

Theme: Endings and Beginnings

1. **Arrival and Registration:** Members of Synod Together started arriving at 9:00 am. Registration was done in the church hall.
2. **Health & Safety Notices:** At 10:25 am Revd George Watt welcomed everyone to Reigate Park and 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 reading was from Genesis 12:1-9 and the theme was "Moving on". The hymn "The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want" was sung.
5. **Synod Roll and Apologies for absence**
 - 5.1 **Synod Roll:** The Synod Clerk placed the roll on the table, informed the meeting that it contained a total of **287** voting members comprising 89 active/serving ministers and 137 church representatives, 61 co-opted members and others.
In addition, there are 72 Retired ministers and 12 regular Observers on the roll.
 - 5.2 **Attendance:** The Moderator presided over a total of **142** people according to the signed in register - comprising: 47 active/serving ministers; 76 church representatives and co-opted members; 14 observers and 5 retired ministers;.
 - 5.3 **Apologies** had been received from 10 active/serving ministers; 16 church representatives; 5 co-opted members; 7 retired ministers.
6. **Pastoralia**

The Synod Clerk advised that the Revd Peter Hatfield had died since the last Synod Together meeting.
The Synod Clerk led the meeting in a prayer for the deceased giving thanks for his life and ministry and for those for whom there was concern in the Synod.
7. **Reception of Jubilee Ministers**

The Moderator named those celebrating special anniversaries, some of whom were present and were greeted by her:

 - 25 years – Revds Susan Marsh, Andrew Sellwood, Rodney Marsh and Alison Davis;
 - 30 years – Revds Craig Bowman, Russell Furley-Smith, Alan Wharton, Andrew Willett, Sally Willett and David Yule;
 - 35 years – Revds Dr Paul Dean, Martin Hazell, Helen Matthews, Jennifer Millington and Gerald Munro;
 - 40 years – Revds David Skitt and Peter Flint;
 - 50 years – Revd Mark Westerman;
 - 55 years – Revds Robert Blows and Frank Jones;
 - 60 years – Revd Michael Davies.

The Moderator presented a certificate on behalf of the URC to Michael Davies for appreciation of 60 years in ministry.
8. **Appointment of Tellers**

The following resolution was passed unanimously :

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| <p>Southern Synod Together appoints as Tellers Revd Peter Flint as Chief Teller, and Miss Pamela Tolhurst, Revd Andy Twilley and Mr Colin McCracken as tellers.</p> |
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If required, **traffic lights** were to be operated by the Revd Alex Mabbs.

9. **Minutes of Synod Together Meeting held on 9 March 2019 at East Croydon URC.**
The Minutes of the meeting were agreed as a true record and signed by the Moderator.

10. **Matters arising from those minutes:**

10.1 Synod Strategy [minute 11.1]

The Moderator advised that Synod Council was seeking ways to implement the strategy agreed at the last Synod Together meeting.

10.2 Isolated Members [minute 11.4]

Synod Council had agreed that St Paul's URC South Croydon, Christ Church (URC) Petts Wood and Emmanuel (United Church) Royal Tunbridge Wells had been selected as churches for isolated members.

11. **Synod Council Report: [Paper A]**

A Report had been prepared by the Moderator and circulated in advance of the meeting. The Moderator emphasised that the Synod Council continued to seek ways to be transformed by the Gospel.

Deployment Strategy: Work had continued on deployment strategy with a small task group being charged with taking this forward.

Partnering with the Presbyterian Church of Korea: The partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) continued to be pursued. It had been decided to draw a line under the relationship with the Rayalaseema Diocese of the Church of South India and to concentrate on the PCK. The Moderator brought the following resolution:

Resolution: Synod Together agrees that our URC's Global and Intercultural link be with the Presbyterian Church of Korea.

Synod voted unanimously in favour of the resolution.

Safeguarding Lead: A Safeguarding Officer was about to be employed jointly by Thames North and Southern Synods. Further details would be made available on completion of the usual checks.

11.1 Restructuring Southern Synod's Grants and Loans Structure [Paper B] Mr John Denison introduced the paper, stressing the need for local churches seeking funding to contact the appropriate officer of the Synod in the first instance (prior to submitting an application). A flow chart illustrated the process which would follow on submission of an application. Projects costing less than £20,000 might not need to go to Property Committee but could be dealt with by email by the Synod Property Officer. Whatever the cost, Listed Buildings had to be approved by the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee.

The £2,000 allocation to each local church: The Treasurer asked that if possible individual claims be held in reserve and that a single total claim be made at the end of the year although churches would be able to claim as the cost was incurred if this would lead to financial difficulty. In all cases invoices would have to be provided. He reminded the meeting that the scheme will come into effect in 2020 so no work done in 2019 would be eligible for the scheme. In the case of Listed buildings, churches were advised to contact the Property Officer to check that the work could go ahead.

The Treasurer thanked the Moderator, John Ellis, David Walters and Lesley Charlton for all the work they had put in to designing the scheme.

The following Resolutions were then put:

Resolution 1: Southern Synod adopts the process for the new grants and loans scheme as set out in paper B as from 1st January 2020.

The resolution was passed with 108 votes for and 1 against.

Resolution 2: Southern Synod agrees to the Synod Maintenance Grant as a church grant of £2,000 per annum for 2020 and 2021.

The resolution was passed unanimously.

Resolution 3: Southern Synod requests that a review of both the grants and loans scheme and the annual church grant be reviewed at the Synod Council Meeting in September 2021 reporting to Synod Together in October 2021.

The resolution was passed unanimously.

Resolution 4: Southern Synod thanks the Grants and Loans Task Group namely, the Moderator, John Denison, John Ellis, David Walters and Lesley Charlton for their hard work.

The resolution met with applause.

The Grants and Loans Task Group was then discharged.

- 12. Search for new Moderator:** The Synod Clerk outlined the process to be followed in seeking the next Moderator of Southern Synod. In July The Moderator had advised of her appointment as the new URC Ministries Secretary. A Synod Panel had been appointed to write a new Synod profile, a job role for the new moderator and a person specification. A time line had been identified which would mean that the Synod profile, a job role for the new moderator and a person specification by 25 January 2020, advertisement to appear in February 2020 Reform, deadline for nominations is 1st March 2020, applications to be submitted by 9th April 2020, shortlisting to take place on 24 April 2020, and interviews held on 15 May 2020 with a view to the new moderator formally commencing by 1st September 2020 having been appointed by General Assembly in July 2020. The Synod Clerk was to write to ministers setting out the time line. Nicola's last day as Synod Moderator was Friday 18th October 2019.

How the Synod will work during the vacancy: The Synod Clerk announced that
1) The Revd George Watt had been appointed to give general oversight of the Synod Office and Synod strategy.

2) Revd Bridget Banks had been appointed to attend the Moderators' Meeting and provide pastoral support.

3) Other pastoral matters were to be managed by the Synod Area Pastoral Committee Conveners.

4) The Synod Clerk, John Denison, Bridget Banks and George Watt were to serve as Synod Officers.

5) The Revd Dr Paul Dean, the Synod Ecumenical Development Officer, would attend to ecumenical matters.

6) The Revd Canon Paul Whittle, Eastern Synod Moderator, would provide further support for difficult issues.

7) Revd George Watt would convene the Synod Together meetings.

8) Line managers of Synod staff would offer pastoral support to the staff member.

All of these arrangements would be intimated in writing to local churches after the Synod Meeting.

- 13. Synod Ministries Committee matters [Paper C]:** A report had been circulated prior to the meeting and was received. The Revd Bridget Banks, convener, highlighted the following:

- Non-stipendiary ministry model 4 – the conference in November had been cancelled as no candidates had come forward.
- LICC Learning Hub: A successful initial meeting had taken place and further meetings were in the pipeline.

The Moderator added her thanks to the Ministries Committee and the various Pastoral Committee conveners.

14. Synod Finance Committee matters

14.1 Accounts [Paper E1] John Denison, the Synod Treasurer presented the accounts for 2018 and drew attention to certain items. After discussions, the following Resolution was put:

Resolution: Southern Synod is asked to receive the accounts for 2018.

The resolution was passed unanimously.

14.2 Budget [Paper E.2] John Denison stressed the difficulty in forecasting over a period of 5 years. A deficit of £400,000 was forecast for 2020. This was largely due to an increased provision for emergency repair grants and of course, the provision for the new grants scheme.

The following Resolution was put after discussions:

Resolution: Southern Synod supports the 2020 General Purposes Budget as agreed by the Synod Finance Committee

The resolution was passed unanimously.

John Denison reminded churches of the changing requirements for registering with the Charities Commission and that Catherine Kingdom, Synod Finance Officer, was available to provide guidance.

He also said that good governance remained the responsibility of local churches and some meetings had been held in South London Synod Area to remind ministers, church treasurers and secretaries of their responsibilities. It was hoped that other Synod Areas would take up the offer to run these meetings locally.

John concluded by thanking Catherine Kingdom for her considerable contribution to Synod trust and finance matters.

15. Matters from the Synod Training and Development Officer: The Revd Andy Twilley spoke about “A Plumline for Change” and mentioned the exciting opportunities provided by the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC) course, of the success of the lay preachers course, of new ministers who had recently joined the Synod and yet ... numbers were dropping. He asked whether we had lost sight of what God intended us to be.

He raised four “Why” question:.

- What is God’s “Why” for your church?
- What is the leader’s “why” for your church?
- What is the church members’ “why” for your church?
- What is the outsider’s/the Community’s “why” for your church?

Using a quote from Revd David Watson: “*It is the church which seeks first the Kingdom of God that will experience this constant, fresh effusion of the Spirit’s power. Such a church can never die. If it is willing to go through the painful process of metamorphosis, and to cast off the chrysalis of the structures & trappings that have ceased to be relevant, there is every confidence that something new & beautiful will emerge which will more perfectly & more suitably express the reign of God for today’s world.*” Andy suggested that change lay at the heart of being church.

Belief, a sense of purpose, a strategic plan to fulfil that purpose, and appropriate training resources – these were the things which Andy believed were the things which he was there to provide and he listed a number of upcoming events.

Andy also indicated his willingness to visit local churches.

The Moderator suggested that time be taken to discuss the “why’ question in groups around the café-style tables and feedback be given to Andy. Lively discussions around tables followed.

16. Synod Clerks’ Items:

Photos in Synod profile: Derrick asked permission for a photo to be taken which might be included in the Synod profile. This was done.

16.1 Matters referred to Synods [and local churches] from 2018 General Assembly [Paper D]: Re: adding an extra promise to the ordination vows of our elders

The Moderator invited comments on the additional promise suggested by General Assembly.

Revd George Watt regretted the wordiness of liturgies for such events as the ordination of elders.

Nigel Macdonald felt that the responsibility for spiritual leadership should be the thing given greater emphasis.

Revd Andrew Royal questioned how the promise could be monitored/ enforced. The Moderator indicated that it was the local church meeting which currently dealt with situations such as this.

Revd Sally Willett regretted the insular nature of the promise.

Revd Bernard Fidler explained that the intention was to bring the promises into line with that asked of ministers.

Revd Peter Flint, New Malden and Thames Ditton asked for an amendment to the resolution to include the word local. The Moderator stated that this was a resolution of General Assembly and, as such, the wording could not be altered.

Revd Dominic Grant, Wimbledon agreed on the importance of recognising that elders were being ordained to the URC

Revd Alison Smith agreed that elders promises should be in line with that of the ministers but suggested that the wording of ordination promises of both ministers and elders might be worded differently in a more up to date manner.

The Moderator thanked the meeting for their comments and asked that the Synod Clerk feed back the tenor of the comments to the General Secretary.

16.2 Resolution from Trinity URC, Wimbledon [Paper F]: The Moderator explained that Synod Council had discussed the possible resolution from Trinity URC, Wimbledon, calling for Synod Together to agree the resolution as in Paper F. However, Synod Council did not receive the amended version from the Synod Area in time for its meeting. Because this is such an important issue, rather than put it on hold, and because the theme of next March Synod Together meeting is “One world, God’s world”, Synod Council felt it would be better if Synod and United Areas as well as local churches had the opportunity to discuss it first so that Synod Together could have a fully informed debate at its next meeting in March 2020.

It was mentioned that the South London Synod Area had already held a very fruitful discussion on the resolution.

The revised resolution would be sent out to local churches in due course.

The meeting was also informed that the Synod Trust had been working with its investment managers with the intention of investing in a fossil-free investment fund.

Congratulations were offered to St John’s Marsh Green who had achieved gold Eco-church status. It was the first church in the URC to do so.

As part of the exploration of “One World, God’s World” theme, Hannah Jones, past Moderator of URC Youth Assembly, who had recently been Southern Synod’s representative on the URC’s visit to Israel/Palestine, would share her experience with Synod Together in March 2020.

16.3 Synod Property Administrator post: The Synod Clerk announced that Mr Jonathan Redman, Synod Property Administrator had resigned for personal reasons and the post was soon to be advertised.

17. Synod Children’s and Youth Work Committee matters [Paper G] : A report had been circulated prior to the meeting. Tom Hackett, Synod Children’s and Youth Development Officer (CYDO), who presented the Report on behalf of the Convenor emphasised the need for more members of the committee. Reuben Watt, Moderator-Elect of URC Youth Assembly spoke of the need for greater representation of the 20s – 40 age group and brought the following resolution:

Resolution:

The Southern Synod of the United Reformed Church:

- a) recognises the importance of the voice of young people to the URC at all levels throughout the United Reformed Church, and commits itself to aiding this wherever possible;
- b) commits to ensure that the Southern Synod Youth Representative, or equivalent, attends General Assembly, either as one of our young person quota or in a capacity as a synod post holder.
- c) will make every effort to send at least one person aged between 20-40, in addition to the prescribed places for under 26s.

All three resolutions were carried unanimously.

It was noted that the resolutions included the words “wherever possible”.

17.1 Friends on Faith Adventures. Tom Hackett, (CYDO), went on to say that in conjunction with Pilots, a new programme was to be launched aimed at children aged 5 – 11. For those signing up to the programme, activities and resources were provided in a pack. On each session there would be a Walking the Way challenge. The programme was already being trialled and would be launched in January 2020. Cost was £110 although for groups signing up in January this would be subsidised and would be reduced to £50. After the first year, there would be an affiliation fee of £4 per child. Ongoing support would be provided.

Tom also promoted the **Youth Assembly in January 2020** for which Synod was prepared to cover the costs subject to early signing up.

Crossfire Camp would be held over the May 2020 Bank Holiday with a camp for older members being held in November. Further information from Tom.

18. **Martin Hayward, Synod Mission Development Officer**, spoke of the churches he had visited which had been willing to change, inspiring growth. He reminded the meeting of the funding which had been provided to local churches for mission projects during the time he had served as Mission Officer. He asked that churches use the resources offered by Synod through the staff – Tom Hackett, Andy Twilley, Colin McCracken and himself all of whom were willing to visit and advise local churches.
19. **Thank You:** 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.
 - Reigate Park Church and its personnel for hosting the meeting.
20. **Welcome to Reigate Park United Reformed Church and directions for lunch:** Mrs Susan Knight, Local Church Leader at Reigate Park URC welcomed everyone to Reigate Park and gave a short history of the church. Following directions for lunch, she said Grace.
21. **Break for lunch:** At 1:15 pm the Meeting was adjourned for lunch.
22. At 2:15 pm the Moderator called Synod Together to order and the afternoon session commenced with **Introduction of new Ministers and appointees.**

The following were introduced and greeted by the Moderator:

- i) **Central Sussex United Area:** Revd Memona Shahbaz ordained and inducted to the Eastbourne churches.
- ii) **East Kent Synod Area:** Revd Bernard Fidler, new Synod Area Leader
- iii) **South London Synod Area:** Revd Lesley Charlton introduced Revd Bill Bowman, who retired from Emmanuel West Wickham and Elmers End Free Church; Revd Dr Jun Soo Park from the Presbyterian Church of Korea soon to be inducted to St Andrew’s, Balham, with Synod Area directed work; Revd Stephen Lewis, inducted to Hampton Hill and Twickenham and Synod Area directed work; Revd Suk In Lee, who had achieved his PhD;

Revd Jacob Bali, ordained and inducted as Evangelist for South East 1, London based at Crossway Christian Centre at Elephant and Castle, London.

- iv) **Surrey and Sussex Synod Area:** Revd George Watt mentioned Revd Kristin Ofstad who had been inducted to Horsham with Slinfold and Mrs Susan Knight, Local Church Leader to be inducted at Reigate Park in November 2020.
- v) **West Kent and East Sussex Synod Area:** The Synod Clerk, covering for the Area Leader Mr John Ellis introduced the Revd Terry Jin, who was inducted to Bexhill-on-Sea with Synod Area directed work and the Revd Dr George Kalu, who was inducted to Christ Church, Swanley with Synod Area directed work.
- vi) **Presentation of Certificates to EM2 Ministers:** The Synod Moderator congratulated the Revds Martin Ferris and Bernard Fidler on their successful completion of the course and presented them with their certificates.
- vii) **Eco-church Award:** Representatives from St John's Marsh Green on attaining gold eco-church status were greeted.

23. There then followed a service of Thanksgiving and Farewell to celebrate the ministry of the Revd Nicola J Furley-Smith as Moderator of Southern Synod:

The Service was presided over by the Synod Clerk, the Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor. The readings were Ecclesiastes 3: 1 – 8 and Luke 9: 1 – 6. Revd Richard Church, URC Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) gave the address on the theme "Today is the new beginning". Tributes to Nicola followed given by Revd Richard Church on behalf of the URC, Revd Stuart Davison, Baptist Regional Minister on behalf of ecumenical friends, Mr David Walters on behalf of Synod Committee Conveners, Reuben Watt on behalf of Synod Children's and Youth Work Committee and Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor on behalf of the Synod.

Gifts (flowers and a cheque for Nicola and a gift for Russell Furley-Smith) were presented.

Nicola responded expressing her sense of call to her next ministry. She spoke of the opportunities and experiences which the role of Synod Moderator had offered her. She thanked all within the Synod who had supported her in her ministry, and those internationally, ecumenically, within the Synod office, fellow Moderators, and of course Russell, Cameron and Ross. She wished everyone love, joy and peace in the next part of their journey.

24. Closing of Synod Together: At 3.55 pm the Moderator declared the Synod Together meeting closed until it meets again on Saturday 14 March 2020, 10.30 am to 4:30 pm 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. The Moderator concluded the meeting with the blessing.

25. Refreshments were enjoyed in the church prior to departure.