

**DRAFT Minutes of the Eleventh Synod Together Meeting held at
Goring United Reformed Church, Goring-by-Sea, Worthing BN12 4EA
on Saturday 14 October 2017**

**Theme: Walking the Way, Living the life of Jesus today:
Discerning God's Plan for Southern Synod.**

1. **Arrival and Registration:** Members of Synod Together started arriving at 9:00 am. Registration was done in the Cornwall Room.
2. **Health & Safety Notices:** At 10:30 am The Revd Andrew Sellwood 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 and Bible Study** was led by the Revd Kevin Watson, Moderator of General Assembly 2016 – 2018. The Bible reading was from John 12:20-36 and "Come back to my Son" as the sermon theme. The prayers included a prayer to help us "Walk the Way, living the life of Jesus today" prepared by the Synod of Scotland. The two hymns sung were 1) "A call that ignores the plans you've carefully laid" by John Campbell and 2) "Longing for light, we wait in darkness." by Bernadette Farrell.
5. **Synod Roll and Apologies**
 - 5.1 **Synod Roll** The Synod Clerk placed the roll on the table, informed the meeting that it contained a total of 265 Synod voting members comprising 83 serving ministers and 128 church representatives, 54 co-opted members and others.
In addition, there are 72 Retired ministers and 15 Observers on the roll.
 - 5.2 **Attendance** The Moderator presided over a total of 133 people according to the signed in register - comprising: 43 serving ministers; 2 retired ministers; 54 church representatives; 34 co-opted members and observers.
 - 5.3 **Apologies** had been received from 11 serving ministers; 21 church representatives; 14 retired ministers.
6. **Pastoralia**
The Synod Clerk advised that the following had died since the last Synod Together meeting:-
 - **Revd Peter Evans** (retired minister) – 2nd May 2017
 - **Revd Mary Read** (retired minister) – 5th May 2017
 - **Revd John Joseph** (retired minister) – 28th June 2017
 - **Revd John Berryman** (retired minister) – 18th August 2017
 - **Revd David Littlejohns** (formerly at Emmanuel URC, Worthing and, at the time of death was minister of the Cadbury pastorate in south Birmingham comprising Weoley Hill, Weoley Castle and Bournville) – 2nd September 2017.

The Synod Clerk led the meeting in a prayer for the deceased.
7. **Reception of Jubilee Ministers**
A meal had already taken place to which all Jubilee ministers had been invited, hosted by the Synod Moderator.
The following jubilees were recorded and the Moderator greeted those present:
 - 60 years** - Revd Brian Pavitt
 - 50 years** - Revds Derek Wales and Derek Nuttall.
 - 35 years** - Revds Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor, Jean Hall and Alan Spence.
 - 30 years** - Revds Graham Allan, David Allonby, Nicola Furley-Smith, Eric Rogers and Raymond Singh.

25 years - Revds Pauline Sparks and George Watt.

On behalf of Synod the Synod Clerk greeted the Synod Moderator who was celebrating 30 years of ordained ministry.

8. **Appointment of tellers**

The following resolution was passed unanimously :

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

Traffic lights to be operated by the Revd Wendy Swan.

9. **Minutes of Synod Together Meeting held on 11 March 2017 at East Croydon URC** The Minutes of the meeting (with a spelling correction) were agreed as a true record and signed by the Moderator.

9.1 Matters arising not covered elsewhere in the agenda

9.1.1 **Disinvestment from Fossil Fuels:** The Synod Trust had asked the Moderator to make a statement in this connection as follows:

Disinvestment was considered by both the Synod Finance Committee and the Synod Trust and involved a presentation by Epworth Investment Management Ltd which is a specialist for ethically investing for Christian Charities such as the United Reformed Church and The Methodist Church and Christian Aid. Following that engagement, and after much discussion, the Synod Trust believes it is not right to disinvest at this time. However, the Trust strongly believes that it is right to invest in line with the ethical investment policy of the URC as indeed other Synods do and that positive engagement with companies on ethical issues is a better way of bringing about change. That said, the Trust will continue to keep the matter under review on an annual basis.

Questions were invited following this statement but there were none.

9.1.2 **Revised LMMR Policy:** The Revd Andy Twilley, Synod Training and Development Officer, confirmed that the new policy was now up and running. A meeting of the Area Review Co-ordinators (ARCs) was to be held in November. Volunteers to become facilitators were still sought.

9.1.3 **Resolution 4 Pastoral Care of Ministers and Local Church Leaders in Southern Synod (Item 12.2 of previous minutes – Recommendations 1, 2 & 3):** The Synod Clerk reminded the meeting of the Recommendations passed the previous year in this connection.

10. **Synod Moderator Review (Papers A1 and A2)** Future arrangements and staffing for Ecumenical support within the Synod:

A Report had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The Synod Clerk invited Mr Nigel Macdonald to bring the report on behalf of the Synod Moderator's Review Group which had been charged with giving further consideration to the provision within the Synod for ecumenical work. Nigel spoke to Paper A1.

The Synod Clerk introduced Paper A2 – Resolutions. With regard to the first Resolution, the Revd David Bedford sought reassurances that the work would be ecumenical in the sense that it would engage with churches other than heritage churches. The Moderator gave an assurance that this would be taken on board.

With regard to the Resolution 2.iii) the Revd Martin Belgrove asked whether the two remaining posts would be reviewed on the retirement of the present post holders and the Moderator gave assurances that this would be the case.

With regard to Resolution 3 a query was raised as to whether it might be better to have a 100%. The Moderator replied that consideration had been given to this possibility by Synod Council but, because of the particular nature of some areas, it had been decided to retain those posts alongside the 50% post.

The Synod Clerk proposed the following Resolutions.

1. The Synod resolves to continue treating ecumenical work as a priority in accordance with Jesus' prayer in John 17: 21 – "that all of them may be one ..." and to explore ways of maintaining effective ecumenical relationships with other denominations, through both structured and informal arrangements.

2. i) Synod gives thanks for the work done by all the ecumenical officers in the various Synod and United Areas.

2.ii) The 25% and 30% posts in the Central Sussex United Area, South London Synod Area Pastoral Committee West, Surrey and Sussex Synod Area and West Kent and East Sussex Synod Area be ended by 31st December 2017.

2.iii) The 25% scoped post in East Kent Synod Area and the unscoped post in the South London Synod Area Pastoral Committee East, be retained until such time as the present post-holders move or retire, allowing a transitional period towards the new Synod pattern.

3. Synod asks that a job description for a new part-time Synod post of a 50% Ecumenical Officer, which addresses such matters as allowing effective delegation by the Moderator, be prepared as a matter of urgency.

These were taken in turn and each was passed unanimously.

The Synod Clerk thanked Nigel Macdonald and the members of the Review Group which had produced the Report.

- 11. Walking the Way:** The Synod Moderator explained that this item and item 21 will be taken together at this point. She then introduced "Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus Today" in the light of the Synod Vision describing all present as Salt and Light. The Revd Andy Twilley, who spoke next, emphasised that each person present was called to live as a disciple both within a church context and outside in every activity. It was necessary to find ways to enthuse and equip people for their journey and material would be provided at the start of the programme to do this in January 2018. He explained that "Walking the Way" - WtW - was an ethos which the URC hoped to capture. In order to assist local churches and individuals the Synod Training Team was offering monthly resources over the period of next year: Months 1 and 2 would focus on the ethos, months 3-12 would look at Holy Habits (Holy Habits by Andrew Roberts) for WtW. Mr Martin Hayward, Synod Mission Development Officer spoke next. He recommended the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity www.lice.org.uk as an organisation offering excellent resources. He also mentioned the resource "Life on the Frontline". Martin encouraged everyone to reach out to those who did not know the love of Christ. He used the acronym **TTT** This Time Tomorrow.

Andy Twilley, referring to Life on the Frontline, shared a video story about Anne, who discovers frontlines all around her in her busy life.

The Synod Moderator advised that the Synod Training Team would be preparing resources to assist churches to Walk the Way. She thanked Andy and Martin for their presentation.

12. Synod Council Report [Paper B].

The Report had been distributed in advance of the meeting; The Synod Moderator invited comments on each paragraph.

The Revd Peter Flint, New Malden and Thames Ditton wondered whether strategic thinking had been given to the increasing number of churches which were reducing their M&M contributions. The Moderator replied that this was something which was being monitored and kept under review. Taking account of the reducing numbers of ordained ministers available, in Southern Synod there was evidence of an increasing number of Local Church Leaders.

Revds John Gordon and Andrew Royal had both ceased to serve on Synod Council having taken up other callings in the Synod. Mr John Ellis had replaced Andrew Royal for West Kent and East Sussex Synod Area as Leader and the Revd Jim Thorneycroft will replace Revd Robert Bushby as Co-Leader in the Central Sussex United Area.

The appointment of the new Synod staff member Colin McCracken, Property administrator, was welcomed. On behalf of Synod, the Moderator, thanked Guy Morfett, Synod Property Officer, for his dedication in what was often a very difficult job. Guy was due to retire at the end of the year. Advertisements for his replacement had been placed.

The Moderator's Ministers' Day led by the Revd Paul Whittle had opened a useful discussion on deployment and call.

The Report was received.

13. Synod Trust Matters: Local Church trusteeship

The Moderator advised that, following legal advice received by the denomination, the Synod Office would be writing to all churches this autumn to explain the current guidance on the letting of church premises. Each church will be asked to pass a resolution to allow them to continue to manage the day to day lettings of their church buildings locally as they have since the formation of the URC.

14. Synod Ministries Committee Report [Paper C]:

The Report had been circulated. The Revd Bridget Banks, Convener, confirmed that the committee had been looking at the policy encouraging local church leadership. Mr John Ellis, Leader of West Kent and East Sussex Synod Area, affirmed this practice but wondered who took the decision as to where a local church leader should be deployed. He felt that this should be the Synod Area but this was not mentioned in the policy. The Moderator confirmed that "on advice from the Pastoral Committee, the Synod Area will decide where the Local Church Leader should serve in line with its ministry deployment priorities" and that this provision had now been added to the policy.

Graham Hill the church representative from Emmaus Centre, Chatham queried the arrangements for local church leadership but it was explained that not all local leaders would necessarily be required to serve in a church other than his/her sponsoring church. The Moderator clarified that some Local Church Leaders would serve in the local church where they worshipped whilst others may be deployed in churches within their Synod/United Area.

In addition to the National Ministers' Spring School to be held next year, it was intended to hold a Synod Ministers' Day in September 2018. The Revd Andrew Royal had queries on the national resources and the method of distributing them for 'Walking the Way'. He was also unhappy about the limited numbers on offer for the national Spring School and an option, therefore, being made available for those ministers who did not wish to attend. The Revd Kevin Watson gave reassurances that anyone wishing to attend the Spring School would be welcomed and accommodated.

The following two items were taken after Item 14

14.1 Jenny Sheehan, Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner, encouraged attendance at a Lay Preaching Day at St John's URC Orpington on 18 November.

14.2 Training for Synod Recognised Lay Preachers: The Revd Andy Twilley, (Synod Training and Development Officer) mentioned that starting in January 2018, a new course of 8 monthly sessions would commence leading to recognition as a Synod Recognised Lay Preacher. Synod members were asked to identify members in their own churches who might undertake this course.

He also encouraged potential lay preachers to come forward. They needed their own church's recommendation and encouragement. During training they would be appointed a mentor.

15. Synod Finance Matters: [Papers D1 & D2] This item was taken after Items 19 and 20

Mr John Denison, Synod Treasurer, advised that the accounts had been scrutinised by the Finance Committee, Trust and auditors and had been signed off. During 2016, the General Purposes Fund had a deficit of £151,000 against an anticipated deficit of £612,000. This was not due to poor budgeting but rather to the inevitable fluctuations of many unknowns. Investment income in 2016 was £151,000 more than anticipated, sales of churches £30,000 less than budgeted and cash from closed churches was £118,000 in 2016.

The balance sheet showed total assets at 31 December 2016 as £22,081,473. Within this figure General Funds were £12,571,451; Designated Funds £8,574,315 and Restricted Funds £935,707.

Roger Woods from Emmanuel URC, Worthing, drew attention to the many millions of pounds being held by Synod and asked why some of this might not be used more widely for ministry. Christine Thompson from Kingston URC was also concerned about the size of reserves. This concern was shared by other speakers. John Denison advised that the advice of the auditors, however, was that it was reasonable to keep such funds in reserve as a contingency to enable Synod to function for a period of years. It was strongly suggested by John Ellis, Leader of West Kent and East Sussex Synod Area, that a reserves policy be written and implemented for the Synod. The Revd Iain McLaren was concerned that Synod was currently being funded substantially by the sale of property and wondered whether over time Synod could not switch to funding from local churches. The Revd George Watt expressed disappointment at the low expenditure on Turn the Tide – a Synod funding source for Children's and Youth work in local churches. He wondered whether more funding could be provided to those churches wishing to employ a youth worker and the Moderator advised that this was already being considered. John Denison undertook to look at the issues which had been raised.

The accounts for 2016 were received by Synod.

The General Purposes Budget for 2018 had been prepared by Finance Committee and Trust which envisaged a deficit of £508,000. This included a provision of £250,00 to assist churches with mission related projects and a £25,000 provision for Resource Sharing with other Synods.

The 2018 General Purposes Budget as agreed by the Finance Committee and the Synod Trust was supported by Synod.

The Synod Treasurer informed Synod Together that Southern Synod's contributions for 2017 Ministry and Mission (M&M) Fund would be £2,600,000 with a similar amount envisaged for 2018. A number of churches had not submitted accounts and others had not agreed to the requested M&M Fund. Any church experiencing difficulty in submitting accounts was encouraged to seek help from Synod.

The Treasurer announced that letters had been sent to Local Church Treasurers reminding them of the importance of having their accounts independently examined.

Letters had also been sent reminding ministers and elders that they are also trustees of the church's funds and assets (excluding buildings). That they are also responsible for ensuring that accounts are produced, presented to the elders meeting and the church's Annual General Meeting and are independently examined.

John expressed his gratitude and thanks for the work done by Catherine Kingdom and Simon Harding.

16. Synod Children and Youth Work Committee Matters [Paper E]:

A Report had been circulated.

Graham Purdye, the Convener spoke of the need for increased representation from across the Synod. There was also a need for a replacement as Secretary.

16.1 "Walking the Way" with Synod Children and Youth: Reuben and Kieran, members of the Synod Youth Executive, introduced themselves, spoke about what the Synod Youth Exec had been doing and invited Synod members to share good news stories about their church firstly, by writing on the foot provided and then, to come forward to share their story. This resulted in many of heart-warming stories being shared with the meeting.

17. Welcome to Goring

Mrs Valerie Cooper, Church Secretary at Goring URC welcomed everyone to Goring and gave directions for lunch.

18. Lunch break URC diaries, prayer handbooks and Constance Colman souvenir items were available for purchase during the lunchbreak.**19. Introduction of new ministers, Candidates and Students:**

All who were present were greeted by the Moderator.

19.1 Central Sussex United Area (CSUA) --- Dr Graham Campling, the Administrator introduced the Revd Irena Byron, the new Methodist Superintendent and Co-Leader of CSUA. Robert Bushby was to leave Area in January 2018 after 12 years.

19.2 East Kent Synod Area --- The Revd George Kalu, Leader introduced the Revd Hilary Nabarro, as the new Interim Minister at The Vale URC, Broadstairs.

19.3 South London Synod Area: The Revd Lesley Charlton, Leader, presented the following: Revd Peter Flint, Convener of Pastoral Committee (West), the Revds Terry Sparks and Pauline Sparks who would be retiring in February 2018, the Revd Claudi Lupi, Minister at Richmond United Church from the Waldensian Church and the Revd Roger Jones, minister at Epsom, Ewell and Tolworth URCs.

19.4 Surrey and Sussex Synod Area –The Revd George Watt, Leader, introduced the Revd Anne Lewitt, West Sussex Area Ministry.

19.5 West Kent and East Sussex Synod Area – Mr John Ellis was welcomed as Leader and he then introduced the 1) Peter and Marie Jackson – Local Church Leaders at Seddlescombe; 2) Revd Angela Rigby, minister of Christ Church URC, Tonbridge and St. John's Hill URC, Sevenoaks.

19.6 Students and Candidates – The Convener, Mr Stuart Dew introduced the Revd Bernard Fidler who was undertaking a period of study at Westminster College to enable transfer from non-stipendiary to stipendiary ministry.

There was a short presentation given by some of the Synod's current ministerial students during an interview with them by Stuart Dew. The Revd Bernard Fidler spoke of his experience to date learning about reformed churches. Prince Brown-Engmann, training at Northern College for non-stipendiary ministry, spoke about how he was combining his studies with his day-time job. He described the placements he had undertaken and is currently undertaking with long travel time. Jacob Bali was nearing the end of his training prior to a one year placement. He had been student president during his second year. He was looking forward to a placement in an ecumenical context. He shared a poem he had written on the theme of "Walking the Way". Jo Patterson was training as a Church Related Community Worker (CRCW) at Northern College, the first such student from Southern Synod. She had done a placement at the Copleston Centre in Peckham London and was currently doing a placement at an evangelical Anglican church where she valued the ecumenical relationships. Stuart Dew asked for prayers for all the students and for anyone considering training as an ordained minister. He mentioned that two candidates were due to be interviewed.

19.7 The Moderator greeted Mr Alan Kirby who was the new Convener of Synod Trust.

21. **Address on “Walking the Way – Living the life of Jesus’: Discerning God’s Plan for Southern Synod”:** Drawing on his experiences as General Assembly Moderator, the Revd Kevin Watson gave examples of churches reaching out to the community in very effective ways. He felt that generosity of the Spirit was needed and that was what he had seen in evidence in Southern Synod that morning when good news stories had been shared. He asked the following questions which were discussed in groups:
- 1) If Walking the Way is a call to sacrificial living to follow Jesus, what might it be in the life of your church that you are being called to let go?
 - 2) If Walking the Way is a call to follow Jesus, what in the journey of your local church are you being called to?
 - 3) What has God given your local church that you may be generous in your love to others?

In concluding, Kevin’s advice was to discern what God wants for you, to move away from the things which are not going well, but to focus on what you want to do. Love, hospitality, generosity and sharing were offered as the greatest gifts.

The Synod Moderator thanked Kevin for his presentation and sent Southern Synod’s greetings to Yorkshire Synod.

22. **Synod Clerk’s Items**
General Assembly 2018: The Synod Clerk asked for Synod/United Areas and Youth Committee to start thinking about representatives for Assembly to be held at Nottingham from July 6th - 9th 2018. Also, he asked for thought to be given to nominations for ordained and lay General Assembly Moderators for 2020 to 2022. Names are to be submitted to him for election at the 10th March 2018 Synod Together meeting.

23. **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 Goring URC.
- The IT team with congratulations in absentia to Martin Hayes on his 50th birthday.
- The Moderator for her chairmanship and leadership.

24. **Closing Worship** The Synod Moderator led closing worship using Matthew 5: 13 – 16. She spoke of feeling encouraged by the day’s meeting. She shared a story about a stranger and stone soup asking ‘who are we in the story?’

25. At 3.52pm, the Moderator declared the Synod Together meeting closed until it meets again in 2018 on Saturday 10 March, 10.30 am to 4:30pm at East Croydon United Reformed Church or at such other time and place as it may be called together by those charged with the direction of its affairs.

26. Refreshments were served prior to departure.