



The
United
Reformed
Church

**Minutes of the Thirteenth Synod Together Meeting held in
The Humphreys Hall at Caterham School
Harestone Valley Road, Caterham, CR3 6YA
on Saturday 13 October 2018**

Theme: Mental Health and Young People

1. **Arrival and Registration:** Members of Synod Together started arriving at 9:00 am. Registration was done in the Deayton Theatre.
2. **Health & Safety Notices:** At 10:30 am Revd Julian P Thomas, Caterham School Chaplain, welcomed everyone to Caterham and gave Health & Safety notices.
3. **Constitution of Synod Together:** The Synod Moderator, the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith, duly constituted the Synod meeting at 10:33 am.
4. **Welcome address:** Mr Ceri Jones, Head of Caterham School, welcomed everyone to the school and spoke with appreciation of the links between the school and the United Reformed Church and the school's Christian non-conformist ethos. This was characterised by a sense of innovation, independence, integrity, curiosity, courage and belief in ability to change things. Mr Jones invited those present to think about and discuss these characteristics and what is it to be a URC School in the course of the day. The Moderator thanked Mr Jones for his address.
5. **Opening Worship** was provided by the Synod Youth led by Sam Brown at 10:40 am. After singing "Bind us together" Sam invited everyone to play a game of Boggle – some of the answers included body parts which led into the reading from 1 Corinthians 12:12 – 27. The second round of Boggle produced words such as Southern, Yorkshire, Eastern – i.e. Synods of the URC. The third round produced acronyms for some of the Synod Areas and roles within Southern Synod. Sam's challenge was to individuals and churches to feel themselves to be part of the larger body of the URC and to play their part by offering their talents, whatever they might be. Worship concluded by the singing of "Vagabonds".
6. **Child Friendly Church Awards:** In the absence of Tom Hackett, the Synod's Children's and Youth Development Officer (CYDO), the Synod Clerk introduced representatives from Reigate Park URC to receive their "re-award" certificate. The Synod Moderator presented them with the award.
7. **Synod Roll and Apologies for absence**
 - 7.1 **Synod Roll:** The Synod Clerk placed the roll on the table, informed the meeting that it contained a total of 271 voting members comprising 89 active/serving ministers and 138 church representatives, 44 co-opted members and others. In addition, there are 75 Retired ministers and 10 Observers on the roll.
 - 7.2 **Attendance:** The Moderator presided over a total of 135 people according to the signed in register - comprising: 38 active/serving ministers; 66 church representatives; 19 co-opted members, 6 observers and 6 retired ministers;.
 - 7.3 **Apologies** had been received from 13 serving ministers; 27 church representatives; 7 co-opted members; 8 retired ministers.
8. **Pastoralia**
The Synod Clerk advised that Mr Roy Wearing, a former District Treasurer had died since the last Synod Together meeting.
The Synod Clerk led the meeting in a prayer for the deceased and those known to be unwell in the Synod.

9. **Theme Presentation:** Mrs Sarah Griffiths, Caterham School Deputy Head (Pastoral and Wellbeing) was invited to address the meeting. She spoke of her role within the school which included the promotion of wellbeing. She stressed the importance of prevention and early intervention. Nationally, there were now far more instances of help being sought for mental health issues which correlated with a greater awareness. 1 in 10 young people will be diagnosed with a mental health condition.

Funding was inadequate to address this and waiting times were far too long. News items, social media, childhood traumas could all be triggers. The digital era put young people under additional pressure. Schools had a role to play in valuing a child's character and effort more than their academic attainment. Discussion on wellbeing now featured in the school curriculum at Caterham. This is aimed to encourage emotional maturity and personal resilience.

Mrs Griffiths suggested four pillars upon which people thrive for good mental health - feeling secure, being part of a community, having self-efficacy and autonomy, and being authentic. She invited members of Synod to discuss what steps their churches had taken or could take to provide such pillars for young people.

The following two questions were also discussed in small groups:

- 1) To what extent does your church provide these four foundations for good mental health?
- 2) What practical steps can you take to support YP's mental health in your congregations?

Mrs Griffiths mentioned **mhfa** (mental health first aid england) and Open **DOOR** as some of those Groups the church can use to respond by signposting people to.

She concluded with a prayer written by Archbishop Justin Welby for World Mental Health Day: *"If you are waking in the darkness today, this is a reminder: You are loved. You are precious. You have value. Sometimes we need others to believe this for us. I believe it for you today and pray you come to believe it too."*

Her PowerPoint presentation is attached to this Minutes.

10. **Reception of Jubilee Ministers**

Since the last meeting, the following jubilees had been recorded. All had been contacted and congratulated by the Moderator and invited to a celebratory lunch.

- 25 years: Josie Finlayson and Daphne Topple.
- 35 years: David Bedford, Lesley Charlton and Ann Cole.
- 40 years: Ronald Smith and Gordon Palmer.
- 45 years: Geoffrey Collins and Bruce Stuart.

11. **Appointment of Tellers**

The following resolution was passed unanimously :

Resolution 1: Southern Synod Together appoints as Tellers Miss Pamela Tolhurst, as Chief Teller, Martin Hayward, Colin McCracken and Revd Andy Twilley.

11.1 **Traffic lights** were to be operated by Revd Wendy Swan.

12. **Minutes of Synod Together Meeting held on 10 March 2018 at East Croydon URC** The Minutes of the meeting were agreed as a true record and signed by the Moderator.
13. **Matters arising from those minutes:** There were none other than agenda items.
14. **Synod Council Report: (Paper A)** A Report had been prepared by the Moderator and circulated in advance of the meeting.

14.1 Synod Strategy (Paper A1):

The Moderator introduced the proposed strategy and as there were no questions, the following resolution was put and carried unanimously.

Resolution 2: Southern Synod adopts Paper A1 as its strategy over the next five years.

14.2 Southern Synod Lay Presidency and Authorised Elders Guidelines (Paper A2):

What was originally introduced into the Basis of Union as almost an emergency provision for when a minister is not available, has become almost a routine occurrence. This resolution introduces a standard practice across the Synod. The main changes are:

- a) Locally Recognized Lay Preachers are authorised to preside at any church within the Synod which invites them to do so providing they have completed the Sacraments Course successfully.
- b) Authorisation is for 3 years.
- c) Two new categories of ministry have been introduced: Local Church Leaders and Authorised Elders.

The following resolution was put and carried unanimously.

Resolution 3: Southern Synod adopts Paper A2 on Lay Presidency and Authorised Eldership guidelines.

14.3 Southern Synod Policy on Authorised Elders for Lay Presidency at the Sacraments (Paper A3):

Presidency at the Sacraments is not a matter of status or competence but of good order, and might be understood as a pastoral rather than a preaching ministry hence provision for the appointment of Authorised Elders.

However, both General Assembly and the Southern Synod recognise that at times it will not be possible for a Minister to preside at the Sacraments. Such occasions fall into two categories:

- 1) Short-notice unavailability.
- 2) Unavailability recognised ahead of time.
- 3) Each church is asked to appoint a number according to local need (either two or three as a suggested number) to be appointed as Authorised Elders. Some clarification was sought.

The following resolution was put and carried unanimously.

Resolution 4: Southern Synod adopts Paper A3 on Southern Synod Policy on Authorised Elders

14.3 Paper A4 - Southern Synod Local Church Leaders Policy was remaindered to be taken in the afternoon session.

15. Lunch: At 1:00 pm the Meeting was adjourned for lunch. Prior to breaking for lunch, grace was said by the Revd Julian P Thomas.

16. At 2:00 pm the Moderator called Synod Together to order and the afternoon session commenced with **Introduction of new Ministers, Candidates and Students and Thanks.**

The following were introduced and greeted by the Moderator:

16.1 South London Synod Area: Revd Lesley Charlton introduced i) Revd Dr Peter Stevenson convener-elect of the URC's Communications Committee; ii) Revd John Grundy ordained and inducted to St Andrew's, Brockley and St Michael's, New Cross; iii) Revd Alison Smith ordained and inducted to Hayes Free Church and Trinity URC, Bromley; iv) Revd Alison Davies (in absentia) inducted to Emmanuel United Church, Sidcup.

- 16.2 **Surrey and Sussex Synod Area:** Revd George Watt introduced i) Revd Ted Bellingham ordained and inducted to Eastwick Road URC, Bookham; ii) John Bunker secretary to the Sussex Area Pastoral Committee; iii) Revd Jan Hoffmeyer (in absentia) to Leatherhead Methodist Church and Leatherhead URC.
- 16.3 **West Kent and East Sussex Synod Area:** John Ellis introduced Revd Wendy Swan who had been inducted to Capel United Church in Five Oak Green.
- 16.4 **Candidates and Students:** Revd Bill Bowman, recently having taken over as Convener of the Candidates and Students Committee, thanked Stuart Dew, his predecessor, for convening the committee so efficiently. He then introduced Adam Earle, who has started as a student at Westminster College and was greeted by the Moderator.
- 16.5 **Locally Recognised Lay Preachers:** Revd Andy Twilley, the Synod Training and Development Officer introduced two people who had successfully completed the Synod's lay preaching course and an assessed service thereby becoming locally recognised lay preachers - Duncan Wilson and Mike Downing. They were greeted by the Moderator.
- The lay preachers course would be run again in January 2019 and already a good number had registered to take part.
- 16.6 **EM2 Training:** The Moderator greeted Revds Martin Belgrove and Martin Knight who had completed their EM2 training.
- 16.7 **Certificates:** The Moderator presented Ordination certificates to the Revds Ted Bellingham, John Grundy and Alison Smith.

17. Synod Children's and Youth Work Committee Report (Paper D): Mr Graham Purdye spoke to the report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. He thanked Reuben Watt for acting as secretary to the committee in recent months. A replacement was still needed.

- 17.1 Reuben Watt, our Synod's Representative on URC Youth Executive addressed the meeting and said since the last meeting in March he had been very busy representing URC youth. A short video featuring the youth ambassadors at the Greenbelt Festival 2018 was shown. Reuben concluded with a quote encouraging churches to value young people for what they were today, and not just as the church of tomorrow. The Moderator expressed her appreciation of the contribution Reuben had made at General Assembly 2018.
- 17.2 Revd Andrew Willett drew attention to the successful Crossfire Camp and asked whether consideration could be given by the Committee as to its support including the provision of transport to the camp. Graham Purdye invited him to attend a meeting of the Committee for further discussion.

18. Synod Council Report (Paper A) continued:

18.1 Southern Synod Local Church Leaders Policy (Paper A4):

The Moderator paid tribute to those people who were willing to serve as local leaders. The existing policy had been revisited and updated. Four changes were suggested – i) in future only one model of local leadership; ii) appointment process to be conducted by the Candidates and Students Committee; iii) introduction of the same mandatory continuing training as required of ministers of word and sacrament; iv) volunteer agreements to be drawn up (rather than Terms of Settlement).

After some discussion on whether this model was precluding the work of non-stipendiary ministry, requirements of initial training and mandatory training, which were noted by the Moderator, the following resolution was put and passed unanimously.

Resolution 5: Southern Synod adopts the Local Church Leaders Policy with the changes as laid out in Paper A4.

- 18.2 Active ministers:** A definition of an “active minister” had been approved by General Assembly 2018. A list would need to be held by each Synod of those deemed active. This was particularly necessary when mandatory training was involved.
- 18.3 Isolated Members:** A couple of churches within the Synod were sought to act as host churches. Synod Area Pastoral Committees were to be invited to nominate host churches.
- 18.4 People for Mission:** As deployment figures fell, other models for the provision of ministry were being looked at such as Church Related Community Worker for Copleston Centre in Peckham, London, Special Category Ministry for Crossway URC in Elephant & Castle, London, lay female missionary to be based in Kingston and New Malden.
- 18.5 Rayalaseema Diocese, Church of South India:**
The money originally loaned to the Rayalaseema Diocese in 2009 for the building of the Jesus Towers is still lodged with the State Bank of India. Because of the India Government Currency Regulations, the money cannot be returned to Southern Synod and sits in the State Bank of India. Therefore, following a conversation with CWM, Synod Council proposed that Southern Synod gifted the money to CWM to be used for mission projects by churches in South India. CWM will assist in the setting up of an account where the money will be deposited and will advise where the money has been used.

The following resolution was put and passed unanimously:

Resolution 6: Southern Synod proposes that the money currently lodged with the State Bank of India, approximately 1500 Crone, is gifted to CWM for the use of the churches in India.

18.6 Mission Grants

This would be covered in the Treasurer's report.

- 19. Synod Ministries Committee Report (Paper B)** The Revd Bridget Banks, convener of the Committee, presented the report which had previously been circulated. Revd Lesley Charlton expressed concern regarding the lack of ministers who had taken up the provision of level 3 safeguarding training. She was assured that more ministers had taken up the training since the report had been written but there were still some ministers who had not done the training. Mandatory safeguarding training is likely to be introduced nationally.

20. Synod Finance Committee Report:

20.1 2017 Accounts Paper C1: Mr John Denison, Synod Treasurer, reported as follows:

20.1.1 Accounts as at 31st December 2017 – Paper C1:

The Synod Trust's accounts for the year ending 31st December 2017 had been agreed by the Finance Committee, the Synod Trust and the external auditors. They had been signed off by the auditors, Thornton Springer LLP, and the Treasurer on behalf of the Trust.

20.1.2 Income / Expenditure:

Contrary to an expected deficit of £612,000 in the General Purposes Account, the disposal of closed churches and investment income having exceeded budgeted figures, funds received were greater than expenditure resulting in a gain in the General Purposes Fund of £882,000. Owing to the rise in the stock market in 2017 the General Funds had further increased in value by £817,000. This illustrated that setting a budget for the Synod was not an exact science.

20.1.3 Balance Sheet:

During 2017 total unrestricted funds had increased from £21,146,000 to £24,701,000. Within this figure General Purpose Funds were now - £14,271,000, and in the Manse Fund - £10,118,000. Of these funds £22,336,000 were invested in the UK through the Affirmative Common Investment Fund managed by Epworth Investment Management. The Treasurer noted that Epworth together with its parent organisation, the Central

Finance Board of the Methodist Church, aims to hold investments consistent with Christian ethical principles. And that the URC takes a path on investments close to that of the Methodist and Church of England.

The balance sheet showed £2,186,000 held as “bank or cash in hand”. Such amounts were needed due to the uncertainty of demands such as the purchase of a new manse or emergency funds for churches.

The following resolution was put and passed unanimously:

Resolution 7: Southern Synod receives the accounts for 2017.

20.2 Budget 2019 Paper C2:

The 2019 Budget for the General Purposes Fund had been agreed by the Finance Committee at its July meeting and the Synod Trust on 13th September.

20.2.1 Income Budget:

For 2019 a deficit of £486,000 is envisaged. Income relied largely on the sale of properties which was difficult to predict and income from investments the return on which was also difficult to predict.

20.2.2 Expenses Budget:

Total anticipated expenses remained largely unchanged over 2018 at £1,007,000. Staff Costs and Building Grants at £388,000 and £300,000 respectively make up 68% of anticipated expenditure. The Treasurer observed that Southern Synod still had fewer staff proportionately than some other smaller synods.

As in the past, provision had been made in 2019 to assist other synods ((£25,000) under the resource sharing scheme

20.2.3 Grants & Loans:

Once again, the grants and loans scheme of £250,000 had been agreed to assist churches with mission related projects. This fund has been approved by the Finance Committee and the Synod Trust for 2019. The Finance Committee considered this as an important tool in providing assistance to churches. Details of this fund and an application form were to be found in the Synod web site. Any queries were to be addressed to Catherine Kingdom at the Synod Office.

In keeping with good practice, the Synod Trust currently had sufficient reserves to meet expected expenditure levels for approximately ten years in the event that the expected income levels were not obtained. Unlike other synods Southern Synod did not seek a balanced budget nor did it seek contributions from churches within the Synod to bridge the current gap. This was a position which needed to be kept under review and might have to change in the future.

The following resolution was put and passed unanimously:

Resolution 8: Southern Synod supports the 2019 General Purposes Budget as agreed by the Finance Committee and the Synod Trust.

20.3 Ministry & Mission Contributions

The Southern Synod contributions for the 2018 M&M was to be about £2,600,000. Thanks were due to the work of the Synod Areas and to congregations for their continuing support. The M&M contribution for 2019 was expected to be the same as the current year and had been advised to Church House. The letters seeking churches contributions to the 2019 M&M had been sent out. Representatives from those churches that had not yet responded were asked to ensure that replies were sent to their Synod Area as soon as possible.

20.4 Churches Accounts

There were a number of churches that had not provided the Synod Office with their 2017 accounts and indeed some which had not supplied their 2016 and older accounts. Churches were asked to remedy this as soon as possible. The Treasurer noted that Synod was not able to provide grants or loans to churches without up to date accounts. Any church experiencing difficulty in preparing accounts was asked to contact the Synod Office.

20.5 Future Structure of Grants and Loans

A group was currently looking at restructuring and simplifying the Synod grants and loans structure. He asked for patience whilst this complicated process was ongoing. It was hoped to bring recommendations to the March Synod Together meeting. The Group comprised The Moderator, John Denison, John Ellis, David Walters, and Revd Lesley Charlton.

Revd Roger Wood, retired minister, queried the Reserves Policy and suggested a larger sum be invested in mission projects. He proposed that £1,000,000 be put towards mission projects. The Moderator advised that this kind of proposal was exactly in the same spirit as was being adopted by the group charged with restructuring and simplifying grants and loans.

Revd David Bedford warned of the dangers of not investing in local churches.

Martin Hayward, Mission Officer, reminded the meeting that the Southern Synod already made good use of funds available to provide ministry.

Finally, John thanked Catherine Kingdom in the Synod Office for the assistance provided to him and that which she provided to all the churches in our Synod. The Moderator thanked John Denison for his report.

- 21. Synod Property Committee Report:** Mr David Walters, convenor of the Synod Property Committee presented the Report. He spoke about the process of recruiting staff to fill the roles of Property Officer and Property Administrator. Whilst the Synod had been enormously fortunate to find Colin McCracken as Property Officer, it had not been successful so far in recruiting a Property Administrator and he appealed to churches to suggest anyone from their membership who might fulfil this role. Advert will be going out shortly for the Synod Property Administrator post.

- 21.1 Synod Manse Policy: (Paper E)** Mr David Walters, convenor, presented the 3rd edition of the Synod Manse Policy. In his introduction, David said the Policy had already been looked at by several different individuals and committees and he felt that the latest document was clearer and more readable. The agreed standard for new purchases had been upgraded. Energy conservation required equal or better than Band D. Regarding maintenance of manses, further clarification and better definition was provided. The annual manse grant had been increased from £500 to £1,000 per annum. Replacement double glazing for ineffective old double glazing would now be paid for from the Manse fund. Health and Safety issues had been included. Trees with tree preservation orders were now covered by the Manse Fund.

CRCWs (Church Related Community Workers) were included in the Manse Policy.

Revd Andrew Willetts drew attention to his own situation where the manse also served as a church and meeting place.

Alison Lessiter, Church Secretary at Trinity URC, Bromley, expressed her own church's unhappiness about the situation with regard to manses shared by two or three churches in a pastorate. It was explained that any major decision concerning a pastorate manse would require resolutions by each church in the pastorate.

The following Resolution was put and carried with 90 for the resolution and 1 against:

Resolution 9: Southern Synod adopts the 3rd edition of the Manse Policy (Paper E)

22. Synod Clerk's Items:

22.1 URC 2018 General Assembly Matters referred to Synods for consideration (Paper F)

The Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor, Synod Clerk, introduced Paper F describing the matters referred by General Assembly 2018.

- 22.1.1 With a view to returning to an annual General Assembly it had been proposed that to do so would require a significant reduction in attendees. The proposal, therefore, was to reduce the number of synod representatives and for each synod to have an equal number of representatives i.e. 16 for each synod.
- 22.1.2 There was also a proposal to provide more flexibility with regard to the proportions of lay and ordained representatives moving to each synod's representation to be at least a third lay and at least a third ministerial (rather than 50/50).
- 22.1.3 The inclusion of the Synod Moderators in each Synod's allocation meant further flexibility although it was understood that the Synod Moderator would always attend other than in exceptional circumstances.
- 22.1.4 The attendance of the Convener of Pastoral Reference and Welfare was no longer judged to be necessary.

All these changes would require changes to the Structure of the United Reformed Church.

The following changes, sent by the General Secretary, were noted and approved: 1, 2 & 4 unanimously. Regarding change no.3, it was carried but there were 3 votes against.

Change no. 1.

To make the number of synod representatives equal – to be, for the present, sixteen for each synod.

Change no. 2.

To introduce some flexibility to the 50-50 ministerial/lay divide – requiring at least a third of each synod's representation to be ministerial (this term includes CRCWs) and at least a third to be elders or lay.

Change no. 3.

To include the synod moderators in the synod figures above, if their synods so wish, rather than giving them a place in Assembly in their own right.

Change no. 4.

To excuse the Convenor of Pastoral Reference and Welfare from membership of Assembly.

22.2 Resolution about the upper age limit of youth representatives: A drafting error in clause 2. (4)(A)(x) of the Structure was noted and the change to the stated upper age limit of youth representatives to 25, rather than the existing figure of 26, i.e. **to change '26' to '25'** - was accepted and approved.

22.3 Resolution about the promises made by Elders: This matter regarding an addition to the promises made by elders on their ordination, which has been referred to local church meetings, was noted. Local churches had been asked to respond to the URC General Secretary by December 2019.

Additional Question and Answer:

Q. Do you promise as an elder of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, unity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always so far as you are able to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?

A. By the grace of God I do, and all these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.

22.4 **Bluewater Chaplaincy – Kent Workplace Mission:** John Ellis spoke of the need for a new chaplain at Bluewater, a vital role. This was a paid full-time post. He asked for prayers that this post may be filled by the right person.

22.5 **Notices:** 1) A comedy night with Paul Kerensa, a very good Christian comedian, at Heronsgate Primary School Hall, Whinchat Road, SE28 0EW in West Thamesmead on Saturday 27 October at 7.30pm. This is being organised by Revd Andy Willett.

2) The Synod Clerk sought owners for some lost property (from the previous meeting).

3) Revd Nigel Uden, General Assembly Moderator, was to preach at Surrey & Sussex Synod Area Meeting to be held at Crawley URC the following day – Sunday 14th October..

23. Matters from Synod Field Staff:

23.1 **Synod Mission Development Officer:** Mr Martin Hayward introduced a short video - Talking Jesus - and advocated a course to explore evangelism which was to start in 2019. He was willing to come to pastorates and churches by arrangement to deliver the course in 3 sessions.

His PowerPoint Presentation is attached to this Minutes.

23.2 **Synod Training and Development Officer:** The Revd Andy Twilley spoke about “Walking the Way” and the resources on the Synod website which would remain on the website during 2019. In addition, there would be new resources (small booklets produced by the Bible Reading Fellowship) available on 19 July and 18 October (each featuring the 5 Holy Habits). Andrew Roberts, the writer of Holy Habits was due to speak at the Christian Resources Exhibition in Epsom on 17 October.

Stepwise: Leaflets had been sent to church secretaries and the Synod Clerk brought some to the Meeting.

Leaders: Growing Leaders was a course to be run in 2019 by Andy. The course would be suitable for anyone wishing to further and develop their leadership role. Time commitment would be two hours once a month. He invited expressions of interest.

His PowerPoint Presentation is attached to this Minutes.

24. Thank yous

The Synod Clerk expressed his thanks and appreciation to .

- 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.
- Caterham School and its personnel for hosting the meeting.
- Caterham URC for its support and organisation.

- 25. Closing Worship:** The Synod Moderator thanked the Synod Clerk for all his work in organising the Synod Together meeting. She led closing worship starting with the reading from Mark's gospel, 10:46-52, about Jesus' healing of blind Bartimaeus. She stressed the need for good listening. All joined together in saying a prayer after which the hymn "I lift my eyes to the quiet hills" was sung.
- 26. Closing of Synod Together:** At 4.15pm the Moderator declared the Synod Together meeting closed until it meets again in 2019 on Saturday 9 March, 10.30 am to 4:30pm at East Croydon URC or at such other time and place as it may be called together by those charged with the direction of its affairs.
- 27. Refreshments** were enjoyed in the foyer of the Humphreys Hall prior to departure..