

**Minutes of the Tenth Synod Together meeting held at
East Croydon United Reformed Church, Addiscombe Grove, Croydon CR0 5LP
on Saturday 11 March 2017**

Theme: Title or Testimony? Growing Authentic Disciples

1. **Arrival and Registration** Members of Synod Together started arriving at 9:00 am. Registration was done in the David Sweet Hall
2. **Health & Safety Notices** At 10:30 am Mrs Amma Boateng, Joint Church Secretary, 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 Revd George Watt. The scripture reading was from Jeremiah 7:1 – 11 and his reflection was on how we are to serve God in new ways. The hymns “Through our lives and by our prayers, your kingdom come.” and “Hear the call of the Kingdom” were sung.
5. **Induction of Mr Thomas William Hackett, thank you to Mr Ian Fleming and welcome to Mr John Denison:**
 - 5.1 The Moderator inducted Tom as the Synod Children’s and Youth Development Officer.
 - 5.2 The Moderator also said greeted Mr Ian Fleming, who had served as Synod Treasurer for the previous nine and a half years. Ian was thanked for all his hard work and hours of service and a presentation was made as a token of the Synod’s gratitude.
 - 5.3 Mr John Denison, the new Synod Treasurer, was also greeted.
6. **Synod Roll and Apologies**
 - 6.1 **Synod Roll** The Synod Clerk placed the roll on the table, informed the meeting that it contained a total of 260 Synod voting members comprising 74 serving ministers and 129 church representatives, 57 co-opted members and others.
In addition, there are 75 Retired ministers and 13 Observers on the roll.
 - 6.2 **Attendance** The Moderator presided over a total of 140 people according to the signed in register - comprising: 41 serving ministers; 5 retired ministers; 75 church representatives; 19 co-opted members and others.

***Please note that due to problems with travel on British Rail on the day, which caused delays resulting in late arrivals, some attendees could not register and, therefore, there were more people at the meeting than the figures suggest.
 - 6.3 **Apologies** had been received from 14 serving ministers; 18 church representatives; 9 retired ministers and 11 others.
7. **Pastoralia**
The Synod Clerk advised that the following had died since the last Synod Together meeting:-
Ministers –
 - Revd David Morgan on 30 January 2017
 Widows -
 - Mrs Renee Smith on 27 January 2017 aged 105
 - Mrs Nancy Welsh on 9 February 2017
 - Mrs Janice Thom on wife of Revd Ken Thom (formerly of Sevenoaks URC) on 9 March 2017, exactly one month before her 60th birthday.
 - Also the Revd John Humphries, former Moderator of the National Synod of Scotland on 17 November 2016.
 The Synod Clerk led the meeting in a prayer for the deceased.

8. Election of tellers

The following resolution was passed:

Resolution 1: Southern Synod Together appoints as Tellers the Revd Peter Flint – Chief Teller; Revd Peter Stevenson, Mrs Jenny Sheehan and Mr Frank Liddell.

Traffic lights The Revd Wendy Swan had agreed to operate the traffic lights.

9. Minutes of Synod Together meeting held on 8 October 2016 at Christ Church Petts Wood URC The Minutes of the meeting were agreed as a true record and signed by the Moderator.**10. Matters arising from the Minutes**

18.6 of previous minutes **Disinvestment from fossil fuels:** Synod Trust had met with Epworth Investments in this connection and a report would be brought to a future meeting.

11. Synod Council Report [Paper A].

The Report had been distributed in advance of the meeting; it dealt with 10 items. The Moderator drew attention to “Walking the Way – living the life of Jesus today.”, the theme in which the denomination aims to place greater emphasis on discipleship and mission. Using a video clip on from Assembly 2016 of the children re-telling Acts 2: 1-13 in their own words, the Moderator explored the questions “what happened next?” and “what does it mean to be a disciple today?”

She highlighted the things in the modern world which stood in the way of discipleship, yet there was a greater need for the message of Jesus to be shared than ever before. The Moderator made the point that “Walking the Way” was intended to be a tool to support individuals and churches in their discipleship by encouraging the good habits which would lead to more meaningful discipleship and for creating disciples.

Some introductory materials were being prepared – Spring and Autumn resources for Synods; a leaflet and worship material for churches (September 2017); Holy Habits, a course for local churches to explore the ten holy habits in Acts in groups and individually (September 2017); Lent resources for 2018, and a new discipleship course to replace TLS, which will be launched in 2018; and much more in 2018 and beyond.

The Moderator invited questions on the Report. Under item 3, she emphasised that in spite of the disbandment of the Urban Churches Network, the urban church work continues and is led by the Revd Raymond Singh.

Item 7 The Big Day Out at Warwick Castle on 20th May 2017 was highlighted. The Moderator suggested that Synod/United areas might plan a group visit.

11.1 Review of Local Ministry and Mission Review (LMMR)

Paper 1A was tabled. It outlined the proposed new process. The Revd Andy Twilley spoke enthusiastically about how, through LMMR, a church might discern God’s plan for it. Under the new process three Area roles would be involved - an Area Review Co-ordinator (ARC), a Minister’s Facilitator and a Pastorate Facilitator. The Church Life Review would be completed first. The Church would appoint a Church Review Team from amongst its membership (or it may be the whole church meeting if it is a small church). The Church Review Team would consult with the church and then compile a Living Document describing mission of the church. The Minister in turn would review his/her ministry in the light of the Living Document and complete the Minister’s Review Form with the assistance of the Minister’s facilitator. Part 4 of the Minister’s Review Form would become part of the Living Document to be ratified by the Church Meeting. The Living Document should be sent to the Area Review Co-ordinator and to the Synod Office.

Synod/United Areas now needed to appoint ARCs and a team of Ministers and lay people to form the teams of visitors. Envisioning evenings to be attended by all ministers, the ARC, the visiting teams and at least one representative from each church were to be arranged. Questions were invited and clarification provided. There was a plea for a change of name for the process and a plea for attention to be paid also to buildings and finance. A pro-forma would be provided to local churches.

The following resolution was carried unanimously:

Resolution 2: Southern Synod Together adopts the revised LMMR policy and urges Synod/United Area Pastoral Committees to ensure the process is carried out.

The Moderator expressed her thanks to Deirdre Harrison, Steve Allott and Andy Twilley for all their work in streamlining the process.

12. Synod Moderator Review

The Moderator invited the Synod Clerk to chair discussion of this item. The Synod Clerk reminded the meeting of the resolutions passed at the last Synod Together Meeting and invited Mr Nigel Macdonald, Secretary to the Synod Review Group to address the meeting. He started by thanking the Revd Paul Dean, for his service as the previous Secretary to the Group; Paul had resigned from the group due to a potential conflict of interest in considering the ecumenical aspect of its remit. Nigel also thanked Linda Austin for agreeing to fill the vacancy in the Group which this change had created.

12.1 Revised Synod Moderator's Job Description Nigel stated that a new national standard job description for synod moderators prepared in 2014 had been adopted as a template by the Group. This had required very little alteration and the Group had simply added a few items to reflect what had been in the previous job description. As the post of Moderator was an Assembly post, the job description was not for approval but simply for noting.

The following resolution was passed:

Resolution 3: Southern Synod Together notes the revised Job Description of the Synod Moderator.

12.2 Pastoral care of Ministers and Local Church Leaders in Southern Synod

The Group had looked at the pastoral care of ministers, noting that there was no specific reference to this in the job description. Nigel mentioned that during the Moderator's review consultation, several comments were received about the provision of pastoral care for retired ministers and their spouses, widows and widowers and particularly those who were not involved with a local URC church.

After contributions from representatives, an amendment was suggested to Recommendation 1, which the Review Group accepted.

The following recommendations were then put individually and were carried unanimously:

Resolution 4 Recommendation 1:

Southern Synod Together endorses the recommendation that primary pastoral responsibility for retired ministers, widows and widowers should lie with their local church; or in the case of those not in fellowship with a local URC church, with the Pastoral Committee for the Area in which they live.

Resolution 4 Recommendation 2:

Southern Synod Together endorses the recommendation that the Synod Training and Development Officer (TDO) should have responsibility for creating and maintaining a direct relationship with all serving ministers, CRCWs and local church leaders in relation to matters falling within the TDO role.

Resolution 4 Recommendation 3:

Southern Synod Together commends the Report on Pastoral Care for Ministers and Local Church Leaders in Southern Synod to Synod/United Area Pastoral Committees for action.

The Group continued to work on the issue of ecumenical work in the Synod.

13. Synod Ministries Committee Matters [Paper B]

In the absence of the Revd Bridget Banks, Convener of Ministries, the Revd Russell Furley-Smith, Secretary to the Committee, was invited to speak to the report. Russell expressed his delight that Dr Graham Campling had agreed to become the Committee's secretary when he stood down at the end of April.

On the subject of **Local accredited lay preachers**, Russell reminded the meeting that local churches were required to carry out DBS checks on locally accredited lay preachers.

Jenny Sheehan, Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner, later clarified that it was the intention that anyone "of standing" preaching on a regular basis should also be checked. Guidance had been provided in a letter sent to all churches.

Synod Safeguarding Policies: These were reviewed each year and had been duly scrutinised and revised this year.

The members of Synod Ministries Committee were thanked for all their work.

The Synod Clerk noted that this would be Russell's last meeting as Secretary of Ministries and thanked him for his service in this capacity. The meeting applauded Russell.

14. Synod Finance matters:

Mr John Denison, Synod Treasurer, started by thanking Mr Ian Fleming for the ease with which he had been able to take over as Treasurer.

John reported that whereas the 2015 accounts recorded a significant surplus due entirely to the income from the sale of two properties, 2016 was a different story. Although lower than expected and subject to the final audit, a deficit of approximately £138,000 was expected subject to yearend adjustments. It was as low as this primarily due to an increase in "surplus on investment income" which was the result of previous years' sale of buildings and some expenditure either not taking place or being lower than anticipated. The Treasurer noted that because Southern Synod does not make a levy on individual churches to cover its expenses any deficit would always have to be made up from reserves.

John further reported that the Synod had met its 2016 Ministry and Mission (M&M) target with an amount of £2,674,000.00 out of total contributions of £21,300,000.00 from the 13 Synods. Churches were thanked for their generosity. To date pledges totalling £2,650,000.00 for 2017 M&M had been received.

The Treasurer made a plea to churches to send in their 2016 accounts as soon as possible, preferably by the end of March, to permit a start on the 2018 calculations. Southern Synod hoped to maintain the figure of £2.6 million although this was not yet settled.

Unfortunately, a number of churches had failed to produce their 2015 accounts. These figures were vital for Synod staff to make the necessary M&M calculations and were still required. The Treasurer asked that any such church should send them in as soon as possible or have a conversation with Catherine Kingdom if this was proving difficult.

The fund of £250,000.00 which had been set up the previous year for churches to apply for grants and loans had been used. Grants and loans totalling £190,000.00 were authorised in 2016. The scheme was to be offered again in the current year with a fund amount of £250,000.00 and a normal maximum of £20,000.00. Full details were to be found on the Synod website. Any assistance required in applying could be obtained from Simon Harding at the Synod Office.

15. Synod Children and Youth Work Matters [Paper C]

Mr Graham Purdye, Convener of the Synod Children and Youth Work Committee spoke of the need for more representatives from local areas and encouraged attendance at the youth camps mentioned in the report.

The Revd Andrew Willett also highlighted the Crossfire Camp (26 May – 29 May 2017) which he was planning to attend with some young people from his church plant in Thamesmead and he offered to take others with him.

16. Notices:

16.1 Rachel St Clair from Crossway URC invited all to attend the opening event for the exciting new Crossway building the following Saturday (25th March) at Crossway Community Centre, Elephant and Castle in London.

16.2 Mrs Gwen Rose invited all to a Healing Conference on 19 May 2017 at Crossway Community Centre, Elephant and Castle in London.

16.3 The Moderator explained that Jubilee ministers would be recognised at the October Synod Together meeting.

17. Welcome to East Croydon

Mrs Amma Boateng, Joint Church Secretary at East Croydon URC welcomed everyone to East Croydon URC and gave directions for lunch.

The Revd Russell Furley-Smith led the meeting in prayer.

18. Lunch break

19. Introduction of new ministers, Candidates and Students:

All who were present were greeted by the Moderator.

1. Central Sussex United Area --- The Revd John Gordon, Co-Leader, gave details of Ministry in the CSUA as follows:

i) That, subject to Methodist Conference approval, from 1 September 2017:

a) The Revd Irena Byron, minister in the Vale of Aylesbury Circuit, has been appointed to the CSUA as Methodist Co-Leader and Superintendent minister with pastoral responsibility for Haywards Heath, Burgess Hill and Hurstpierpoint Methodist Churches;

b) The Revd Peter Rayson has been appointed to the Lowestoft and East Suffolk Circuit as Superintendent minister;

c) The Revd Rose Westwood has been appointed to the Witney and Faringdon Circuit as Superintendent minister. (An appointment at Cross Way, Seaford, and Chyngton is still being considered);

d) The Deacon to be appointed to Haywards Heath,, Burgess Hill and Hurstpierpoint Methodist Churches is Bryanell Rop (known as Byre), a Probationary Deacon from Arizona.

ii) No names have come forward for the half time post to cover Hailsham, Cross-in-Hand, Gamelands Methodist Churches and The Haven Church, Eastbourne. Consequently, other options are being pursued, initially for one year.

- 2) **East Kent Synod Area** --- none
- 3) **South London Synod Area:** The Revd Lesley Charlton, Leader, presented the Revd David Morgan, newly inducted to St Mark's Greenwich and the Revd Jenny Snashall who was about to retire from Hampton Hill and Twickenham. She also expressed her appreciation for the service and support given by Jenny's husband, Clive Snashall.
- 4) **Surrey and Sussex Synod Area** –The Revd George Watt, Leader, introduced Linda Richards, who had been inducted as Local Church Leader at Banstead on 23 February 2017.
- 5) **West Kent and East Sussex Synod Area** – The Revd Andrew Royal, Leader, introduced the Revd Helen Warmington who had been inducted to the Tunbridge Wells Group of churches, the Revd Richard Stein has left to take up post as Associate Minister with The Assemblies of God Church in the United States of America.
- 6) **Students and Candidates** – Convenor, Mr Stuart Dew advised that there was one person who wished to transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary ministry and who was to attend the national assessment in April.

20. Theme Presentation: “Title or Testimony? Growing authentic disciples”

The Revd Andy Twilley, the Synod Training and Development Officer, was asked to address the meeting.

Prior to the presentation Andy highlighted

- “Make a Difference” event to be held at Hassocks URC on Saturday 8th April 2017..
- The half day training event on social media to be held on 27 April in Worthing - anyone interested was asked to contact Andy as soon as possible as places were limited.
- “The Kingdom Come” A week of prayer from 25 May to June 4.
Resources were available <https://www.cpo.org.uk/thykingdomcome>

The presentation: Are we growing authentic Christians? The level of commitment for many Christians had diminished to the extent that many people believing themselves to be Christians actually failed themselves to be true disciples.

Andy asked the meeting to discuss in small groups “What characterises a true disciple of Christ?”
Title or testimony?

The meaning of the term “Christian” had been eroded. Perhaps a better term nowadays would be “Christian Disciple”. This implied a personal relationship with God, adhering to the teachings of Jesus, being on fire for God, being filled with the Holy Spirit, living for God. To sum up, a disciple was an apprentice of Jesus.

How did Jesus inspire discipleship? By sharing in normal life, by teaching which was relevant to the people who were listening, by focussing on a small group.

He invited the meeting to read and discuss the principles for discipling contained in Acts 2: 42 – 47. Key words were “devoted”, in “teaching”, “communion”, “prayer”, “worship” and “fellowship”.

Four key ingredients to making disciples were prayer, bible, fellowship and service.

Andy firmly believed that discipleship was best fostered in small groups.

He asked for reflection on the following

- What is God saying to you?
- What do you need to do with this?
- What discussions should your church have?
- How will you respond to this challenge?

Andy advised that he was willing to visit local churches to assist in making people think about discipleship.

The Moderator thanked Andy for continuing the conversation on Walking the Way.

21. Synod Clerk's Items There were none.

22. Thank You

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

- Everyone who had responded to the call to attend Synod Together.
- All at East Croydon URC
- The IT team
- Committee Conveners and all those who had provided reports
- Minutes Secretary
- The Organist, Mr Dean Taylor, Organist and Music Director of Dulwich Grove United Reformed Church in London
- The Moderator for her chairmanship and leadership

23. Closing Worship There being no other business the Moderator led Synod Together in Closing Worship. The reading was Mark 10: 35 – 45. Nicola in her comments spoke on “Dare to be a Disciple”. The hymn “The love of God comes close” was sung to the tune ‘Melanie’.

24. At 3.45 pm, the Moderator declared the Synod Together meeting closed until it meets again in 2017 on Saturday 14 October, 10.30 am to 4:30pm at Goring United Reformed Church in Worthing, West Sussex or at such other time and place as it may be called together by those charged with the direction of its affairs.

25. Refreshments were served prior to departure.