

Minutes of the third Synod Together meeting which met at St John's URC, Orpington on Saturday 10 November 2012

The Opening Worship was led by the Revd Jennifer Millington and some of the Children and Youth. The worship acknowledged the theme of the meeting – ***Everybody Welcome: Celebrating 40 years of the URC***. The meeting sung the hymn 'Come and Celebrate' with a new verse 2 written by the Revd Margaret Collins particularly marking the URC 40 years Anniversary. There was further joyful singing, party games which represented sharing the love of God and the different churches which comprise Southern Synod, prayers led by the children and the blowing out of 4 large candles.

Mr Jon Henderson, Church Secretary, welcomed all to St John's and gave Health & Safety notices.

1/st/12 The Synod Children & Youth Development Officer, Mr Nick White, announced that two Churches in Synod had been awarded Child Friendly Church Awards - Lindfield URC and the host church for today's meeting – St John's URC, Orpington. The Moderator congratulated each representative group including young people.

2/st/12 The Moderator welcomed everyone and read out the Constitution of the meeting.

3/st/12 **Synod Roll** The Synod Clerk placed the roll on the table, informing the meeting that it comprised 116 ordained ministers, 164 lay members, 14 observers, 77 retired ministers, 5 students and 6 ecumenical representatives.

4/st/12 **Present** The Moderator presided over the Synod Together meeting which comprised 52 ordained ministers; 89 lay members; 3 retired ministers, 6 observers, 1 student, 2 FURY representatives and 2 local ecumenical guests.

5/st/12 **Apologies** were received from 17 serving ministers; 20 lay members; and 3 retired ministers.
The Synod Clerk led in prayers for those who could not attend.

6/st/12 **Welcome to Ecumenical Guests** The Synod Clerk presented The Revd Brian McHenry who is the vicar of All Saints Parish Church, Orpington and Mr Nelson Pallister, the Vice President of Churches Together in Orpington to the Moderator who thanked them for attending the Synod Together.

7/st/12 **Tellers** The following were unanimously elected to act as tellers: Revd Peter Scotland [Chief Teller]; Mr Ken Meekison; Mrs Helen Warmington and Mrs Sue Wootton.

8/st/12 **Minutes of Synod Together held on 5 November 2011** at Emmanuel URC, Worthing.

8a/st/12 **The Minutes** of the second Synod Together Meeting were agreed as a true record and signed by the Moderator.

- 8b/st/12 **Matters Arising:** The meeting accepted that any matters from the Minutes which required discussion were already on the Agenda.
- 9/st/12 **Synod Council Report – Paper A** was presented by the Convener, the Revd Martyn Coe. Mr Coe opened by making a correction to the paper – on page 2 under the Synod Mission Fund. It states that “The Synod Council has asked the *New Growth Fund* to administer this Fund, but this should readhas asked the *Water in the Desert Group*...
He stated that the Synod Council always carried out its work being mindful of what each member of Synod would say on any item and producing a carefully and prayerfully considered decision.
The meeting accepted the Report nem com.
- 10/st/12 **General Assembly Resolutions – Paper A1** - The Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor, Synod Clerk, presented the paper and reminded all that the General Assembly now meets bi-annually. This year the Assembly had met in July in Scarborough. There were a number of resolutions which had been referred to Synods or to local Churches which are in the General Assembly Records with the accompanying CD which has been sent to each Church.
The General Assembly Resolutions were numbers:
13 – Registration of civil partnerships on religious premises [to be considered by Churches];
15 – Changes to the structure [Synod];
18 – Giving to the Ministry and Mission Fund [Churches];
21 - Synod Financial Safety Net [Synod];
22 - Ministers’ Pension Fund: revision of benefits [Synod];
25 - Ending of full-time stipendiary service [Synod];
28 - Addressing the social impact of poverty and inequality [Synod and Churches];
32 – A Pilots Sunday [Churches] and
34 - The Occupy Movement [Synod and Churches].
- 10i/st/12 **GA Resolution 13 – The registration of civil partnerships on religious premises.**
The Synod Clerk informed the meeting that the Assembly had debated the Resolution long and hard. It was acknowledged by the Assembly that people hold different views on this subject as per the 2007 General Assembly Agreement in which it was accepted that diversity is to be recognised and respected. Resolution 13, which had been agreed by the General Assembly 2012, had put the URC on a different path to other denominations. He stressed that it was an enabling General Assembly Resolution. The Synod Clerk also mentioned that there are Guidelines for local churches wishing to register their premises for civil partnership. These have been posted on the URC website under the “Resources” tab. Firstly, there is a main set of guidelines, a second paper for churches who share their buildings and a third for the trustees of Church buildings (normally the Synod Trust). There is also a liturgy for a civil partnership ceremony. The Synod Clerk further urged churches to read the booklet produced by the Human Sexuality Task Group of the URC *Living with Difference – Deepening Dialogue*, which Synod has already sent to each Church and can also be found on the URC website.

The Moderator stressed that it was up to each Church in Synod to decide whether it wished to register and, if it decided to register its premises, this needed to be done through the Synod Trust to ensure the legal process was correctly followed through.

She stated that the Synod Office would be happy to direct churches to the URC Guidelines for local churches wishing to register.

- 10iia/st/12 **GA Resolution 15 – Changes in structure.** The General Assembly had referred this Resolution to Synods which needed responding to. It concerns changes to the Structure arising from recent amendments to the *Ministerial Disciplinary Process and the Incapacity Procedure*. These were designed to bring the structure in line with the changes that General Assembly & Mission Council had agreed.
- 10iib/st/12 **RESOLUTION: Synod agrees General Assembly Resolution 15 on Changes to the structure.**
A card vote was counted by the tellers and the Synod Clerk reported that the vote was carried nem com.
- 10iic/st/12 The Moderator spoke on **Resolution 25 - Ending of full-time stipendiary service.** General Assembly had agreed that full-time stipendiary service was to end on the month of a minister's 68th birthday although it was still possible to opt to retire at 65 but with a reduced pension. All stipendiary ministers and CRCWs can join the scheme. Synods are asked to urgently put in place pastoral support for ministers, CRCWs and churches affected by these changes. The Moderator therefore suggested that we ask the Synod Ministries Committee to look at ways in which this can be done. The meeting agreed.
- 10iid/st/12 The Moderator spoke on **Resolution 28 – Addressing the social impact on poverty and inequality.** This resolution affirms the work of CRCWs. The Moderator reminded the meeting that Synods and congregations should be encouraged to pay the living wage. She asked the meeting if they wished to ask the Finance committee to look at this. The meeting accepted this suggestion. She further reminded Synod that the resolution challenges Synods and churches to support work which highlights injustice and asked the meeting whether they wished the Synod Church and Society Committee to give Synod a steer on this. The meeting agreed.
- 10iie/st/12 The Moderator spoke on **Resolution 34 – The Occupy Movement.** She explained that this is an international protest movement whose aims and objectives resonate with the gospel of love. She asked the meeting whether they wished the Finance Committee to look at the Synod's Ethical Investment Policy. The meeting agreed.
- 10iii/st/12 **Report on URC Mission Councils – March and October 2012 - Paper A2.**
The Synod Clerk presented the report. Questions were raised regarding the decision that Synod representatives to the 2014 General Assembly, to be held in St David's Hall, Cardiff from Thursday 3 to Sunday 6 July, would have to pay their own travel, accommodation and meals with a £50 daily allowance. The Revd Michael Davies, who is a member of the URC General Assembly Arrangements Committee, explained that this decision had not been taken lightly but with the cut in the national budget there had been no choice. The Revd Kristin Ofstad who had been a minister in Cardiff was able to tell the meeting that there were lots of restaurants of all sorts. She did suggest that the URC should see if the University of Cardiff would be able to assist with accommodation for some if booked in advance. The Moderator commented that it would be hoped that no-one who was asked to represent Synod would feel unable to attend because of financial restraints and stated that Synod would certainly look at ways of supporting attendance.
- 10iv/st/12 At this and other points in the meeting comment was made about the decision to cease the Zero Intolerance Campaign and the decision that material created for this project could not be used. Synod Representatives at Mission Council informed the meeting that this decision had been taken based on legal advice from URC lawyers.
- 10/v/st/12 The Synod Clerk mentioned that our Synod's nominee for the Lay Moderator for General Assembly, Mr John Ellis, was elected Moderator Elect 2013-2016. As Mr Ellis is the URC Honorary Treasurer, a Deputy Treasurer is to be appointed to work

alongside him. The Synod Clerk urged members in the Synod to let him have nominees for the post of URC Deputy Treasurer.

- 11/st/12 Synod Ministries Committee Report Paper B** was presented by the Convener, the Revd Jennifer Millington. She drew out particular items from the Report.
- 11a/st/12 ***Lay Preaching*** - The Revd Jenny Snashall was acclaimed by all present for all she had done in the last seven years for Lay Preachers within Synod, as Commissioner. Her successor Mrs Jenny Sheehan was introduced to the meeting.
- 11b/st/12 ***Local Mission and Ministry Review*** - Mrs Millington called on the Revd Andrew Mills, LMMR Co-ordinator to speak on the Review. Mr Mills stated that, in the summer, the LMMR Planning Group – Convener Mr John Bunker, Dr Graham Campling, Mr Bruce Gill, the Revd Sue Powell and himself had concluded their work. He expressed thanks for all the work the Group had put in to the Synod’s implementation of the Review. LMMRs have started to take place across the Synod. Although slowly at present, it was hoped that they would gain momentum. Andrew reported that he and Martyn Coe had attended the National LMMR meeting and it had been helpful to hear how other Synods were implementing LMMR. They had felt reassured that Southern was making slow but steady headway compared to other Synods. This was in no small way because of careful preparation and clear material which had been produced. LMMR is a process which aims to help each congregation to recognise God’s calling to mission in its area, to find the best use of all forms of ministry – ordained, non-stipendiary, LCLs, CRCWS, lay preachers, eldership, etc. and to fulfil the mission. Someone had said that LMMR is about “us writing our own roadmap”. Andrew went on to speak of the hope that there would be a sharing of resources on these Reviews across Synod/United Areas – sharing and promoting new ideas for mission. Finally, Andrew asked everyone when they collected their Synod bag to ensure that the manilla envelope which contained a letter from the Moderator and himself and LMMR material was handed to the right people – Church Secretaries, LCL and Elders. There were envelopes with similar contents for all Ministers and he asked that these be picked up if a Minister was not in attendance and passed on. It was hoped that each church would be able to offer one volunteer to assist another church in its Review and that this would help that volunteer to support their own church when the LMMR was carried out.
- 11c/st/12 ***Local Church Leaders Advisory Group*** – The Advisory Group which is convened by the Revd Bridget Banks had produced an Order of Service for Commissioning of Local Church Leaders (LCLs). This is available from the Synod/United Area Pastoral Committee Conveners.
- 11ci/st/12 Also a Policy Document regarding the appointment, training and on-going support of LCLs in Southern Synod had been drawn up and had been sent to all LCLs and was also available on the Synod Website. This would be used from January 2013 for all newly commissioned LCLs. The Revd Dr Goldring pointed out it did have some clauses which would help those already commissioned LCLs, in particular regarding continued training.
- 11cii/st/12 **RESOLUTION - *Synod Ministries Committee commends the Southern Synod Policy on the Call and Care of Local Church Leaders within the Synod and asks Synod Together to accept this as a Synod Policy Document.***
The resolution was carried nem com.
- 11d/st/12 ***Water in the Desert*** – Mr Martin Hayward, Convener of the Water in the Desert Committee spoke to the report contained in Paper B. He stressed that although applications could still be made for Strategic Category Ministers there was a major

reduction in the number of SCMs available after decisions by the URC Mission Council.

12/st/12 **Finance – Paper C1 and C2** - The Synod Treasurer, Mr Ian Fleming, spoke on Papers C1 the 2013 budget and Paper C2 a summary of the 2011 accounts.

12a/st/12 **The budget for 2013** had been agreed by the Finance Committee & Synod Council. Appendix 1 shows proposed expenditure set out in a single stream in descending order of cost. This was again a deficit budget. He mentioned a suggested an amendment to line 15 (LMMR) deleting *training*. The £10,000 was going to be used to make sure that this new Review had funding for necessary expenditure including training. However it seemed likely that the 2012 deficit would reduce to £100,000 because of the sale of three church buildings – Hartley, Snodland and Bognor Regis. He reminded the meeting that Synod had agreed that monies from certain church buildings would be put in the new Synod Mission Purposes Fund. This may well increase the gap between income and expenditure.

Assured income relies on income from investments which in 2011 amounted to approximately £146,000 and although this was likely to improve in 2013 this was exhausted by the first item of the budget – salaries. Investing the proceeds from the sale of East Sheen would not produce a significant return – possibly around £50,000 to £60,000.

Southern Synod had offered £25,000 for smaller Synods and the necessary funding had been found to support these Synods.

Church House has again asked for further contributions to the Ministers' Pension Fund for another 3 years. The Synod Appeal in 2012 had brought in contributions of £55,000 from Churches and he asked those at the meeting to take back the thanks of Synod for this generosity. For 2013 Synod Council had agreed that churches should be given the opportunity to contribute but for congregations to make a decision on the amount they wished to give. The request for further contributions had been unexpected and so, with the agreement of the Westminster College Appeal, Southern Synod's contribution would be made over 5 years rather than 4 to help reduce budget deficits.

Synod Council is looking critically at what would be essential future Synod activities.

12b/st/12 **MOTIONS - from Paper C1 -**

12bi/st/12 **Motion 1:** *Synod Together approves the 2013 General Purposes Budget which has been agreed by the Finance Committee and Synod Council.*

This motion was carried by a sizeable majority.

12bii/st/12 **Motion 2:** *Following the request from Church House for further contributions to the Ministers' Pension Fund churches should be invited to make a contribution.*

This motion was carried nem com.

12c/st/12 **Paper C2 – Summary of the audited Accounts 2011** – The Synod Treasurer reported that the accounts showed an increase in unrestricted Synod funds by some £664,000 but the General Purposes Fund decreased by £401,000 to £5,578,000. As mentioned in the report on the budget the main expenditure relates to staff costs, then training, grants given to various initiatives and the contribution to inter-Synod Resource Sharing and, as reported earlier, writing off the loan to Rayalaseema and a project within Synod. Income had again come from the sale of a church building of £569,000, and the deficit had reduced from £513,000 to £288,000.

12d/st/12 **RESOLUTION:** *That Synod receives the audited account for 2011.*

The Resolution was carried nem com.

- 12e/st/12 **Ministry & Mission** – The Synod Treasurer passed on the thanks of Church House for all the contributions received. Without these the Church would not function. It is likely that the Synod's contributions in 2013 will decrease to about £2,750,000 – although the final figure is not known. To date some £1.42million has been pledged. Mr Fleming reminded any church which had not responded to the request for pledges to respond to its Synod/United Area Treasurer as soon as possible.
- 12f/st/12 Finally, the Synod Treasurer expressed his thanks to Mrs Catherine Kingdom and Mr Simon Harding for their assistance, patience and forbearance during another extremely busy year. It was acknowledged that Mrs Kingdom had also been involved in much additional Trust work and how invaluable her knowledge and experience had been. It was agreed, at the suggestion of the Moderator, that a letter of grateful thanks should be sent to Mrs Kingdom.
- 12g/st/12 There were questions from the floor on the following: the fact that yet again the budget was a deficit. There were questions asked on the actual value of investments and property held by Synod. The Synod Treasurer agreed to look at the possibility of being able to report to Synod Together a clear idea of the Synod's assets. It was suggested that such information may be available from work on valuing the Ministers' Pension Fund. There were questions on Ministry and Mission contributions and how hard it was to find this money. It was pointed out that this money was the way that the Church could pay for ministry and all the other activities.
- 13/st/12 Mr Jon Henderson, Church Secretary for St John's, Orpington gave directions for lunch.
- 14/st/12 During lunch Mrs Christine Thompson showed a DVD on the 20th Anniversary of Commitment for Life.
- 15/st/12 **Introduction of new Ministers, Candidates and Students, thanks and farewells, Anniversaries and Pastoralia.**
Those who were present were presented to the Moderator and mentioned where not in attendance.
- 15i/st/12 ***Ministers who have left or are leaving Synod*** – Introduced to the Moderator were the Revds Andrew Berry who was retiring at the end of November and Terry Sparks who has taken up a new post as Chaplain to Princess Royal Hospital, Bromley, having resigned from Widmore Road, Bromley and Bruce Stuart who is due to retire in February 2013. Those not in attendance but mentioned were the Revds John Cook, now in ministry in East Midlands Synod; George Gibson who has retired to Southampton; Philip Osborn who has retired to Jersey; David Sturt, a retired minister who has moved to Yorkshire; Ken Thom in a new ministry in Eastern Synod; Diane Farquhar presently at Mersey Synod, Delia Bond a retired minister who has moved to Scotland.
New Ministers – The Revds Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor the Synod Clerk who has been called as the Interim Minister to East Croydon; Bruce Allinson who had moved within the Synod to Pagham URC & Selsey Methodist; David Bedford called to Canterbury St Andrews with Littlebourne and as East Kent Synod Area Leader; Elaine Dunn, who has moved with the Synod to Horsham with Slinfold; Tod Gobledale, Interim Moderator to Sevenoaks URC; Dominic Grant who has moved within Synod to Trinity, Wimbledon; Philip Gray called to St Andrew's, Cheam; Helen Matthews called to the South West London Group and as the Synod URC Urban Churches Minister; Jenny Yule, called as Interim Minister to St Barnabas and The Broadway,

Eastbourne. Not present was Revd Paul Dean called to Cade Road, Centrepiece, Ashford and Kennington and as Synod Area Ecumenical Officer.

The following ministers were mentioned from the Methodists, the Revds Sheila Foreman, called to take pastoral responsibility for Crowborough United/ Methodist Church and the following who were unable to attend John Lines, called to Trinity, Deal; Gordon Newton giving oversight to The Beacon Centre, Dover and Peter Cornish, an Anglican Minister called to Herne Bay.

It was noted that the Revd Derek Stockwell, a retired minister had moved into the Synod.

Pastoralia – The Synod Clerk opened this section by reporting with joy that the Revd Peter McIntosh had asked for the news to be shared that he had recovered from cancer through treatment and especially prayer.

The deaths of the following were announced with sorrow: retired ministers the Revds Alistair Dykes, who died in August; Marie Roe who died in September and Barrie Scopes, Convener of the Church & World Mission Committee, who died in October. It was explained that there would be no funeral for the Revd Scopes as he had left his body to medical science. A thanksgiving service would be held in January 2013.

The Synod Clerk spoke of others who has passed to glory – Ian Chalmers, Convener of the Synod Church & Society Committee; Viv Baker, long serving Church Secretary at Ewell URC; Margaret Grew, Central Sussex United Area who had served as Lay Preaching Co-ordinator; Chris Whittingham, lay preacher and Bert Peters, Church Secretary at Ashburnham and Lay preacher and Ian Buist, Wimbledon a long standing member of Synod and whose thanksgiving service will take place on 15 March 2013.

The Moderator led the Synod meeting in prayer for all.

16/st/12 **Radical Welcome** – Presented by the Revd Fiona Thomas, Secretary for URC Education & Learning, who is also a member in Southern Synod and is Church Secretary at Bellingham URC.

Miss Thomas explained that although it had been decided that the URC would not continue with the Zero Intolerance Campaign, there had been considerable work on whether the material produced for the campaign could be made available for use by churches. Unfortunately, as had been explained earlier, the URC had been advised that the posters could not be used for legal reasons.

She went on to introduce the meeting to the material which had been used in a new Toolkit which would be available from the Revd Martyn Coe at the end of the meeting and could be obtained after the meeting from Synod Office.

After showing slides of how to use the toolkit there was an opportunity for groups to consider various scenarios; what they would need to support them and how to find this in the Toolkit.

The Revd Thomas was thanked for coming to Synod Together.

When the floor was opened for questions there was some annoyance expressed that money had been spent on producing advertising posters and now the Church were telling congregations they could not use them. It was reiterated that this decision had been made by Mission Council on legal advice.

17/st/12 **URC at 40**

The Moderator introduced three stories of things happening in Southern Synod.

17a/st/12 **Everybody Welcome – Local Church Engagement** – The Revd Pauline Sparks and Mrs Hilary Miles shared the work done at Petts Wood URC to make the church open to all.

One of the changes which had been made was that children remained in church – and had an area at the very front of the church. Some had doubted this would work but Mrs Miles stated that it had been an amazing success. Parents were still able to be involved in worship and the children were happy to remain in the church. This had proved a way of all sharing with the youngsters who came to the church.

17b/st/12 ***Fair Isle Project – Mr Daniel Gulacsy*** – a URC Sponsored Ukrainian gap year student spoke of his experiences in the Medway Area. Here there were many immigrants from Eastern European countries within the EU many of whom had language difficulties which he was able to help with. Daniel had also led worship within the churches in the area.

17c/st/12 ***Sharing the views of Young People in the Synod*** – The Synod FURY representative, Miss Eleanor MacIntyre, spoke on behalf of young people in Synod and what they were doing. She asked that all in Synod supported the youth of Synod and asked all to go to the *SouthernSYE.wordpress.com* and leave comments on what they had heard. The meeting was informed that people had twittered immediately.

The floor was opened so that others could share good news stories of projects and wonderful things that were happening within Southern Synod. It became clear that there was a great deal of mission taking place within Synod.

18/st/12 **Synod Clerk's items**

The Synod Clerk, Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor introduced the following:

18a/st/12 ***Church Closures*** – that the District Council had met prior to Synod Together and formally concurred, with sadness, the closure of Lenham URC and Balcombe URC. **RESOLUTION – *Synod records with sadness the closure of Lenham URC on 30 June 2012 and of Balcombe URC on 10 August 2012 and offers thanksgiving for the life and witness of church members over the years.***

This was carried nem com.

18b/st/12 ***Next Synod Together meeting -***

RESOLUTION - *Synod agrees to meet again on Saturday 9th November 2013 at a venue to be advised to members at a future date or on such other date as may be necessary.*

This was carried unanimously.

19/st/12 **Vote of Thanks** - The Synod Clerk expressed thanks to all the members of St John's URC, Orpington for their hard work and hospitality; especially to the minister Jennifer Millington, Mr John Henderson, Church Secretary and all those who had acted as Stewards, cooked and been involved in all the generous hospitality. He thanked Richard, Martin and Neil the IT people; the Synod Youth & Children's Work Committee Executive and the young people for their involvement; Glenys Sibley his secretary for all she had done with the administrative preparations; all our Committee Conveners for their Reports and various inputs; all Church representatives, Ministers and everybody for their attendance. He especially thanked the Moderator for her chairmanship and control of discussions, debates and comments.

And to God, without whose blessings and guidance all that was planned could not have been done so successfully.

20/st/12 There being no other business the Moderator led Synod Together in worship taking as her theme "Life begins at 40" and using the reading from Deuteronomy 17 v7-12 [which had been read at the Inauguration service in 1972].

21/st/12 The Moderator declared the Synod Together closed until it meets again.

The next Annual Synod Together Meeting will be held on **Saturday 9th November 2013** at a venue to be confirmed.

PLEASE NOTE - The venue has since been confirmed to be at Reigate Park URC, Park Lane East, Reigate RH2 8BD.