

**Minutes of the Eighth Synod Together meeting held at
East Croydon United Reformed Church, Addiscombe Grove, Croydon
Saturday 12 March 2016**

1. **Arrival and Registration** Members of Synod Together started arriving at 9:30 am. Registration was done in the David Sweet Hall.
2. **Health & Safety Notices** At 10:30 am Mrs Grace Marriott, Joint Church Secretary from East Croydon URC, welcomed everyone to East Croydon URC and gave Health & Safety notices.
3. **Constitution of Synod Together** The Moderator, the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith, duly constituted the Synod meeting.
4. **Opening Worship** was led by the Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor, Synod Clerk and Minister at East Croydon URC. The theme was "Living Water – drinking deeply from the well of Christ for Missional Discipleship" based on John 4:1-42.
5. **Synod Roll and Apologies**
 - 5.1 **Synod Roll** The Synod Clerk placed the roll on the table, informing the meeting that it contained a total of 217 Synod members comprising of 83 serving ministers and 134 lay church representatives and others. The Synod Clerk also noted that there were 77 retired ministers on the roll.
 - 5.2 **Attendance** The Moderator presided over a total of 156 people according to the signed in register - comprising: 45 serving ministers; 5 retired ministers; 96 lay members; 5 Student; 1 ecumenical representative and 4 observers.
 - 5.3 **Apologies** were received from 15 serving ministers; 24 church representatives and 19 retired ministers.
6. **Pastoralia**
 - 6.1. The Synod Clerk informed the meeting that two ministers were celebrating Jubilee anniversaries. The Revd Geoffrey Bird (in absentia) was congratulated on 60 years of ordained ministry. The Revd John Waller was greeted and congratulated on 50 years of ordained ministry. The Moderator thanked him for his continuing and much valued contribution to the life of the Synod.
 - 6.2. The Synod Clerk also mentioned the following who had died since the last Synod Together meeting: -Mr Sydney Cole, husband of the Revd Ann Cole and Mrs Doris Morgan, wife of the Revd David Morgan.
The Moderator led the meeting in a prayer for the deceased.
7. **Tellers** The following were unanimously elected to act as tellers – the Revd Peter Flint, the Revd Dr Peter Stevenson, Ms Pamela Tolhurst, and Mr Clive Snashall
8. **Minutes of Synod Together meeting held on 10 October 2015 at Cheam URC**
The Minutes of the meeting were agreed as a true record and signed by the Moderator
9. **Matters arising from the Minutes:**
 - 9.1 **East Kent Synod Area resolution:** The resolution concerning the URC budget had gone to Mission Council Advisory Group and a response from Mr John Ellis was shared with Synod. The response described the extensive consultation process for approving the budget, the strictures of timing and the procedure adopted for dealing with those years when General Assembly was not meeting. The Revd Dr Alan Spence, East Kent, took issue with this response and wished to persist with the resolution – he felt that Synod had the right to ask that an issue be raised at General Assembly and that what was at issue deserved a public debate.
The Moderator and Synod Clerk concurred with this view and Synod overwhelmingly agreed that the resolution should be put to General Assembly.

- 9.2 Southern Synod requests General Assembly to give due consideration to the following resolution:

General Assembly resolves that at its future meetings it will, as part of its regular business, receive the budget of the Church for approval. In the years when the General Assembly does not meet Mission Council, acting in the Assembly's stead, will receive the budget for approval.

This was unanimously agreed.

10. General Assembly 2015 Resolution 4A.

The Resolution had been approved by General Assembly and referred back to Synods for their response. Synod members were asked to indicate whether they were resistant or non-resistant to the Resolution. Those “non-resistant” to the proposals numbered 94. Those “resistant” to the proposals numbered 7. The Resolution now returned to General Assembly. The Moderator invited anyone who wished to record their dissent to advise the Synod Clerk accordingly and their names would be noted in the minutes.

11. Synod Finance Matters

Mr Ian Fleming, Synod Treasurer, reported on current finance matters. At the end of 2015, the accounts showed a surplus of £3,000,00 in cash terms. This had arisen through the sale of two churches and could not be expected to be repeated. The 2015 M&M target of £2,734,000 had been met. Ian had written to church treasurers advising of the availability of grants and loans - £250,000 had been set aside. Full details and an application form were available on the Synod website or via Simon Harding in Synod Office. Ian asked that the 2015 accounts for local churches should be submitted to Catherine Kingdom by the end of March at the latest.

12. Synod Children and Youth matters:

Ms Cathy Glazier shared a report prepared by Mr Graham Purdye, (Convener of Synod Children and Youth Work Committee) Following the departure of several members there was a need for more involvement in the committee. Synod Youth Camp with the theme “Equality” was to be held 30th July to 6th August 2016. Flyers were available. Kearnsey Camp was celebrating its 50th anniversary and would take place from 23 July to 30 July.. Youth Assembly: Seven young people from the Synod had attended the assembly meeting in January with the theme of “Roots and Foundations: growing in Faith.”

13. Synod Clerk's Items

13.1. Synod Moderator's Review: The Moderator had served five and a half years of her seven year term of office. URC practice allowed the possibility of an extension for a further five years. As part of this process a review by the Synod was required to be carried out a year prior to the end of the current term. With this in mind the Synod Clerk proposed that a team representative of the Synod be elected to carry out this task. The following were nominated by Synod Council and were elected by Synod Together to serve on this team – the Revd Paul Dean, the Revd Jennifer Millington, Mr Nigel Macdonald, Ms Pam Tolhurst, Mr Sam Brown (representing youth), and the Synod Clerk.

13.2 Nominations: Ordained and Lay General Assembly Moderators. The Moderator proposed that Southern Synod should nominate the Revd Nigel Uden - Synod overwhelmingly agreed. So far no nomination for the lay moderator had been made - members were asked to reflect on this and approach anyone they wished to nominate before advising the Moderator.

14. Synod Ministries Committee Matters

14.1. Report: The report had been circulated. The Revd Jennifer Millington reiterated thanks and appreciation to the Revd Dr Richard Goldring for his thoroughness in the performance of his duties and his meticulous preparation for training events. There were no questions on the report.

14.2 Presentation on Conduct of Ministers: The role of retired ministers in Local Pastorates

A paper had been circulated. This included the Guidelines on conduct and behaviour for Ministers of Word and Sacrament approved by General Assembly 2010. Ministries Committee felt that local churches needed to be made aware of the potential for misunderstanding of the role of ministers and in particular, retired ministers. Some scenarios had been prepared for group discussion based on real situations. These would assist in understanding “call” and “boundaries”. Jennifer drew attention to a liturgy for an act of worship which might be held to mark the end of a ministry. Ten groups were identified and invited to consider one or possibly two of the scenarios. Answers to the discussion questions were to be displayed during the lunch break. Recommendations for a guideline to local churches were also to be sought.

- 15. Lunch arrangements:** Prior to the meeting dispersing into groups, The Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor advised of the arrangements for the lunch break.

16. Group Discussions

Those attending dispersed into groups to discuss the case studies arising from the Conduct of Ministers presentation.

17. LUNCH BREAK**18. Introduction of new Ministers, Candidates & Students, Thanks & Farewells**

South London The Moderator greeted the Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor who had been inducted as minister at East Croydon URC.

East Kent David Bedford, Area Leader, introduced the Revd Alan Spence who had been inducted at Trinity Deal URC/Methodist Church.

Surrey & Sussex Synod Area (S&SSA): The Revd George Watt, Area Leader advised that the Revd Sue Chapman had been inducted to Hove and Portslade URCs. The Revd David Skitt had retired from Oxted and Marsh Green. The Revd John Joseph was about to retire from Redhill. The Revd Kim Plumpton was retiring as pastoral convener and was to be succeeded by the Revd Julian Thomas. George offered a welcome to the churches joining the Synod Area from the South West Sussex United Area.

Candidates and Students: Stuart Dew, Convener of the Committee, reported that three of the current students were in attendance - Jo Patel, Jacob Bali and Jo Patterson. Each of them was invited to share experience of their training with the meeting. Two candidates were to attend the National Conference in April.

Lay Preaching: Jenny Sheehan introduced two lay preachers who had completed Assembly Accreditation. Heather Wall (Leatherhead URC) and Lynne Le Masonry from Hope Street, Sheerness. Jenny advised of the imminent changes to the URC training courses and urged everyone to encourage members of their churches to consider such training.

Jennifer Millington returned to summarise the guidelines which had emerged from the group discussions. She thanked everyone for their engagement with the process. The Moderator thanked the Ministries Committee for its work.

19. Theme Presentation “Missional Discipleship”

The Moderator introduced the Revd Richard Church, URC Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship). Richard began his presentation with a short video, details of which were to be made available via the Synod. He described a shared journey in the company of others and likened this to church. How was the United Reformed Church responding to the challenges facing church in the 21st century? He recommended engagement with a programme of events planned for 2017 and the introduction of “Walking the Way”, the new URC training programme which was to replace Training for Learning and Serving. He used the analogy of the oak tree – roots as the

faith which has been nurtured in us, sometimes unseen (prayer as the taproot), - the trunk common to all of us and our growth as Christians, and out of the trunk the branches celebrating different gifts and specialities and eventually acorns as new disciples. He talked of signs of maturity and referred to the ten statements of mission of Vision 2020. He asked, "How do we encourage change?" He invited questions emphasising that he was attending the meeting to listen as much as he was to convey information. The tone of the questions reflected some scepticism but mostly enthusiasm for what was proposed and in particular the importance of prayer and the need for a prayer resource.

The meeting broke into groups to discuss the following questions. What do you understand by Walking the Way? What would help you develop in your discipleship? What holy habits might be modelled in your congregation? What steps might be taken to enable faith sharing to be a priority?

Richard concluded the session in a prayer "Disturb us Lord" which he attributed to Sir Francis Drake.

The Moderator thanked Richard for his contribution to the meeting.

- 20. Synod Council Report** A report had been circulated. (This item was dealt with during the morning session.)
- 20.1** The Moderator greeted the Revd Dr Richard Goldring who was leaving his post as Development Officer for Education and Learning at the end of April. She thanked him for his commitment and diligence.
- 20.2** Historic Safeguarding: The Moderator drew attention to the Past Cases Review. Within the Synod Phase One had been carried out (looking at ministers' files) Phase Two remained to be done. This was a period of open consultation for anyone who felt that they had been inappropriately dealt with by the church to come forward and allow their grievance to be heard. The Synod required some listeners and these people needed to be identified and their help enlisted.
- 20.3** Deployment – current projections for 2020 and 2025 indicated a substantial drop in the number of ministers. A large number of ministers were due to retire and there were fewer trained ministers to replace them. Deployment was currently linked to M&M contributions - the Moderators had asked that this policy be looked at again suggesting that other factors also be taken into account. The Moderator and the Revd Jennifer Millington were to attend a meeting looking at ministry in the future. Mission Council was also to consider this issue. Synod was currently within its allocation of ministry and this included different kinds of ministry e.g. pioneer ministry at West Thamesmead.
- 20.4** SWSUA The Revd Ken Lynch, Joint Leader of the United Area, had written following a meeting of the United Area on 8 March advising that the recommendation to terminate the United Area had been accepted. The following resolutions were put to Synod.

Resolution: Southern Synod approves the decision of the SWSUA meeting to terminate the United Area on 31st August 2016.

This was approved - 109 for; 0 against; 2 abstentions.

Resolution: Southern Synod agrees to the recommendation that the United Reformed Churches and Single Congregation UR/Methodist Local Ecumenical Projects shall become part of the Surrey and Sussex Synod Area.

This was approved - 109 for; 0 against; 1 abstention.

- 20.5** The Moderator advised that she proposed to hold a Moderator's Day on 21st September with the theme "Shepherding the flock or CEO of the Company?"

21. Last minute Notices and Thank You

- 21.1** The Synod Clerk promoted "Just One" event and a book by John Campbell "Shake us up".
- 21.2** The Revd Raymond Singh promoted the Cause for Celebration event scheduled to take place at Bellingham URC on 18 June 2016, 10am to 4pm. This would be a day of workshops and celebrations for urban URCs organised by the Urban URC Network and would take the theme "@ home in a strange place".

- 21.3** The Revd Dr Peter Stevenson promoted a Commitment for Life event on 7th May at Bromley URC 10.30 – 3.30pm. All local church organisers and supporters were invited.
- 21.4** Peter also reminded Synod that the new Synod website had won an award and asked that thanks be conveyed to those concerned.
- 21.5** Prayers were asked for the daughter of the late Revd Hugh Kemper.
- 21.6** The Revd Sue Shortman, a Methodist probationer was to be ordained at Aberdeen Road in July.
- 21.7** The Synod Clerk thanked the following for their contribution to Synod Together:
- All at East Croydon URC, particularly the volunteers, for their hard work and hospitality
 - The IT team who had been assisting for 12 years.
 - Everyone for coming to Synod Together and for their time
 - The Synod Office staff
 - The Moderator for her chairmanship and leadership and the Revd Richard Church for attending after what had been a very busy week.
- 22. Closing Worship** There being no other business the Moderator led Synod Together in Closing Worship. The reading was Matthew chapter 28: 18 – 20. She used a reflection by Anthony de Mello entitled “The ocean fish”.
- 23.** At 4.20 pm the Moderator declared the Synod Together closed until it meets again in 2016 on Saturday 8 October 2016, 10.30 am to 4:30 pm at Christ Church URC, Petts Wood or at such other time and place as it may be called together by those charged with the direction of its affairs.
- 24.** Refreshments were served prior to departure.