



The
United
Reformed
Church

**DRAFT Minutes of the Twelfth Synod Together Meeting held at
East Croydon United Reformed Church,
on Saturday 10 March 2018**

Theme: Children Save the World

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 at East Croydon URC, 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 Nicola Furley-Smith. The Bible reading was a selection of verses from Mark's Gospel chapters 9:30-36 and 10:13-16 describing what Jesus said to prepare his disciples for what lay ahead and his use of the analogy of a little child to describe what was needed if they were really to be part of the Kingdom. In her comment on the Bible reading, the Moderator said "We are called to serve the least and the littlest". Prayers were said and the hymn "Have you heard God's voice; has your heart been stirred?" by Jacqueline G Jones was sung.

4.1 Synod Ecumenical Development Officer 50% post: Immediately following the opening worship, the Moderator, on a point of procedure, asked that item 1 in Paper A - Synod Council Report be taken. This was about the post of **Synod Ecumenical Development Officer 50%**.

It was reported that at its meeting on 1st February 2018 Synod Council, on behalf of Synod Together, unanimously appointed the Revd Paul Dean as Southern Synod Ecumenical Development Officer (50%) from 1st March 2018 for five years.

Resolution 2 was thus put to the meeting.

Resolution 2:

Synod Together endorses the appointment of Revd Paul Dean to serve as Synod Ecumenical Development Officer 50% from 1st March 2018 for 5 years.

The resolution was unanimously passed.

4.2 Induction of Revd Paul Dean as Synod Ecumenical Officer: The Moderator invited the Revd Paul Dean to join her on the platform. The Synod Clerk stated the history of the call and ended by saying that Paul is a gifted ecumenist and will balance this role with his pastoral ministry within the South East Kent Methodist Circuit. Paul Dean responded following which the Synod Moderator inducted him as Synod Ecumenical Development Officer.

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 367 voting members comprising 89 serving ministers and 134 church representatives, 57 co-opted members and others.

In addition, there are 71 Retired ministers and 16 Observers on the roll.

5.2 Attendance: The Moderator presided over a total of 121 people according to the signed in register - comprising: 41 serving ministers; 5 retired ministers; 56 church representatives; 19 co-opted members and observers.

5.3 Apologies had been received from 17 serving ministers; 23 church representatives; 15 co-opted members; 5 retired ministers.

6. Pastoralia

The Synod Clerk advised that the following had died since the last Synod Together meeting:-

- Dr Ray Brotherhood (November 2017) – Church Secretary and the Revd Tony Groom – retired minister (January 2018).

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

7. Reception of Jubilee Ministers

Since the last meeting the following jubilees had been recorded. All had been contacted and congratulated by the Moderator.

- **70 years** Revd Norman Stanley Jenkins
- **60 years** Revd Keith Leonard Havers
- **50 years** Revd Peter Ernest McIntosh
- **30 years** Revd Julian Thomas. Julian, being present, was greeted by the Moderator.

8. Appointment of Tellers

The following resolution was passed unanimously :

Resolution 1:

Southern Synod Together appoints as Tellers the Revd Peter Flint as Chief Teller; Rita Brown, Martin Hayward and Pamela Tolworth.

8.1 Traffic lights to be operated by Mrs Rosemary Davies.

- 9. Stepwise:** Revd Andy Twilley, Synod Training and Development Officer, introduced the new training scheme **Stepwise** which replaces Training for Learning and Serving (TLS). He mentioned the success of the groups already run for small group leadership, the Make a Difference (MAD) Days and the current well-supported Synod course for lay preachers. (The next Make a Difference Day will be on 16 June at Petts Wood). With all that in mind, Stepwise was designed to be a course to equip people for the purpose which God intended for them. There are to be 5 streams (or modules)
- Faith-filled life
 - Faith-filled confidence
 - Faith-filled community,
 - Faith-filled worship
 - Faith-fuelled leadership.

Each module will be open to everyone and will be rolled out over a period of a period three years, starting in September 2018 with Faith-filled life culminating in 2020 with the Faith-fuelled worship module. Resources will be available online and can also be produced on memory sticks. Courses will be delivered locally in a variety of different formats, some modules taking longer than others. Mentoring would be at the heart of the course and mentoring training was to be offered. There would be a small cost involved but this was intended to be minimal.

- 10. Minutes of Synod Together Meeting held on 14 October 2017 at Goring URC** The Minutes of the meeting were agreed as a true record and signed by the Moderator.

11. Matters arising from those minutes

11.1 Synod Reserves Policy: This was to be dealt with under Item 14.

- 12. Synod Council Report (Paper A)** A Report had been prepared by the Moderator and circulated in advance of the meeting.

12.1 Synod Ecumenical Development Officer: (See above Item 4.) Synod Together concurred the appointment of the Revd Paul Dean as Southern Synod Ecumenical Development Officer (50%) from 1st March 2018 for five years. The Revd Paul Dean was inducted into post at this meeting.

12.2 Synod Clerk Review: A Review of this increasingly demanding role had been carried out by the Revd Dr Peter Stevenson and Mr Peter Pay of Wessex Synod. Having received their report, Synod Council, on behalf of Synod Together, had unanimously reappointed the Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor as Synod Clerk for a further term of 4 years until his retirement.

Resolution 3:

Synod Together endorses the appointment of Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor to serve as Synod Clerk from 1st February 2018 for 4 years.

Synod Together passed the above resolution unanimously. The Moderator expressed the Synod's gratitude to Derrick for all that he did on Synod's behalf.

12.3 Local Church Leader Policy: The Moderator noted that Southern Synod was leading the way in establishing the role of local church leadership.

12.4 Concurrence: Synod Ministries had requested changes to the requirements for concurrence to calls (and exits), asking that concurrence be devolved to Area Pastoral Committees due to the infrequency with which some Synod/United Areas met. Concurrence (or withholding of concurrence) would be with advice from the Synod Moderator.

Resolution 4:

On the recommendation of Synod Council, Synod Together agrees that the Synod/United Area Pastoral Committee gives concurrence to a call, both for the incoming minister and the outgoing minister, on behalf of Southern Synod.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

12.5 General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Presentation: Colin McCracken, Synod Property Administrator, gave a presentation explaining what would be involved by the new legislation. A summary of his presentation was to be distributed as soon as possible.

In essence the legislation

- Applies to churches because they process personal data
- Builds on 1998 Data Protection Act
- Applies to paper and electronic records
- Common rules for EU and will apply post Brexit
- Establishes legal bases for processing
- Requires privacy (Information) notices
- Confers individual rights
- Establishes a requirement of transparency

Colin highly recommended the information and advice contained on the URC website. Revd Lesley Charlton contrasted the simplicity needed in the message of the Moderator's opening devotions with the requirements which were now being required. She was grateful that a member of Synod staff was on hand to offer advice and guidance. Past records were something to be thought about but the important thing was to make sure that the new requirements were met going forward. Concern was expressed that history might be in danger of being forgotten through not being recorded. Reassurances were given on this.

12.6 Synod Manse Policy: The annual grant for the maintenance of manses had been increased to £1,000 per annum with effect from 1st January 2018.

12.7 Membership of Synod Council: The Moderator had been pleased to welcome into Synod Council the Revd Jim Thorneycroft, Co-Leader, Central Sussex United Area and Miss Pamela Tolhurst, Synod Representative to Mission Council.

12.8 Staffing: Jon Dean was working on a temporary basis on property matters, Simon Harding had resigned and a temporary finance administrator was in place. The Moderator recorded her thanks and appreciation of the Synod staff's patience and co-operation during this period of change.

- 13. Synod Ministries Committee Report (Paper B)** Dr Graham Campling, Secretary to the Committee, presented the report which had previously been circulated. Many points had already been covered. He highlighted the following:

Paul Dean had suggested that consideration be given to a scheme of support and accountability similar to the Methodist Supervisory Scheme for Ministers. This was being looked at further to see how it might fit within the URC ethos.

Safeguarding Training: It was proposed that all ministers should have safeguarding training every three years. A training session was already scheduled for 21 March 2018.

Applications for Special Category Ministry and Church Related Community Worker posts were in train.

- 14. Synod Finance Committee Report:** Mr John Denison, Synod Treasurer, reported as follows:

Preliminary draft figures for 2017 showed funds received would exceed expenditure by approximately £2.4 million (ignoring unrealised investment gains).

The Synod had met its 2017 M&M target of £2.65 million out of total M&M contributions of £19.1 million from the 13 Synods. On behalf of the URC, John thanked the churches in Southern Synod for their generosity. The Synod had pledges totalling £ 2.62M for 2018. Churches were reminded to send in their 2017 accounts as soon as possible to permit a start on Synods 2019 calculations. At this stage draft accounts would be fine.

A number of churches had still to provide their 2016 accounts. Without these Synod Office could not make accurate calculations of M&M contributions. He asked Synod Area Leaders and Treasurers to have discussions on the difficulty of finding church treasurers and independent examiners at their Synod Area meetings bringing back thoughts and ideas to the Synod Finance and Synod Council Meetings so that the Synod could be more aware of the scale of the problem and discuss ways of possibly providing assistance.

In 2017, grants and loans totalling £122,000 were authorised. This scheme has been extended for 2018 at the same funding amount of £250,000. The Annual Manse Grant has been increased from £500 to £1,000 per annum. Details of these funding schemes were available on the Synod website. There were also schemes to support youth work (Turn the Tide) and small mission projects (New Growth Fund) which were not currently being fully utilised by churches.

At the last Synod Together, some unease had been expressed with the reserve policy of the Synod and the size of funds held by the Synod.

Each year the finance area prepares a five-year budget for approval for the General Purposes Fund. Current budgets anticipated expenditure of slightly over £1.0 million per year. The budget was designed to cover expenses incurred in meeting the needs relative to the entire Synod. In meeting that expenditure, the Synod drew on funds received from the sale of closed churches and income from investments. Under our 2016 audited accounts, the Synod had funds totalling £22.1 million in the accounts. It needs to be realised that not all of this was readily available. There were "Restricted Funds" - funds received to only be used for a specific purpose - totalling £935,000; "Designated Funds" - which were funds allocated by Synod Together to a special purpose and Manse Funds - totalling £8.6 million. That left a balance of £12.6 million in General Funds.

The Manse Fund - over the last five years (2012-2016) sales of manses had generated funds totalling £7.1 million while purchases had totalled £4.3 million thus contributing to a significant increase in the Manse Designated Fund. There were several potential purchases of new manses in the pipeline which could reduce the fund considerably.

John noted that in spite of the ease of claiming from the annual manse maintenance fund, roughly half of all pastorates made a claim each year. The last completed year showed 28 pastorates claiming £12,000 out of a possible total of £30,000 available.

The Reserve Policy was currently set at seven years of estimated expenditure i.e. approx. £7.0 million. This was due to the fact that presently the Synod is totally reliant on sales of closed churches and investment income in order to meet its non-manse related expenses. Even setting the reserve at 7 years that did not put pressure on or restrict use of the General Funds of £12.6 million. But it did provide the Synod with a time cushion should the General Fund begin to show

a rapid decrease to realign budgets and the Reserve Policy itself. In view of this £5.0 million cushion John saw no reason at this time to propose such realignment of the Reserve Policy. He hoped, however, that at some point the Synod would need to realign the Reserve Policy in the event that the Synod was no longer selling closed churches and the Synod's strategy was aligned to feeding growth.

John emphasised that it was not he who decided Synod strategy. He interprets Synod Strategy from a financial position advising of any financial implications associated with that strategy.

Synod Council was looking at developing a Synod Strategy which would include looking at surpluses in the reserves. John encouraged Synod Areas to discuss the future of the Synod at their meetings instructing their Synod Treasures and Leaders to bring their thoughts to the Synod Finance Committee and Synod Council, respectively. They could then formulate proposals for future strategy based on advised needs of the churches bringing these to Synod Together with all its implications for discussion and approval. He therefore recommended in the strongest terms that all churches actively attend and support their Synod Areas.

The Manse Policy: David Walters, Convener of Synod Property Committee gave assurances that the annual grant for maintenance was well advertised in the manse policy, the Synod website and the MAD days.

John Ellis, leader of West Kent and East Sussex Synod Area, welcomed the willingness to look again at the reserves policy. If Synod Area Meetings were to take the initiative on this, he hoped that those meetings would be well informed meetings. He asked whether some consideration should also be given to sharing with other Synods. The Moderator assured him that such conversations were already taking place.

Martin Hayward, Synod Mission Officer, looked forward to the time when the Synod was no longer closing churches. He also noted that there were resources other than money which could be shared with other Synods.

- 15. Synod Children's and Youth Work Committee (Paper C)** Mr Graham Purdye spoke to the report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. There was little to add to the report.

Graham thanked Liz Sutton for acting as secretary for so many years. Suggestions as to her successor would be welcomed. The Crossfire camp, omitted from the report, was mentioned.

Reuben Watt gave a report on the recent Youth Assembly and the resolutions passed. He described the process of electing the Youth Assembly Moderators which had prompted resolutions to come to Mission Council regarding changes to the election of General Assembly Moderators.

- 16. Notice:** The Revd David Marshall-Jones advised that the United Reformed Church Guide and Scout Fellowship was to celebrate its Diamond Jubilee on Saturday 19th May with a cruise along the Regents Canal in London. He asked that attention be drawn to this event which was open to all. Further information was available from pammj@btinternet.com 01737 644 556.

- 17. Welcome to East Croydon URC**

Ms Joanna Marfoh, Joint Church Secretary at East Croydon URC welcomed everyone and gave directions for lunch.

- 18. Lunch break from 1 pm - 1:50 pm** Grace was said by the Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor.

- 19. At 2:00 pm, the Synod Moderator called Synod Together to order.**

Then followed the Introduction of new ministers, Candidates and Students. All who were present were greeted by the Moderator.

19.1 Central Sussex United Area (CSUA): None.

19.2 East Kent Synod Area (EKSA): Revd Miriam Moul, inducted at The Beacon, Dover. Revd Lisa-Maria Browning ordained and inducted as a Non Stipendiary Minister at Union Church, Margate.

19.3 South London Synod Area: None.

19.4 Surrey and Sussex Synod Area: Revd Alex Mabbs re-appointed for a further 5 years at Brighthelm, Revd Graeme Allan was retiring as Convener of the Sussex part of the Surrey and Sussex Pastoral Committee. Revd Sue Chapman was introduced as the new convener.

19.5 West Kent and East Sussex Synod Area: Mr John Ellis had visited Tahiti and brought greetings from the church there. Tahitian necklaces were bestowed upon the Moderator, the Synod Clerk and Mrs Lynne Le Masonry who was introduced as Local Church Leader at The Church in Hope Street, Sheerness.

19.6 Candidates and Students: None

- 20. Theme Presentation: “Children Save the World”** The Synod Moderator welcomed and introduced Miss Hannah Jones, Moderator of URC Youth Assembly.

Hannah explained that this was the first of many such presentations she was going to give during her term of office. Using the Harry Potter stories, she livened up the proceedings with a true or false style game – Harry Potter or the Bible? With the use of slides, she then gave examples of children or young people who had made a meaningful difference to the world. She suggested that nowadays we had become risk averse in encouraging young people to make a difference and that we needed to think more about empowering them to do so. Empowerment could be achieved through psychological, community, organisational, economic, social and cultural support means. The main thing was to provide opportunities and not to stand in their way.

After Hannah’s speech, Tom Hackett, Synod Children’s and Youth Development Officer, took over and invited further discussion on some questions that had been left on the tables during the lunch break. One of the questions was “what can we be doing locally to give our young people a voice?” Members of Synod were invited to break into small groups to discuss “What are the things which are important to children and young people in your church and community?” and “How do we seek and value the thoughts and opinions of children and young people? Share examples of how we can enable them to have their voices heard within our churches”. Several examples of successful youth ventures were shared and also inter-generational activities.

Tom drew attention to the Charter for Children which still pertained and in particular the need to identify gifts.

Finally we were invited to identify the points of contact on a day to day basis with children and young people – neighbours, grandparents and parents, carers, teachers, bus drivers, shop assistants, dinner ladies and many more. It was a long list. This highlighted the network of people with potential to influence a child’s development. Tom asked, “Where and how did church fit in?”

- 21. Synod Clerk’s Items**

21.1 The Revd Michael O’Hara: The Synod Clerk advised that he had that day been advised that the Revd Michael O’Hara, formerly minister at East Grinstead had died at the end of February.

21.2 General Assembly 2018 Synod Representatives: Some places remained to be filled. The names of those already notified were shared. Synod Together concurred with these names and authorised the Synod Clerk to fill the remaining places.

22. Walking the Way: Stories from the churches:

Mr Martin Hayward, Synod Mission Development Officer, introduced material available from Holy Habits and the Synod website.

Revd Dr Peter Stevenson and Ms Rachel Sinclair brought stories from Crossway URC, Elephant & Castle in London (which had doubled its membership in 12 months).

Mr Bernard Moon from Burgess Hill described an event last autumn when the congregation had baked cakes to take out into the local community delivering them to the library, doctors' surgeries, council health point, market management centre, police, fire and ambulance stations. Each cake was accompanied by a thank you and an invitation. He felt that this had put the church into local people's awareness and recommended that other churches do likewise.

Revd Andrew Willett highlighted the work of HOPE and the leaflets produced for both Easter and Christmas; (they sell out quickly). In connection with the 100th anniversary of the end of the 1st World War, Andrew also drew attention to the national day of prayer on August 4th and the peace babies (jelly babies). More on the HOPE website.

Revd Lesley Charlton spoke about the multiple congregations at Kingston URC and the need to pick up on worship opportunities presented by national events which would have relevance to all.

Good news about the interim moderator at Twickenham was shared.

Other good news stories were shared by Revd Bob Street on ministry with the addicted, Charlton URC and The Bay URC, Birchington where a teenager had been encouraged to learn to play the organ.

Martin recommended the following websites:

www.hopetogether.org.uk
www.licc.org.uk
www.disciplekit.org
www.southern.org.uk

The Synod Moderator told the story of the carrot seed in which against all the predictions of failure, a little boy successfully grew a carrot from seed. These stories gave similar encouragement.

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 who had prepared and presented reports.
- The IT team.
- The Moderator for her chairmanship and leadership.
- East Croydon United Reformed Church for hosting the meeting.

24. Closing Worship Mr Tom Hackett, Synod Children's and Youth Development Officer, led closing worship using a reflection based on John 1 verses 12 to 14. His theme was "Blinded by Grace". He used tracks from Stormzy's "Gang Signs and Prayers" to demonstrate the impact made on the performer by his faith. There followed a time of prayer during which those present were invited to give thanks for the good things in life, and then to think of difficult times in their lives and to think of others who are finding life tough, then to thank God for the times he had helped them in their need. through those who help others and show them love, and for the gifts and talents which help people out at difficult times.**25. Closing** At 3.55 pm, the Moderator declared the Synod Together meeting closed until it meets again in 2018 on Saturday 13 October, 10.30 am to 4:30pm at Caterham School 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.