there will be three extra resolutions, two as part of the Executive report, and one emergency resolution about Traidcraft at the end of the afternoon session. There has been a change to the speaker on Green Journey, as Mark Rudhall is unavailable: Kilian Coyne will take his place. There will no longer be an Employment Surgery at lunchtime but those who wished to speak with Penny Thatcher should contact the Synod Clerk.

**18S28 Synod Executive report:** The Synod Clerk presented the report, drawing attention to the February Area Gatherings, which will look at fundraising from sources other than URC grants. No venues have been decided yet, so the Clerk will be grateful for offers to host in February or September 2019. She also commented that interviews for the Safeguarding Officer post will be held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> October and asked for prayers as there are four very good applicants.

The Clerk brought the new Resolution 1:

**RESOLUTION 1**

Wessex Synod approves the appointment of the Revd. Michael Hopkins as Convener of the Listed Buildings Advisory Group and of the Revd. Glyn Millington as Secretary of the Listed Buildings Advisory Group.

The resolution was approved by consensus.

The Moderator thanked those taking on these roles and pointed out that they are there so churches do not have to go down the very onerous local authority route. The officers' handover date is not yet clear so churches were asked to speak first to their Property Officer if they require LBAC help.

The Clerk tabled the new Resolution 2:

**RESOLUTION 2**

Wessex Synod resolves that change no. 1 referred to Synods by General Assembly: "to make the number of Synod representatives equal – to be, for the present, sixteen for each Synod" be not proceeded with.

The Moderator invited the Revd. Romilly Micklem to introduce this resolution. After presenting his reasoning, Dr. Micklem moved Resolution. 2. The Moderator explained that if one third of Synods ask for this change not to proceed then it will not go forward. If we pass the resolution Wessex Synod is therefore not making that decision but is asking General Assembly not to proceed.

Questions were asked for clarification, then discussion commenced. Due to time factors this was then suspended until after lunch, with the Revds. Romilly Micklem and Michael Hopkins being asked to word another possible resolution to accompany Resolution 2.

**18S29 Ministries and Learning Committee report:** Phyllis Williams presented the report, drawing particular attention to Stepwise and to the deployment of stipendiary ministers. She gave a definition of scoping, then invited table groups to complete a questionnaire.

**18S30 Green Journey:** The Revd. Mike Shrubsole, the Synod's Green Apostle, introduced Kilian Coyne from Green Journey. He spoke about this national scheme which works with multi-faith groups looking at sustainable solutions. It works by being introduced by Synod to its members and then going out to interested churches to offer a survey. There is no direct cost to churches and there will be a report at the end of the process which a church's buildings committee can use to access funds.

**18S31 Announcements and introduction to workshops:** The Synod Clerk directed people to four Workshops:

1. Mental Health First Aid
2. Eco-Church and All Things Environmental
3. An Encounter with Jesus
4. Stepwise

Synod then broke for lunch.

**18S32 Wessex Trust report:** The Revd. Romilly Micklem presented the report. Referring to March Synod's recording of its thanks to Chris Evans, Dr. Micklem added his own personal thanks for all his help. He also acknowledged Synod's debt of gratitude to a former trustee, David Humphries, who has recently died.

Dr. Micklem clarified the information about hiring of church premises and annual returns. They will be requested in January 2019 and updated information about this will be available on pp.14-15 of the website version of the property handbook.

There will be a dedication service for Banbury URC's new premises, the Haven, on 24<sup>th</sup> November and the minister (the Revd. Barrie Cheetham) wished to record his thanks for Synod help.

LBAC officers have now been appointed and there are interviews for the post of Finance Manager on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> October.

Dr. Micklem invited Peter Pay to present his **Ministry and Mission report**. He began by thanking Synod for nominating him as lay moderator of General Assembly and asked for prayers for himself and Clare Downing, who was nominated as minister moderator.

Mr. Pay explained that it is a busy time of year for working out and sending figures to churches. 30 have not yet responded, while 38 churches have offered 1% or more above what was asked of them. 6 churches have offered more than 10% less than they were asked for.

Dr. Micklem then referred to Resolutions 3, 4 and 5. In relation to Resolution 3 he mentioned that in March 2019 there will be a resolution about putting a significant amount into the Special Reserve Fund. He declared an interest in Resolution 4 as he is a member of the Ministers' Pension Fund and commented that there is no change to the amount requested in Resolution 5, though it is likely to increase in 2019.

The Moderator brought Resolution 3:

#### **RESOLUTION 3**

Wessex Synod approves the transfer of £200,000 from the General Fund to the Church Mission Fund of the Wessex Trust.

The resolution was approved by consensus.

The Moderator brought Resolution 4:

#### **RESOLUTION 4**

Wessex Synod approves the proposal by the Wessex Trust to grant 10% of the net proceeds from the sale of redundant churches where there is no continuing congregation to the United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund, for a period of three years from 1 November 2018. Synod asks the trustees to review this arrangement during 2021 and report to the Autumn Synod in that year, noting that this new arrangement replaces the current one agreed by Synod on 10 November 2007 which benefits the Retired Ministers' Housing Society.

The resolution was approved by consensus.

#### **RESOLUTION 5**

Wessex Synod approves a grant of £100,000 from the General Fund of the Wessex Trust to support the URC's Inter-Synod Resource Sharing for 2019.

The resolution was approved by consensus. The Revd. Michael Hodgson thanked Synod for passing this resolution. He was previously in a Synod which relied heavily on Inter-Synod Resource Sharing and he expressed how very well used these finances are.

The Moderator thanked Dr. Micklem and other trustees for their hard work for the Wessex Trust

**18S33 Good News Story:** Philip Bonnier explained the process by which Collinwood Road URC agreed to run a three-day Holiday Club for children for the first time in many years. With the help of photographs on the screen he described the Club and spoke of strengthened community relationship which have followed. Despite the church's small size and age profile Mr. Bonnier felt that this kind of venture is not too difficult for other, similar churches to contemplate if members buy into it.

The Moderator prayed for Collinwood Road church and for others who may consider a similar venture.

**18S34 Synod Executive report (contd):** Revd. Romilly Micklem brought an additional resolution to accompany Resolution 2. A slight amendment to the wording was agreed, leading to the following, proposed by the Revd. Romilly Micklem and seconded by Colin McBean.

#### **RESOLUTION 6**

Wessex Synod recognises the imperfections in the current system of allocating numbers of representatives to General Assembly between the Synods but is not convinced that the proposed solution is the best way of addressing the issue. Wessex Synod therefore requests General Assembly to consider alternative proposals to address this matter.

After a little discussion the resolution was approved by consensus, recognising some disagreement.

Synod then returned to discussing Resolution 2:

#### **RESOLUTION 2**

Wessex Synod resolves that change no. 1 referred to Synods by General Assembly: "to make the number of Synod representatives equal – to be, for the present, sixteen for each Synod" be not proceeded with.

Following further discussion, including a procedure check with the Revd. Michael Hopkins, Clerk to General Assembly, Gordon Woods proposed that Synod proceed to vote on the resolution. The outcome was not clear by consensus, so a majority vote was taken and tellers were used. The resolution failed, with 29 votes in favour and 51 against.

The Moderator reassured Synod that Mission Council reps have heard the significant concern about this matter. When the Clerk sends Resolution 6 to Mission Council she will make it clear that the decision was not easy.

**18S35 Updated Synod Strategy:** The Revd. Nigel Appleton took the chair and invited the Moderator to present the new Synod Strategy. Following her introduction, which included a clip from the TV series "Yes Minister", the Moderator brought Resolution 7:

#### **RESOLUTION 7**

Wessex Synod resolves to adopt the updated Synod Strategy.

This was approved by consensus.

The Moderator then invited table group discussion about how being part of Synod has been positive, inviting suggestions for one thing in people's local churches that Synod could do for them. These responses will be considered at a later date.

The Moderator resumed the chair.

**18S36 Community Awards:** The Moderator explained that the four finalists had all been declared equal winners at General Assembly. A video was shown of the work of one of them, Trinity Learning, part of

Trinity Church Abingdon. The Moderator encouraged other churches to be inspired by these finalists and to nominate projects. She led in prayer for Trinity Learning and other community projects.

**18S37 Synod Youth Executive:** Laura Everard explained that they do not know where Paddington is in his Synod journey at present, because churches have not updated the Facebook page or website. She encouraged churches to do so.

She went on to state that elections for Youth Executive are coming up soon. She asked Synod reps to encourage children and young people to vote.

The Moderator asked reps to share the papers which were in church packs.

**18S38 Traidcraft:** Following the recent low-key announcement in the press about the likely closure of Traidcraft's commercial enterprise, the Revd. Tim Clarke brought an emergency resolution (after a slight correction to its wording), seconded by the Revd. Ray Stanyon:

#### **RESOLUTION 8**

Wessex Synod notes with concern the statement by Traidcraft indicating the likely closure of their trading arm:

- asks General Assembly Mission and Finance Committees to work with allied Church bodies to facilitate urgent engagement, after consultation with Traidcraft, to enable the restructuring and continuation of Traidcraft PLC
- encourages members of our churches to show their support for Traidcraft by buying goods both from church run stalls and directly from Traidcraft
- encourages local churches to renew their campaigning on Fair-trade matters.

Mr. Clarke explained that he has been in consultation with Traidcraft and with URC Church House, in order to get the resolution correct. Traidcraft's Chief Executive has said that an indication of support could help but that time is short.

Following clarification and discussion, the Moderator put bullet point 2 first, which was approved by consensus, as was bullet point 3. Bullet point 1 was also approved by consensus but recognising some disagreement.

The Moderator explained that Synod will forward the resolution to General Assembly Mission and Finance Committees, and asked reps to go away and act on it.

**18S39 Child Friendly Church Awards:** There were no awards to give out but the Moderator encouraged churches to work on this and to talk about it to CYDOs.

**18S40 Thanks:** The Moderator thanked the Church on the Heath for all their work in assisting the running of this Synod, and the minister the Revd. Patrick Butler for the opening worship. She also thanked workshop leaders and asked the Revds. Mike Shrubsole and Mary Thomas to pass this on to Kilian Coyne and Peter Larkum respectively. The mental health workshop was a taster, with day-long courses being available shortly in the Synod.

The Moderator asked Patrick Wintrebert to take Synod's greetings to the Nord Normandie Region of the Eglise Protestante Unie de France and the Revd. Nigel Appleton to take greetings to the Lusaka Presbytery of the Church of Zambia.

The Moderator thanked people for everything that goes on in the Synod, and also the committees who work for it. She mentioned in particular Gerry Prosser (current Secretary of LBAC), Sue Brown, Michael Hopkins, office staff especially Deborah Walker, John Downing and Laura Everard.

The Revd. Ray Stanyon, on behalf of Synod, thanked the Moderator.

**18S41 Closing Worship.** The Moderator led worship on the theme of Making More Disciples from the Holy Habits book.

Synod closed at 16:10.

**The next meeting is on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at London Street URC, Basingstoke.**