

**Minutes of the fourth Synod Together meeting  
held at Reigate Park United Reformed Church, Park Lane East,  
Reigate, Surrey RH2 8BD on Saturday 9 November 2013**

- 1/st/13 **Health & Safety Notices** At 10:30 am Mrs Tina Papworth, the Church Secretary of Reigate Park Church welcomed everyone to Reigate Park and gave Health & Safety notices.
- 2/st/13 **Opening Worship** was led by the Moderator, Revd Nicola Furley-Smith on the theme “Making Connections” which was the theme for the Synod Together meeting.
- 3/st/13 **Constitution of Synod Together** The Moderator duly constituted the Synod meeting.
- 4/st/13 **Child Friendly Church Awards** - Mr Nick White, the Synod’s Childrens & Youth Development Officer announced that 8 Churches in the Synod had been awarded Child Friendly Church Awards. There are at present 40 URC churches which hold these Awards, of which 12 are in Southern Synod. [Information on how to work towards the Awards in 2014 could be found on the Synod website – [www.urcsouthern.org.uk](http://www.urcsouthern.org.uk)].
- The Moderator presented the Award to Sanderstead URC, who were receiving it for the first time. The following churches received the Award for a second time: St. John's, Orpington, St John’s, Marsh Green; New Malden; Reigate Park; The Temple, St Mary Cray; Trinity, Wimbledon.; Uckfield and Emmanuel, West Wickham
- 5/st/13 **Synod Roll and Apologies**
- 5.a/st/13 **Synod Roll** The Synod Clerk placed the roll on the table, informing the meeting that it contained 352 names comprising of 117 ordained ministers, 136 lay members, 9 observers, 79 retired ministers, 4 students and 7 ecumenical representatives.
- 5.b/st/13 **Present** The Moderator presided over 67 ordained ministers; 77 lay members; 13 retired ministers; 1 Ecumenical Guest; 2 Observers; 2 FURY representatives and 1 student.
- 5.c/st/13 **Apologies** were received from 11 serving ministers; 17 lay members; and 11 retired ministers and 2 observers.
- The Synod Clerk led prayers for those who could not attend.
- 6/st/13 **Welcome of Civic Guest** The Synod Clerk introduced her Worship the Mayor of Reigate & Banstead, Councillor Dr Lynne Hack to Synod Together. Dr Hack welcomed all present to the Reigate and Banstead area. She mentioned that during her time as Mayor, instead of appointing a Chaplain from one denomination, she had been inviting ministers from all the denominations in the area, one at a time, to attend a Council meeting and act as chaplain. The Revd Jenny Morgan, (Banstead URC), had attended a Council meeting in this capacity.
- Dr Hack further spoke of connections between the Council and the churches / denominations within the area acknowledging the social assistance they give to the community. She closed by thanking the meeting for inviting her and expressing the wish that the Synod Together meeting would be a success.
- 7/st/13 **Pastoralia**  
The Synod Clerk announced the following who had died since the last Synod Together:
- 7.a/st/13 **Ministers:**  
Revd Betty Agnes Scopes – died 13 September 2013; Revd Peter Hammond - died 12 July 2013 and Revd Prof Robert Crawford - died 1 March 2013.

- 7.b/st/13 **Spouses/widows of Ministers:**  
Mrs Kathleen Melville-Jones – died 4 July 2013 and Mrs Yvonne Boorman – died 14 September 2013.
- 7.c/st/13 Also of note was the death of Mr John Cole, a former BBC political editor, who died on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2013. Mr Cole was a member of the Kingston URC. He had been involved in the production by this Synod, of the video “What is the United Reformed Church”, providing the commentary.
- 8/st/13 **Tellers** The following were unanimously elected to act as tellers: Revd Derek Wales [Chief Teller]; Mr Prince Brown-Engmann; Mrs Eileen Rhodes and Revd Bryn Thomas.
- 9/st/13 **Minutes of Synod Together held on 10 November 2012 at St John’s URC, Orpington.**
- 9.a/st/13 **The Minutes** of the third Synod Together Meeting were agreed as a true record and signed by the Moderator.
- 9.b/st/13 **Matters arising** The meeting accepted that any matters arising from the Minutes were already on the Agenda.
- 10/st/13 **Synod Council Report – Paper A**  
10.a/st/13 The Synod Council Convener, Revd Martyn Coe said that the Council and Synod Trust always sought to be good stewards of Synod’s finances so that resources were available to make Synod priorities realisable. He explained that much of Council’s time had been taken up with financial matters supporting local churches in their mission. Synod Council was bringing a recommendation to make minor changes to structure of the Synod Trust to strengthen good practice and due diligence within the Trust.
- As this was his last report before leaving the Synod for the South Lake Group in North Western Synod, Mr Coe in closing, assured the Synod that he would continue to hold it in his prayers and was confident that the journey of the people of God in Southern Synod will continue for years to come.
- 10.b/st/13 **Southern Synod Trust Arrangements – Paper A1**  
10.b.i/st/13 The Revd Michael Davies, Convener of the Synod Trust Committee explained that the paper described modest changes to the way that Synod Trust matters would be handled in future. There had been two changes to earlier procedures in recent years. The first was the General Assembly decision to remove one tier of the URC structure with the removal of the District Councils. This had involved major revisions within the Synods.
- The second was the Charities Act 2006: Southern Synod had decided, under the restructuring, to make the Synod Council the Trust Board, its members becoming the managing/charity Trustees for the Synod’s assets. A smaller Trust Committee had been set up to handle routine business, reporting back to the Board as necessary. Although this structure worked quite well, there had been concern that two or three major Trust issues had occupied a considerable amount of Synod Council time to the detriment of its fundamental role of piloting the mission strategy of Synod. Also there had been a sense that a significant amount of duplication in the handling of finance and property matters had occurred.
- Under the new proposals, the new Trust Board would comprise of about 12 people – including the Synod Officers and the Conveners of the Finance and Property Committees. It would also be possible to involve up to four people with specialist knowledge/skills. This Board would, of course, keep the Synod Council informed of any major matters which arose.
- In answer to a question from the floor, Mr Davies confirmed that appointments to the Trust Board would be made by the Synod Council acting as the Synod Trust. The following Resolution was put to Synod Together by Mr Davies, seconded by the Synod Clerk:

10.b.ii/st/13. **Resolution**

***“Synod Together notes the proposed changes in arrangements relating to the operation of the URC (Southern Synod) Trust Limited as outlined in Paper A1, encourages Synod Council, the present Trust Board, to implement the changes outlined as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014, and to appoint suitable people as Trustees in accordance with the proposals set out in the paper.”***

The Tellers counted a card vote which was announced as –  
For – 137, Against – 0, Abstentions – 1 and so was carried nem con.

10.c/st/13 **Synod Ministries Sub-Committee Report - Paper A2**

10.c.i/st/13 The Revd Jennifer Millington, Convener of the Committee informed the meeting that the Committee had sent a letter to all Stipendiary ministers seeking their views on changes to the retirement age [from 65 – 68]: all concerns raised in the responses had been addressed.

A paper had also been sent out to all Ministers, Church Secretaries and Pastoral Committees regarding the new URC guidelines on ministerial working hours. Questions as to whether similar guidance should be offered to church secretaries and other church officers had been raised. Ms Millington acknowledged that many in lay leadership positions often worked excessive hours and she would be willing to look into who could address this. She further reported that deployment and scoping issues continue to challenge and the Synod Ministries Committee was looking at ways of supporting the local churches.

Ms Millington told the meeting that Sacred Safer Space training is likely to be mandatory for all Ministers. Information on the training was unlikely to be available until early in 2014.

10.c.ii/st/13 **Safeguarding** Mr White reported that the revised Synod Safeguarding Policy had been accepted by the Synod Ministries Committee. The Policy had been sent to all Churches together with a Local Church Model document that could be used to develop their own policy: all Churches needed to have a policy in place, and to appoint a Synod Safeguarding Officer to co-ordinate the Policy. He asked that any nominations should go to the Synod Clerk. Church policies should be reviewed annually.

Any concerns should be addressed to the Synod Safeguarding link people. Any allegations against a church worker/officer/minister must be referred to the Local Authority’s Designated Officer and their advice followed. In all cases of a known sexual offender being involved in a church, there should be a robust behaviour contract drawn up in partnership with the Synod Safeguarding Link people and the relevant authorities involved with the offender. Nick was thanked for all his work on this matter.

The URC had appointed a Safeguarding Officer Ms Amy Slennett.

The URC Good Practice Policy for Safeguarding [Children and Young People] was being rewritten and should be available early 2014.

Mr White also informed the meeting that the Criminal Records Bureau had been replaced by the Disclosure and Barring Service [DBS]. DBS would give a person a single certificate which would be part of a continuous updating service. Certificates could be solely for working with children or adults or both. These would be provided to the applicant and not to the organisation for whom they worked/volunteered. Further information could be found on the URC website. The URC was looking at making online DBS applications available for URC volunteers.

10.c.iii/st/13 **Resolution:**

***“Synod Together draws the attention of all local churches to the updated Synod Safeguarding Policy and urges them to take all necessary steps to implement the policy.”***

The resolution was passed nem com.

The Convener closed the report urging anyone to contact her with matters that they would wish the Committee to give consideration to, regarding matters on which Synod needed advice, guidance on policy, etc.

10.d/st/13 **Synod Finance – Papers A3 and A4**

10.d.i/st/13 Mr Ian Fleming, the Synod Treasurer explained that following last year's meeting of Synod Together the Finance Committee, with the agreement of Synod Council, had embarked on a consultation with all churches on what they saw as the priorities and the financing of Synod in the future. The Synod/United Areas were assisting in this exercise and it was hoped that all comments would be received by the end of the month. This would allow the Finance Committee to have an informed debate at its January 2014 meeting. Conclusions could then be passed to the Synod Trust. Mr Fleming stated that it had already become obvious that many people did not understand the work that Synod is required to undertake. This he felt was not the fault of churches. He had already responded to some individual points and hoped that there would be time during the spring Synod Together in 2014 to be able to provide further information.

10.d.ii/st/13 **Budget for 2014 and estimates 2015-18 - Annex A to Paper A3**

This budget had been agreed by both the Finance Committee and the Synod Trust. It contained the same level of detail as last year and he hoped the meeting found it helpful, providing greater transparency. All budget items were shown in descending order of cost. The 2014 budget had a projected deficit of £517,000.

Modest projections had been made for the sales of buildings. The most important regular income for Synod arose from investments, which in 2012 amounted to approximately £158,000. Once again the largest item of expenditure related to Synod staff, and the anticipated income would be spent before line 2 of the budget was reached. Estimates had been provided for future budgets up to 2017, but these should be treated as speculative.

Mr Fleming went on to mention salient points within the budget and hoped that the tendency of others to pass costs, previously met from elsewhere, to Synod would cease in future. On a more positive note, it is now predicted that the 2013 accounts will have a surplus of the order of £870,000, instead of the £528,000 deficit projected at last year's Synod Together. The main contribution to this was the sale of another church building.

10.d.iii/st/13 **Resolution**

***“The 2014 General Purposes Budget has been agreed by the Finance Committee and the Synod Trust: Synod Together is asked to endorse it.”***

This was passed nem com.

10.d.iv/st/13 **2012 Accounts – Paper A4**

The paper set out a summary of the accounts for 2012. The categorisation of expenditure had been changed slightly to better reflect the statutory accounts format: this meant figures were not directly comparable to last year's paper. The full audited accounts, having been approved by the Finance Committee and Synod Trust, were now available from the Synod Office. The prior year's figures had been included within the accounts paper as comparatives, and this would be done for the 2013 accounts.

During the year unrestricted Synod funds increased by some £1,312,000. The General Purposes Fund increased by £27,000 to £5,605,000, but only because of an increase in the value of its investments of £259,000. The main expenditure related to grants given to churches for building or mission work. At the beginning of 2012 the estimated budget deficit was £513,000: this was reduced to £232,000 through sales of closed churches.

In 2012, the Manse Fund had a surplus of £832,000 which included an increase in the value of investments of £145,000, leaving the total balance in the fund at year end of £5,347,000. This was held in investments, cash and property holdings.

Mr David Howell asked if a breakdown of the Synod Mission Fund could be provided. Mr Fleming said he would provide these figures to Mr Howell later.

The Treasurer stated that the 2012 accounts had been approved both by the Finance Committee and the Synod Trust, and that the audit had been completed with no reservations. The accounts had been lodged with Companies House and with the Charities Commission. Synod was therefore asked to receive them.

- 10.d.v/st/13 **Resolution**  
**“Synod is asked to receive the accounts for 2012.”**  
 This was passed nem com.

Before finishing the Treasurer thanked churches for their contributions to Ministry and Mission. It was hoped that the contribution from this Synod would remain at about £2,750,000 in 2014. He reminded any churches that have not yet responded on proposed M&M contributions for 2014 to let their Synod Area have a reply as soon as possible. In a similar way he thanked churches for contributing £68,000 in 2012 towards the Ministers’ Pension Fund.

In conclusion he thanked Catherine Kingdom and Simon Harding in the Synod Office for their assistance, patience, and forbearance over during the last year.

- 11/st/13 **Reception of Jubilee Ministers**  
 The following ministers were acknowledged as celebrating special ordination anniversaries:  
 60 years - Revd Howard John  
 50 years - Revds Alistair Hutcheson, Peter Scotland, Peter Barker  
 35 years - Revd Andrew Lorimer  
 30 years – Revds David Bedford, Ana Gobledale and Michael Hensman.

- 12/st/13 **Welcome to Reigate Park Church** – Tina Papworth, Church Secretary, officially welcomed all to Reigate Park Church and informed the meeting of the arrangements for provisions for lunch.

During the lunch break the Revd David Bedford did a presentation on Retired Ministers’ Housing.

## THE AFTERNOON SESSION

- 13/st/13 **Introduction of new Ministers, Candidates & Students, Anniversaries, Thanks & Farewells.**  
 13.a/st/13 **Central Sussex United Area** - There were no introductions.
- 13.a.i/st/13 **East Kent Synod Area** - The Area Leader the Revd David Bedford presented to the Moderator:  
 The Revd Dr Alan Spence inducted to The Vale & Sandwich URCS and as strategic minister for the Sandwich & Thanet Cluster.
- 13.a.ii/st/13 **South London Synod Area** - Mr Alistair Wilson, the Area Administrator presented:
- 1) The Revd Helen Warmington ordained in September to Bromley & Trinity, Bromley URCS.
  - 2) The Revd Louise Polhill, a newly ordained Baptist Minister, inducted to The Grove Centre in Sydenham, London.
  - 3) The Revd Robert Draycott a Baptist minister, has become the Interim Minister to Eltham URC.
  - 4) Revd Bryn Thomas who has oversight of Charlton URC.
  - 5) Mrs Hilary Miles, who is stepping down as Convener of South London Synod Area Pastoral Committee East.
  - 6) The Revd Susan Henderson, who retires at the end of the year from Sanderstead URC.

- 7) The Revds Dr David Dickenson, Methodist minister inducted to Trinity, Sutton and Lynda Russell, Methodist minister to Christ Church URC, Leatherhead were welcomed in their absence.

13.a.iii/st/13 **Surrey & Sussex Synod Area** - The Area Leader the Revd David Skitt presented:

- 1) The Revd Rosemary Shirley, ordained in March as a Non-Stipendiary minister to the Assistant Chaplaincy at Worthing Hospital and URC Chaplaincy Advocate within the churches of the Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust.
- 2) The Revd Martin Hazell inducted in September to The Moat URC, East Grinstead and Ecumenical Officer for Surrey & Sussex Synod Area.

13.a.iv/st/13 **South West Sussex United Area** - The Synod Clerk presented:

The Revd Kavula John, Methodist Superintendent Minister in Bognor Regis.

13.a.v/st/13 **West Kent & East Sussex Synod Area** – Professor Adam Cumming, the Area Leader presented:

The Revd Andrew Royal, inducted to Maidstone URC and Ecumenical Officer to West Kent & East Sussex Synod Area.

13.a.vi/st/13 **Candidates & Students** - Mr Stuart Dew, Convener of the Committee reported to the meeting that there were no new students to be introduced. One person however was attending the Assessment Conference and the Committee were due to interview four other candidates.

13.a.vii/st/13 **Ministers who left the Synod** - The Synod Clerk mentioned

- 1) The Revd Peter Clark, Minister to the North Kent URC Group and Ecumenical Officer for West Kent & East Sussex Synod Area, who had moved to Bridport & Dorchester in Wessex.
- 2) The Revd Diana Farquhar, who was a non-stipendiary minister, has moved to Mersey Synod where she is to train, at Northern College, to be a stipendiary minister.

13.a.viii/st/13 **Retired Ministers** – The following ministers, who had retired since the last meeting were acknowledged, although none of them were present:

- 1) The Revd Charles Martin from Lindfield & Balcombe URCS to Eastern Synod.
- 2) The Revd Martin Camroux from Trinity UM, Sutton to Eastern Synod.
- 3) The Revd Barbara Exley from St Paul's, Croydon to Mersey Synod.
- 4) The Revd Jenny Morgan from Banstead URC but remains within Southern Synod.

13.b/st/13 **Thanks** – The Synod Clerk read a citation about all the work Mrs Glenys Sibley had done for Synod as Synod Office secretary before her retirement in March 2013, and then presented her to the Moderator. It was noted that Glenys had worked at Southern Synod Office from July 2002 until her retirement, living through the restructuring of Synod, with major changes in administration. Glenys had been the first person that many spoke to or met at Synod. The Moderator gave Glenys a gift which came from her friends in Synod – both individuals and churches. Glenys thanked everyone.

13.c/st/13 **Thanks & Farewell** – The Moderator spoke about the Revd Martyn Coe and his work as Convener of Synod Council and as Minister in Greenwich, London: he had received a call to the South Lake Group in North Western Synod and was leaving Synod at the end of December. As Martyn had one more Synod Council meeting to chair and plans are in place to present him with a gift at the last meeting, the Moderator, on behalf of all in the Synod expressed warm appreciation to Martyn for all he had done and wished him well in his new pastorate.

- 14/st/13 **Theme Presentation: “Making Connections” by the Revd Roberta Rominger, URC General Secretary**  
Mrs Rominger confirmed that she and the members of the General Secretary Review Group had agreed that she would not be reappointed as URC General Secretary for a second term. She fully supported the decision as this was a time of major restructuring and it would be good to have a new perspective on the United Reformed Church as a whole. She did however ask for prayers as she looked to her future ministry.
- Mrs Rominger turned to the theme of her presentation – “Making Connections”. Notes of her inspiring presentation have been attached as an appendix.
- 15/st/13 **Synod Clerk’s items**  
15.a/st/13 **Synod Nomination Committee Report - Paper B** [which had been tabled].  
This contained the names of people that the Committee had approached and who had agreed to take on various roles within and outside the Synod. The meeting was asked to endorse the following:
- Synod Council Convener - Revd Andrew Mills
  - South London Synod Area Pastoral Committee East Convener - Revd Terry S Sparks
  - West Kent & East Sussex Synod Area Pastoral Committee Co-Conveners -  
Revs Bob & Karen Street
  - Candidates and Students Committee Secretary - Mrs Linda Richards
  - Deployment Group Secretary - Mr Nick Foulger
  - Kent Workplace Mission Trustees - Mr Richard Blackwell & Mr Alex Cameron
  - Listed Buildings Advisory Committee Member - Ms Sarah Freeman
  - Thamesmead Christian Community Ltd Board Trustee (Synod) - Mr Alistair Wilson
  - Rural Advocate - Revd Jim Thorneycroft
- 15.a.i/st/13 **Resolution**  
**“Synod Together affirms those appointed to serve in the Synod and United Areas and approves the appointment of those nominated to serve in other roles within and outside the Synod and Denomination.”**  
The resolution was carried nem com.
- 15.a.ii/st/13 The Synod Clerk drew members attention to the list of remaining posts for which Synod representatives were still being sought and asked for anyone to contact him with nominations.
- 15.a.iii/st/13 **2014 General Assembly Synod Representatives - Paper C** [which had been tabled].  
This listed the nominations so far received of Southern Synod representatives at the 2014 General Assembly [3-6 July in Cardiff]. The Synod Clerk stressed that Synod Council had discussed how to make the representation more strategic, keeping a balance with new people, but ensuring, partly for reasons of continuity, that the full work and knowledge of the Synod was represented. Working on behalf of Synod Together, the following allocation has been agreed by Synod Council:
- Mission Council Reps (3); Synod Council Convener (1); Ministries Committee Convener or alternate (1); Pastoral Committee Conveners or alternate - one rep each (8); Finance Committee Convener or alternate (1)
- Area and Youth reps:-** Central Sussex United Area (3); East Kent Synod Area (3); South London Synod Area (4); Surrey & Sussex Synod Area (3); South West Sussex United Area (1); West Kent & East Sussex Synod Area (2); Under 26 / Fury (2)
- The following are those nominated:  
**Mission Council - Synod Reps (3)**  
Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor ; Revd John Gordon; Mr Alistair Wilson

**Synod & United Areas:****Central Sussex United Area (4)**

Revd Howard John; Revd David Yule; Revd Jenny Yule; Mrs Jenny John

**South London Synod Area (6)**

Revd Dominic Grant; Mr Frank Liddell; Ms Grace Marriott; Revd Kristin Ofstad;  
Revd Sue Powell; Revd Raymond Singh

**Surrey & Sussex Synod Area (5)**

Revd Bridget Banks; Mr Ian Fletcher; Revd John Joseph; Revd Kim Plumpton

**South West Sussex United Area (2)**

Revd Bruce Alinson

**West Kent & East Sussex Synod Area (3)**

Revd Andrew Mills; Mr Guy Morfett

**Under 26 / Fury (2)**

Katie Steel (Christ Church, Swanley); Alex Jeffs (Lindfield URC)

15.a.iv/st/13 **Resolution**

*“Synod Together approves the names of those nominated and authorises Synod Council and/or Synod Officers to approve those other names yet to be submitted to the Synod Clerk.”*

This Resolution was passed nem com.

15.a.v/st/13 **Nominations for Moderators of General Assembly 2016-18**

The Synod Clerk explained that our Synod had been invited to submit two names: 1) a Minister of Word and Sacraments, or a Church Related Community Worker; and 2) an Elder. General Assembly 2014 will elect one person from each of these categories to work together as Moderators. The General Secretary would be grateful if we could forward nominations to her as soon as possible and no later than 31<sup>st</sup> March. Nominations should first go to the Synod Clerk by mid-March 2014 at the latest. Consent from those nominated is not needed beforehand as the Synod Clerk will write to them to seek it before their names go forward.

The Synod Clerk reminded Synod that Mr John G Ellis, the 2012 nominee from Southern Synod was elected and is presently serving as Lay Moderator (2013-2016).

15.a.vi/st/13 **Resolution:**

*“Synod Together authorises Synod Council to approve nominations for Moderators of General Assembly 2016-18 before submission to the General Secretary.”*

This Resolution was passed nem com.

15.a.vii/st/13 The Revd Andrew Mills expressed the concern of many that there will not be a print version of the URC 2014 Yearbook, but instead to only have it available on disc. He stated that a third of the Church Treasurers in West Kent & East Sussex Synod Area did not have e-mails and that this would create a disconnectedness for many. The Revd Michael Davies undertook to confirm on behalf of Synod that printed copies would be available.

15.b/st/13 **Dates for Synod Together meetings in 2014.**

The Synod Clerk explained that because of the 2014 General Assembly there would be two meetings in 2014:

- 1) Half-day Pre-General Assembly: Saturday 14 June 2013, 10.30am to 1.30pm at a venue to be advised. All those nominated to represent Southern Synod will be required to attend.
- 2) The Full day Annual Synod Together would be held on Saturday 8 November 2014, 10.30am to 4.30pm at a venue to be advised.

- 16/st/13     **Good News Stories** – Before the Meeting, 11 churches had suggested Good News stories which could be shared.
- 16.a/st/13    Stories were shared from Eastwick Road Church [Bookham URC]; St John’s URC, Orpington; Gillingham URC and New Malden URC.
- 16.a.i/st/13   Martin Hayward, the Synod Mission Officer, said the Good News stories had shown how Synod support church ventures that go beyond the Church and into the wider community. He gave details of the New Growth Fund, available for 3 years, which gives grants of up to £5,000. He also gave details of the Synod Mission Fund which can be found on the Synod website.
- 17/st/13     **Vote of thanks**  
 The Synod Clerk thanked the following for their contribution to Synod Together :  
 - Revd George Watt, Mrs Wendy Hopkins (who served on the Synod Planning Group), Mrs Tina Papworth (the Church Secretary); Mr Peter Mercer (the driver who provided shuttle service); and the first aiders, caterers and all the members of Reigate Park Church for their hard work and hospitality;  
 - the Mayor of Reigate & Banstead, Councillor Dr Lynne Hack.  
 - the Revd Roberta Rominger, URC General Secretary, for her thought provoking presentation on theme “Making Connections”.  
 - the IT team - Richard Westbrook, Martin Hayes and Neil Percival - for all their help and input every year.  
 - Mr Nick White and the Revd Ana Gobledale and the Synod Children’s & Youth Work Committee Executive and the young people for a successful Youth event, and all Synod Committee Conveners for their Reports and various inputs.  
 - Synod Office staff who helped with the administrative preparations for the Synod Meeting.  
 - the Moderator for her chairmanship and control of discussions, debates and comments.  
 - God our Father, without whose blessings and guidance all that was planned could not have been done. To His name alone be the glory.
- 18/st/13     **Closing Worship** There being no other business the Moderator led Synod Together in closing worship, again on the theme of “Making Connections” with a reading from 1 John 3 v 16-20 and the story of “God’s Dream” by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton Abrams.
- 19/st/13     At 4:23 pm the Moderator declared the Synod Together closed until it meets again in 2014 for a pre-General Assembly meeting on Saturday 14 June 2014, 10.30am to 1.30pm at a venue to be announced and then for a full Synod Together on Saturday 8 November 2013, 10.30am to 1.30pm at a venue to be announced.

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## APPENDIX

**“Making Connections”****Presentation by Revd Roberta Rominger, General Secretary, URC  
on the theme of the Synod Together Meeting.**

There was concern at the sudden loss of many things which the URC had done as a whole – an annual General Assembly, the tier of District Councils, monthly mailings sharing news, and *Reform* magazine no longer being solely a URC publication.

With the demise of Districts, there was a struggle to ensure that pastoral care was given to retired ministers and widows - a feeling that Synod at the centre was remote. These changes had made people feel insular, and not happy with the demands for resources coming from the Centre. There was however good news: there were now Synod Areas; *Reform* magazine had a digest specifically for URC news, a new website had been created, and there were the new Local Mission and Ministerial Reviews.

By the end of the presentation, it was hoped that people would agree there was still fellowship, support and an intimate mutual oversight, and that the URC still united to take action as a whole.

***Why bother with connections?***

Lots of people consider themselves to be on a spiritual journey, but they fear that institutionalisation and the day to day administrative cares kills the spirit, which should be personal and free. However, the reason we worship together is because we worship a God of relationship. We believe in the trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three faces of our one God that cannot be separated out. Nevertheless, as we reflect on how God has dealt with us, we are aware of the otherness of the Creator, the God-with-us in Jesus, and the God active in our midst in the Holy Spirit. Jesus and his disciples created a community, and we are promised Jesus' presence whenever we are gathered together. We were also left the gift of Holy Communion – sharing in him and the Holy Spirit.

All joined to sing – “Let us build a house and its All our Welcome”, by Marty Haugen,

***We are the body of Christ***

We are stretched and our complacency challenged when we gather around the Word: we know a demanding God is in our midst. Through the tribulations and conflicts of community life, we learn about ourselves, grow and sometimes we suffer, but the calling is to work it out together.

All joined to sing “A Touching Place” by John Bell and Graham Maule.

***Doing things we couldn't do alone***

The benefits of united action could be seen at Easter, when there had been considerable interest in the media on the Report “The Lies we Tell Ourselves” published by the Baptist Church of Great Britain, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church and the URC. The Government took its publication so seriously that the Prime Minister made a statement about it to the House of Commons. During the last week, a letter had appeared in the Financial Times giving robust support to the ‘Living Wage, again signed by a number of Church leaders. Then there was the IF campaign and the vision 2020 which covers many activities provided by church groups – food banks, street pastors, debt counselling, outreach to young and old people, families in need and the lonely. We could all add to this list.

All joined to sing “Community of Christ”, by Shirley Erena Murray.

**“I love to be alone. I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude”  
*Henry David Thoreau, American philosopher, writer and slave abolitionist.***

Of course in a busy life we all need times of solitude, and it is the same of churches too: it is ok to enjoy our own company. However, to build his house of solitude he needed an axe and nails, window panes etc., all made by others. Churches too need to work together. Who trained your minister, published your hymn book, operates payroll and pensions, provides housing for retired ministers, fulfils legal obligations etc? Who holds you accountable and challenges you to be all you can be? Next to this intimate mutual oversight, self-sufficiency looks impoverished. We belong to each other, each church making the whole.

All joined to sing “Brother, Sister, let me serve you.”

### **Belonging together**

Everybody broke up into small groups to discuss the things which annoyed them about the URC/Synod. Eleven themes were raised:-

- Paying for a minister but not getting one:
- Lack of communication:
- Constant re-structuring:
- Lack of Christian stewardship:
- Lack of children and young people:
- Lack of commitment:
- Lack of being prayer centred:
- [The name “URC”?]
- Having no faith in the future:
- [World Church]
- Lack of the Holy Spirit.

All joined to sing “Blessed city, heavenly Salem”

### **The URC**

The URC is a conciliar church: it’s not “them” but “us”. When the URC gather together it is fantastic. Next year’s General Assembly will be streamed on the internet so even if you cannot go to Cardiff you can still watch and be inspired. There are new standing orders so that items can be passed without debate, unless it is needed.

All joined to sing –“How shall I sing that majesty”.

### **Conclusion**

People contributed to a list of Good Things in the URC:-

- The joy of calling a minister:
- Support in illness or personal crisis:
- An informed network of Church Secretaries:
- Ministers’ refresher courses and TLS courses:
- Involvement in food banks and chaplaincies:
- The sense of freedom to travel your own journey with God and to be who and what you are:
- Singing:
- National FURY events and young people moving on to key roles in the church:
- Water in the Desert:
- Special Category ministries.

With this celebration of the United Reformed Church Mrs Rominger thanked Synod for this opportunity to join them and the Moderator thanked her for attending, offering prayers for her at this time of change in her ministry.