

**Minutes of the Ninth Synod Together meeting held at  
Christ Church United Reformed Church, Tudor Way, Petts Wood  
on Saturday 8 October 2016**

**Theme: Caring for People and Planet**

1. **Arrival and Registration** Members of Synod Together started arriving at 9:30 am. Registration was done in the Lounge.
2. **Health & Safety Notices** At 10:30 am the Revd Pauline Sparks welcomed everyone to Christ Church United Reformed Church, Petts Wood and gave Health & Safety notices.
3. **Constitution of Synod Together** The Synod Moderator, the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith, duly constituted the Synod meeting.
4. **Opening Worship** was led by the Synod Moderator. The Revd Andy Twilley was also inducted as Synod Training and Development Officer. Andy was greeted with the right hand of fellowship by various representatives of the life of the Synod. He addressed the meeting describing his passion for the work which lay ahead.
5. **Child Friendly Church Award:** Mrs Cathy Glazier, the Synod Children's and Youth Development Officer (CYDO) advised that Caterham United Reformed Church had achieved Child Friendly Church Status. The Moderator greeted the Revd David Marshall-Jones, the Caterham Synod representative, and presented the Child Friendly Award certificate; the Synod Clerk presented the plaque.
6. **Farewell to Mrs Cathy Glazier** was leaving the Synod at the end of October 2016. The Synod Moderator thanked her for her much valued contribution to the life of the Synod with particular regard to her expertise in safeguarding and wished her well for the future on behalf of the Synod.
7. **Synod Roll and Apologies**
  - 7.1 **Synod Roll** The Synod Clerk placed the roll on the table, informing the meeting that it contained a total of 257 Synod members comprising of 83 serving ministers and 134 lay church representatives, co-opted members and others.
  - 7.2 **Attendance** The Moderator presided over a total of 131 people according to the signed in register - comprising: 52 serving ministers; 2 retired ministers; 51 lay church representatives; 17 co-opted members; 2 Students; 1 ecumenical representative and 6 observers.
  - 7.3 **Apologies** had been received from 17 serving ministers; 30 church representatives; 18 retired ministers and 15 others.
8. **Pastoralia**
  - 8.1. The Synod Clerk advised that the following had died since the last Synod Together meeting:-  
Ministers –
    - Revd Derek Stockwell - 29 March 2016.
    - Revd Andrew Lorimer - 18 April 2016.
    - Revd Peter Geoffrey Barker - 13 May 2016.
    - Revd Delia Jean Bond - 23 August 2016.
    - Revd Hazel Yu (a Methodist minister), the wife of Revd Ernest Yu - 6 September 2016.
  - Widows -
    - Mrs Evelyn Dewhurst – February 2016.
    - Mrs Rae Halliday – 9 May 2016 (in S&SSA –Sussex).
    - Mrs G Eileen Goodchild – 8 June 2016 (in SLSA – West).

The Synod Clerk led the meeting in a prayer for the deceased.

9. **Welcome of ecumenical Guests** The Moderator greeted and welcomed the Revd Juliet Ushewukunze from the Methodist church in Petts Wood and the URC/Methodist Church Emmanuel in Sidcup.
10. **Reception of Jubilee ministers** The following Jubilees were noted:
- Revd Geoffrey E Beck (1/9/16) – 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and not 60<sup>th</sup> as we said at the last Meeting in March.
  - Revd Donald J Finnan (1/7/16) – 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
  - Revd Margaret Juhasz (1/7/16) – 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
  - Revd May Segain (1/7/16) -- 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
  - Revd Andrew Fairchild (21/6/16) – 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
  - Revd Peter Elliott (1/7/16) – 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
  - Revd Roy Cole (1/7/16) – 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
  - Revd Marina Jeffrey-Watson (1/7/16) – 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
  - Revd John Braund (13/7/16) – 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Only the Revd Andrew Fairchild was able to be present at the meeting and was greeted by the Moderator.

11. **Tellers** The following were unanimously elected to act as tellers – the Revd Peter Flint as convenor, the Revd Dr Peter Stevenson, Ms Pamela Tolhurst, Mrs Jenny Sheehan and Mr Frank Liddell.
12. **Traffic lights** The Revd Wendy Swan was appointed to operate the traffic lights.
13. **Minutes of Synod Together meeting held on 12 March 2016 at East Croydon URC**  
After some corrections, the Minutes of the meeting were agreed as a true record and signed by the Moderator. The corrections were:  
**Minute 6 Pastoralia** – 6.1 the Revd Geoffrey E Beck was congratulated on 70 years of ordained ministry.  
**Minute 11. Synod Finance Matters** as follows:  
*Mr Ian Fleming, Synod Treasurer, reported on current finance matters. At the end of 2015, the accounts showed a surplus of £3,000,000 in cash terms.*  
**Minute 21. Last minute Notices and Thank You** as follows:  
*21.6 The Revd Sue Shortman, a Methodist probationer was to be ordained at Conference to Aberdeen Road United Church (URC-Methodist) and 2 other Methodist churches.*

#### **Matters arising from the Minutes**

- 13.1 (Minute of the last meeting 20.3) Deployment  
There was query about the first part of the third sentence: “Deployment was linked to M&M contributions.” Mr John Ellis, Past Moderator of General Assembly expressed dissatisfaction with this sentence as this was not the case. He spoke about how M&M assessment is set out and warned of the risk of churches being perceived as “buying ministers”. Our Synod Moderator explained that, although M&M is not used to buy-in Ministers per se, it is one of the criteria used in considering deployment of ministers in our Synod.
- 13.2 **East Kent Synod Area resolution:** (Minute 9.1) The resolution agreed by the previous Synod Meeting concerning the URC budget had been raised at General Assembly, presented by the Revd Alan Spence and seconded by the Synod Moderator, but it had failed to gain acceptance. In future, however, it had since been agreed that Finance reports to General Assembly will contain a one page summary of the current year’s budget as approved by Mission Council.
- 13.3 **South West Sussex United Area** (Minute 20.4) The United Area had been terminated at the end of August and the URC churches absorbed into the Surrey and Sussex Synod Area. A farewell service had taken place on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016. Synod gave thanks to God for all that the South West Sussex United Area had achieved and was grateful to the Surrey and Sussex Synod Area for the welcome extended to the churches.

**14 Synod Council Report (Paper A) .**

The Report had been distributed in advance of the meeting. There were no questions on it. In addition to the report, the Moderator advised that LMMR training now fell under the remit of the Training and Development Officer.

**Shared Panels Resolution 1.** Discussion and questions were invited but none was forthcoming. A counted vote was taken on the following resolution:

**Resolution 1**

**The Southern Synod meeting in plenary session on the 8th day of October 2016, resolves as follows:**

- 1. To join with *Eastern, East Midlands, Southern and Thames North Synods* (the Sharing Synods) in constituting a Shared Synod Panel in accordance with Paragraph B.2.2 of the Ministerial Disciplinary Process, which said Panel shall come into being when all the Sharing Synods have passed this enabling resolution and at a date to be agreed by the Sharing Synods (“the formation date”), at which date the Shared Synod Panel shall come into existence.**
- 2. In conjunction with the other Sharing Synods and no later than the formation date, to appoint persons onto the Shared Synod Panel in compliance with Paragraph B.2.2.1 and one person (who may be a Panel member) to act as Co-ordinator in compliance with Paragraph B.2.2.3.**
- 3. To continue to maintain its separate Synod Panel until the formation date, following which it shall cease to exist.**

109 voted in favour of the resolution, none voted against.

**15 Synod Ministries Committee Matters (Paper B)**

The Revd Jennifer Millington, Convenor, repeated the welcome to the Revd Andy Twilley and also expressed her thanks to Steve Allott who had worked tirelessly to promote LMMR.

Mr Nigel Macdonald was invited to speak on the matter of Deployment. He reminded the meeting that a new basis of scoping had been introduced into the Synod some six years previously. This had placed particular emphasis on the mission criteria and was carried out by a central body. Latterly more strategic assessment had been passed to the Pastoral Committees with an allocation being given each year and then responsibility for scoping being passed to the Pastoral Committees. Some local churches had fallen into the habit of depending on the minister to do tasks which could be done by lay persons and these attitudes needed to be addressed with ordained ministry being used in those roles which *only* ordained ministers could provide. “What do we need a minister for?” now became a question which every church needed to address.

In response to a query about appeals, the Moderator confirmed that any appeal against a scoping decision should come to the Moderator.

Jenny Sheehan, the Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner, asked that all who led worship should be encouraged to do training. There were TLS Lite courses which could be offered locally. On Saturday 19 November there was a lay preachers meeting at Wimbledon URC.

The Moderator noted that this would be the last meeting to which Jennifer reported as Convenor of Ministries and she thanked her for her service in this capacity.

**16 Synod Finance matters:)(Papers C1 and C2)****16.1 Accounts**

Mr Ian Fleming, Synod Treasurer, reported that in 2015 as opposed to the budgeted deficit of £648,000, Synod had ended with a surplus of £3,117,000 due almost entirely to the sale of church buildings. It was unlikely to be replicated in 2016.

Paper C1 set out a summary of the accounts for 2015. The audited accounts had been approved by both Finance Committee and Synod Trust and had been submitted to Companies House. They were to be lodged with the Charities Commission shortly.

Balances in both the unrestricted Synod fund and the Manse Fund had increased during the year in spite of a decrease in the value of investments.

A question was raised concerning the surplus and the current high level of Synod assets. The Treasurer reminded Synod that the current situation might be but a snapshot in time and that lean years might follow. He also reminded Synod that a new system of grants and loans to local churches had been introduced during the year. Ian agreed, however, that if the surplus continued this would become a matter to be considered.

Synod received the summary of the accounts, a full version of which was available from the Synod Office.

### **16.2 The Synod Budget for 2017**

The budget for 2017 (Appendix 1 to Paper C2) had been agreed by both the Finance Committee and the Synod Trust. It was again a deficit budget with a projected deficit of £612,000.

An allowance had been made for additional staff to take account of additional work on property issues and advice received from the Moderator following her recent review. Ian noted that even allowing for additional staff the Southern Synod operated with fewer staff proportionately than other smaller synods. £216,000 had been anticipated as income from investments (including rents). This was the major source of budgeted income for the Synod but fell far short of budgeted expenditure. Provision had been made to offer at least £25,000 towards resource sharing within the denomination in 2017. Although £250,000 had been budgeted in 2016 for grants and loans, so far £75,000 had been awarded although more requests were to be considered before the end of the year. The same amount had been allocated for 2017.

### **Resolution 2 – (Finance: Budget – Paper C2)**

**Southern Synod Together is asked to endorse the recommended Synod 2017 Budget for the General Purposes Fund.**

Synod indicated its endorsement of the general purposes budget for 2017.

### **16.3 Ministry and Mission**

The Treasurer advised that £2,650,000 was likely to be raised by the Synod towards M & M in 2016 and expressed his gratitude to local churches for their generosity.

He asked that all churches submit their agreement to the assessments levied for 2017. He also noted that 2015 accounts were also outstanding on several churches and asked that these be submitted as soon as possible. He thanked Mrs Catherine Kingdom and Mr Simon Harding for all the work they did.

## **17 Synod Children and Youth Work Committee Matters (Papers D and D1)**

Mr Graham Purdye spoke of the need for more representatives from the Areas on the committee. Youth Assembly was to take place in January 2017 and young people were encouraged to attend. Advertising for the new CYDO had already started.

## **18 Synod Clerk's Items**

**18.1. Synod Moderator's Review: (Paper E)** Mr Alistair Wilson, Convenor of Synod Trust was invited to chair this item. The Synod Review Panel had carried out its task as part of the review process. In July 2016 General Assembly had re-appointed the Moderator for a second term from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018 to 28 February 2023.

Some recommendations had been made by the Synod Review Panel and a resolution containing 6 points was presented to Synod. The wording of the second point (2.) regarding ecumenical work had been changed (new wording below). After several comments from members of Synod a third point (3.) concerning the appointment of a Synod Moderator's Pastoral Assistant was removed from the resolution with the intention of this being looked at more closely by the group appointed by the final point (6.) in the resolution. The remaining points were approved by a substantial majority.

**Resolution 3 — (Synod Moderator Review – Paper E)**

Southern Synod Together resolves that:

- 1. The Synod Clerk be the Moderator’s ‘official’ deputy at meetings if the Moderator is unable to attend.**
- 2. Regarding Ecumenical work in the Synod, there will be a review of the ecumenical posts in order to establish the best practice for Southern Synod in light of the changing nature of ecumenism across the synod.**
- 3. Synod Council should look again at the future property needs of the Synod especially at the division of manse and church issues.**
- 4. The Moderator is given a clear mandate to go to the Synod Officers meeting for decisions of a sensitive pastoral nature, usually involving manse issues.**
- 5. Synod Together appoints the Revd Paul Dean, the Revd Jennifer Millington, Mr Nigel Macdonald, Miss Pam Tolhurst, Mr Sam Brown (representing youth), and the Synod Clerk as Convener, to review the Moderator’s job description in light of the Review report/findings and using the generic job description for Moderators approved by Mission Council.**

The Synod Clerk expressed the Synod’s thanks to the Synod Review Panel for all their work.

**18.2 General Assembly 2016 Resolution 7 - Marriage of same-sex couples (Paper F)**

The resolution was noted and details and guidance were on the URC website.

**18.3 General Assembly 2016 Resolution 31 - Environmental Policy (Paper G)**

The resolution was presented for information and action by churches.

**18.4 General Assembly 2016 Resolution 26 – Churches Mutual Credit Union (Paper H)**

The resolution was presented for information and action by churches.

**18.5 General Assembly 2016 Resolutions 3 & 42 referred to Synods (Paper I)****Synod Resolution 4 – (Assembly 2016 matters referred to Synods – Paper I)**

Re Assembly Resolution 3, the Southern Synod meeting in plenary session on the 8th day of October 2016, resolved that: The Proposed new version of Section 5: 5. Appeal, Reference and Constitutional Review, be proceeded with.

The Resolution was passed nem con.

**Synod Resolution 5 – (Assembly 2016 matters referred to Synods – Paper I)**

Re Assembly Resolution 42 the Southern Synod meeting in plenary session on the 8th day of October 2016, resolved that:

The Proposed new wordings in sections:

- a) Membership of Synods 2(4) (i)**
- b) Membership of General Assembly (2(6) (b) and 2(6) (k)**

Be proceeded with.

The Resolution was passed nem con.

**18.6 Disinvestment – Resolution from Brighthelm Church (Paper J)**

The Moderator explained that as it stood the resolution (proposing that Southern Synod disinvests from fossil fuels) would present legal difficulties for the Synod Trust. The Resolution had, therefore, been withdrawn. This enabled a debate to take place prior to a further resolution being put in a year’s time. The Revd Alex Mabbs introduced Paper J which outlined the position adopted by Brighthelm. He welcomed the ethical investment policy already adopted by the URC and reported that Brighthelm had added fossil fuels extraction to its list of banned investments. He reminded the Synod of the General Assembly resolution to try to significantly reduce carbon emissions. He suggested that there were other areas more profitable than fossil fuels where investment could take place.

A counter argument was presented by Mr Richard Nunn, formerly the Convenor of URC Investment Committee and presently the Convenor of URC Ministers Pension Fund. He spoke of the complexity of ethical investment. He agreed that the future lay with renewable energy and advocated engagement in the hope of bringing pressure to bear for more research and development. There were examples of this working and hearts and minds being changed. Richard further stated that hopefully Operation Noah will realise that being a Christian is tough. Jesus gave us two simple commissions which would solve all our problems. As ever the implementation of those directives of so few words is challenging and far from simple. You can't love your neighbour if you don't look after Creation sustainably. We live lives so detached from the majority of humanity and this inequality is broadcast by all the social networks in an instant. Our unwise use of fossil fuels sets an embarrassing contrast with those who look on with a desire to share a similar lifestyle. This leads to most of the ills of this beautiful world. Those of criminal intent grab whatever is going. Those who want to come to share what we have are abused. Those victims offered a rich life are trafficked. We just read the papers and blame the system as we turn up the heating. As Christians, Richard further said, we are commissioned to do something about it. Simplistic solutions clear the conscience but don't change the one thing that has to change and that's us. He commended the work of the Methodist and the Anglican denominations for their good practice and recommended that the URC emulate them.

Further points of view were offered from members of Synod. Whilst everyone appeared to agree that the development of other forms of energy production was the ultimate goal, there was divergence as to the most effective means of achieving this.

The Synod Moderator stated that Synod Trust will look again at our investments in the light of the discussions and bring a report to a future meeting.

## **18.7 Nominations (Paper K) to be tabled**

### **18.7.1 Concurrence was sought for the following:**

- 1) Lewisham SACRE - Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education – **Revd Raymond Singh**
- 2) Synod Assembly Youth Exec – **Mr Reuben Watt**
- 3) 2<sup>nd</sup> Kent Work Place Mission Trustee (URC Representative) – **Mr John Ellis**
- 4) East Kent Synod Area (EKSA) leader – **Revd George Kalu**

### **Resolution 7**

**Southern Synod Together endorses the above appointments, which came through Synod Council.**

The Resolution was passed nem con.

### **18.7.2 Other vacancies still needing to be filled were:**

- 1) 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Panel member on the Disciplinary Process Commission (Section O)
- 2) Secretary for Synod Ministries Committee
- 3) Turn the Tide - Convener
- 4) 2 (two) Turn the Tide members
- 5) BRIGHTHELM Community Centre Trustee (1)
- 6) Trustee – Southern Synod (1)
- 7) Synod Treasurer from January 2017

Suggestions as to who might take over were sought.

## **18.8 Church Closure – Hartley (Paper L)** The church had closed and a thanksgiving service had been held a couple of weeks previously.

### **Resolution 8**

**Southern Synod Together notes the closure of Hartley URC, with praise to God for the worship and witness offered by these fellowships across the years since 1927.**

Resolution 8 was passed nem con.

**18.9 Papers following General Assembly given out at registration –**

These were **2016 Assembly Matters for consideration and action by**

- i) Local churches [on Lilac paper] - 6 matters; and**
- ii) Synods [on blue paper] – 7 matters.**

These were to be taken away for noting and/or for action by local churches and Synod Areas.

**19 Welcome to Christ Church and directions for lunch:** Mrs Kat Copley, Assistant Church Secretary, repeated the welcome to Christ Church and gave instructions for the lunch break. URC diaries and fairly traded goods were to be available for sale in the Lounge during the break.

The Revd Pauline Sparks said grace.

**20 Lunch Break****Afternoon Session****21 Introduction of new Ministers, Candidates & Students, Thanks & Farewells**

All who were present were greeted by the Moderator.

- 1) Central Sussex United Area --- None**
- 2) East Kent Synod Area ---** The Revd George Kalu was greeted as the newly elected Leader of the East Kent Synod Area.
- 3) South London Synod Area:**
  - Pastoral Committee East** - Convenor, the Revd Terry Sparks introduced the Revds Andrew and Sally Willets newly inducted to Thamesmead and Charlton churches.
  - Pastoral Committee West** – Convenor, the Revd Dominic Grant introduced the Revd Martin Ferris, who was ordained and inducted to Sanderstead URC and the Revd Martin Knight who had been inducted to South Croydon.
- 4) Surrey and Sussex Synod Area** – The Leader Revd George Watt introduced Revd David Bedford, who has moved to Dorking and Gomshall and will be inducted on 15 October 2016 and the Revd David Littlejohns who was moving from Emmanuel Worthing to the Cadbury Group of Churches.
- 5) West Kent and East Sussex Synod Area – None**
- 6) Students and Candidates** – Convenor, Mr Stuart Dew introduced Mr Ted Bellingham who has just started training at Westminster College.  
The Revd Helen Warmington was presented with her certificate of completion of Education for Ministry Phase 2.

**22 Theme Presentation “Caring for People and Planet”**

The Moderator introduced Mr Ben Niblett, Senior Associate, Campaigns, Tearfund. He introduced his address by giving up to date news about Haiti in the light of Hurricane Matthew. It was currently estimated that 80% of crops had been lost, over 800 people had been killed and over 14,000 people displaced, there had been severe damage to housing and infrastructure. This was an example of what climate change might be leading to. The likelihood of more frequent and more severe hurricanes would be a consequence of climate change.

A short film highlighted the needs of people experiencing drought situations. This too was likely to increase.

Ben suggested that responding to climate change was a Christian's response to Jesus' instruction to love one's neighbour as oneself. Although poverty had reduced in recent years, this was threatened by climate change. We had become accustomed to a consumer society where people were identified by what they could buy. This accumulation of goods had had a negative effect. "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" Romans 12:2 He promoted the idea of Eco-church - Each individual church was challenged to address climate change and environment matters and work towards an eco-church award- bronze, silver or gold. There was also shortly to be a scheme for Eco-Synod status. He advocated

- Big Church Switch – this involved getting better deals through collective bargaining from renewable energy companies. This could be done by churches or by individual users.
- Stir-Up Supper This was a resource to be used to encourage people to think about what they ate and where it came from.

Attendees were invited to share with neighbours what their churches were currently doing in connection with the environment.

It was confirmed that Synod would entertain applications from local church for grants and loans towards the installation of things like solar panels and insulation. The point was made that ministers living in retired ministers' housing should be permitted to install solar panels. The Moderator undertook to take this up.

Recommended reading "Just Living" by Ruth Valerio and "Planet Wise" by Dave Bookless

Some positives: Coal was dropping out of use. Coal powered power stations were being phased out. In 2015 more power had been generated from renewables than from coal.

The Paris Climate Change Agreement had been an encouraging breakthrough even if not all countries delivered on their pledges.

The Moderator thanked Ben for giving the Synod much food for thought.

- 23 Presentation: Eco-church – what does that mean to you?** The Revd Pauline Sparks described the beginnings of eco awareness at Christ Church, Petts Wood. More recently the church had asked its World Church and Social Action Group to look at what actions could be taken. They had registered for Eco-Church calling themselves "Toe in the water". The Springs Dance Company had attended morning worship bringing home the message of the need to care for our environment. A course was planned to heighten awareness of the need for more action on behalf of both individuals and churches.

Mrs Elizabeth Richmond described the measures taken by St John United Reformed Church at Marsh Green with a view to reducing their carbon footprint. She also described how attitudes had changed.

Revd Alex Mabbs offered to work with churches trying to become eco-friendly by way of training, workshops etc.

## 24 Thank You

The Synod Clerk thanked the following for their contribution to Synod Together

- The speakers
- All at Christ Church Petts Wood, particularly the volunteers, for their hard work and hospitality
- The IT team
- Everyone for coming to Synod Together and for giving their time
- Those who had provided reports
- The Tellers
- Traffic light controller
- Minutes Secretary
- Office staff
- The Moderator for her chairmanship and leadership

- 25 Closing Worship** There being no other business the Revd Andy Twilley led Synod Together in Closing Worship.

- 26** At 4.00pm the Moderator declared the Synod Together closed until it meets again in 2017 on Saturday 11 March, 10.30 am to 4:30 pm at East Croydon URC, or at such other time and place as it may be called together by those charged with the direction of its affairs. There was a retiring collection for the relief effort in Haiti following the recent hurricane.\*

- 27** Refreshments were served prior to departure.

\* Over £530 was raised through the collection for the Tear Fund Haiti appeal.