



Minutes of the meeting of the Yorkshire Synod of the United Reformed Church held on Saturday 11th March 2023 at Herringthorpe United Reformed Church and via the Zoom Digital Conferencing Platform

1. Welcome

The Clerk offered a welcome as did Revd Matt Stone of Herringthorpe URC.

2. Synod Convened

Synod was convened by the Moderator, Rev Jamie Kissack.

The Moderator then extended a welcome to all who were attending including those attending Synod for the first time.

Synod representatives were reminded of the conventions Synod use in relation to the use of Zoom as a forum

3. Present

There were 68 Lay people, 21 Ministers, 3 Retired Ministers, 1 Lay Pastors representing 52 churches, Yorkshire Synod Youth and Sheffield Teaching Hospitals Trust.

Please note,

Due to the nature of the hybrid element of the proceedings, a full count of those attending via Zoom was unable to be completed.

4. Apologies

Apologies have been received from 6 Ministers, 6 Retired Ministers, 1 Lay Pastor, 16 Lay People.

5. Minutes

The minutes of the October 2022 meeting were presented, were agreed as a true record and were signed by the Moderator.

Synod has not met since the October 2022 meeting.

6. Matters Arising

None

7. Notices

The Clerk gave the notices for the day including the revised paper submitted by the Treasurer.

8. Date and Place of March 2023 meeting

Synod will meet again on the Saturday, 14th October 2023 at Holme URC in Bradford. The Clerk noted that the format has to be finalised, but if we are in need of an evening session as we have this autumn, the time, date and place will be advertised in due course.

The Clerk also churches willing to host Synod to contact him in the usual manner.

9. Worship

Worship was led by the Moderator, who linked it in with the main business of the day, and which included the induction of Mr Daniel Raddings as the Yorkshire Representative to United Reformed Church Youth where he also sits on their executive body.

10. Being a Missional Synod

An Introduction to Synod Forums.

Four dates are being proposed for gatherings around the Synod during the Spring and early Summer.

The Moderator brought Synod's attention to the statement: SYNOD HELPS US TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN MISSION.

Synod was then asked to mark the statement out of 5 and both those in the room and online returned a 3 to 4 out of 5 figure score.

Feedback from the breakout rooms was sought as they were asked What Would Push up the Score?

The responses were as follows:

- Excellent resource in Synod Mission Fund – would a video be a good idea to spread the word
- Increased communication from Synod
- Clarity of message – especially in what we understand mission to mean.
- Increased Partnerships, especially in LEPs etc
- Synod to be more gospel focused. Synod to bring churches together. Also better ecumenical coordination.
- Perception of support in compliance & legal issues (Stainbeck – personal issues).
- Financial support is valued. Resource support from Synod Valued. But how can Synod engage with Churches in mission.
- Streamlined funding resources – one fund leading to simple conversations between Synod & Church. Also need to increase church to church conversations. JK hoping Forums would do this
- Need to be using wider awareness of missional resources eg LYCiG
- Endorsement of Elders & Lay Preachers' initiatives.
- Feeling that fewer people are able to take Synod roles, and to some degree Synod becoming overwhelmed too. Look to improve on that.

The Moderator thanked Synod and assured them that these comments would be fed into the Synod team and utilised during the summers Forums.

11. Mental Health Awareness

The Moderator introduced the event taking place on 27th march 2023, and noted that places were still available.

12. Receiving Resolutions

The Clerk opened this session and reminded Synod of the ways and means by which the business is to be conducted & in particular the Guide to Zoom Etiquette leaflet on the website.

The Clerk moved the following resolutions as it means that the reports submitted may be received and that we can discuss them in their appropriate place.

- **Resolution No 1**
Synod receives the report of its Council.
- **Resolution No 2**
Synod receives the reports from its Committees and Groups as presented in the attached papers where appropriate.
 - Moderator's Report
 - Ministries Committee
 - Safeguarding Committee
 - Treasurer/Financial Resources Committee
 - Listed Buildings Advisory Committee
 - Keld
 - Children & Young People's Committee

The Clerk noted that Convenors of some of these committees are here today and if there are any questions time has been set aside later in the proceedings.

Both Resolutions 1 and 2 were passed unanimously.

13. Wilderness Hub

Mr Dan Morrell, Convenor of the Children and Young People's Committee offered the following :

URC Children had been relaunched at General Assembly 2022 aimed at 0-12s in the church. This has been followed by the launch of a new resource on 1st February 2023 called Faith Adventures for Children Together. it is a weekly based resource open to all, being delivered by a national group and is available now. For more info speak to Dan in Megan's absence. Similarly the national denomination is offering all age resources through the URC website including Holiday Club resources and "Glorious Grandparenting" resources in partnership with Bible Society.

Other activities include – summer courses in August for 15-18 year olds, a Young Adults pilgrimage to Taize, The Greenbelt Festival between 24th and 28th August where Volunteers are sought to help 12-17 years group.

URC Youth Assembly is asking all Synods to strongly encourage a quiet space in church buildings. To help those who feel overwhelmed or want to be in a calm space. For all, not just youth or those with specific mental health needs.

Next Synod Youth forum now 29th April not in March. Publicity being sent out soon.

Wilderness Hub – Expanding on the report, Wilderness resources have been given to all Youth & children workers in Yorkshire Synod. The committee is looking to plant Enablers around Synod in existing churches. Some will be supporting existing roles and some will be doing the direct engagement. The plan is to plant five in total and will form a team centred on the work of our Children and Young Peoples Practitioner, Megan Tillbrook. In effect this strengthens Synod's partnering with local churches.

Therefore Mr Morrell moved

- **Resolution No 3**

Synod wholeheartedly commends and blesses the WILDERNESS Hub as a future model of ministry with children and young people in Yorkshire Synod, and asks the CYP Committee, alongside other relevant groups, to continue to pioneer and champion this project.

The Resolution passed unanimously.

14. Pre-Lunch Announcements

Shown over the lunch break was a film update from the Church Life Review Group, which met 27th Feb to 1st March. The link <https://youtu.be/yCYVoOmchHE> will be shared with all church representatives for wider distribution. It's available on the URC's YouTube page, www.youtube.com/URCUK, and also on the home page of the URC website, www.unc.org.uk

15. Grace & Lunch

Grace was offered and Synod was informed that during the afternoon session they would be asked to vote on resolutions that would give us answers to how we move forward as a Missional Synod.

16. Telling It Like It Is

Global & Inter Cultural Ministries Video

Rev Zaidie Orr opened with the background to the Task Group & consultation on Anti-racism. She highlighted how the group were bringing ideas to how we can offer justice, apologies & reparations.

A video was shown and Synod was asked, in breakout groups, the following three questions to think about:

1. How do you respond to the film? Does anything surprise you?
2. To what extent do the issues highlighted resonate with your own local context, or situations you have encountered in other parts of the URC?
3. What practical actions could be taken by the local/wider church to address the issues as part of our commitment to becoming an actively anti-racist Church? What support might be needed to enable the journey?

Rev Orr noted that the Task Group is looking for practical suggestions from Synods to take to task group.

The feedback from the breakout groups included:

- Important to keep on top of these issues within & without the church.
- Never ceasing to be shocked by the stories being told in the video. Praying for a time that these stories no longer need to be told
- For some this is not a surprise. We need to keep working constructively to be anti-racist.
- Thanks to the Task Group. Physical reaction. Need to respond more to these stories. Listen and accept what suggestions are coming from those who are experiencing racism.
- Struck by what white privilege really means.
- We need to hear these stories otherwise the issues get ignored.

- Narrative is changing. We need to be anti-racist rather than being not racist. This means actively seeking justice – walking alongside and not behind.

Finally Rev Orr mentioned that the Task Group will be working on more formal proposals to work actively to being anti racist. Looking to bring further suggestions and resolutions to General Assembly in July 2023.

The Moderator then led Synod in a period of Prayer.

17. Communications Officer

Mr Dan Morrell led the discussion on the proposal to increase the communications potential of Synod and mentioned the fact that communications is secondary to the role of those who are currently putting out information to the Synod.

He noted that Synod does have an IT team and the invitation is there to join them to broaden the scope of what this team can do. Invitation not just to Synod representatives, but to people in representatives' churches.

The IT Team is suggesting the role of a Communications & Digital Lead to look after the Website, Mailing lists and bring together a coherent communications strategy. The plan is that this role ensures that information is targeted more effectively. It would also mean that some of the burden placed on Synod Staff would be removed, not just with online material, but in dealing with printed material as well.

2 resolutions designed to both look to appoint a Digital Communications Lead, but also to encourage churches to engage in this side of the church's life.

As for funding, the Treasurer stated that it would be a modest outlay and that Synod has set aside money in the budget to help with support roles such as this.

After discussion Resolution Four was amended by the proposer and agreed by Synod from *Synod commends the role of Communications and Digital Lead, as part of a wider effort from the synod and its churches to communicate the Good News effectively in an ever-changing digital age* to

- **Resolution No 4**

Synod agrees to the recruitment and appointment of a Communications and Digital Lead, as part of a wider effort from the synod and its churches to communicate the Good News effectively in an ever-changing digital age.

The Resolution passed unanimously.

Mr Dan Morrell then introduced Resolution 5. It was accepted that not all churches can work digitally, but it was recognised that help and advice was always available through the Synod team. Therefore he moved

- **Resolution No 5**

Synod, and especially its local churches, commends digital media as an effective form of outreach and an exciting opportunity for mission, and will make efforts to develop their skills and use, especially digital, communications to reach new people with the Good News of Jesus.

The Resolution passed unanimously.

18. Eco Group Introduction

The Moderator introduced the new Synod Eco Apostles.

The Eco group is very passionate about their work, and time is running out for us to help our environment. Thanks was offered to Alex Jowitt (who remains a member of the Property Committee), but now a small group has been formed.

The Eco Team consists of Ann Bosworth, Rod Morrison, Dan Morrell, Helen Owen, Jane Simmons and Jamie Kissack.

It's first aim is to contact each church in Synod and to encourage Synod across all its facets to be more sensitive to the needs of the environment.

The group is still open for new members to join.

19. Committee Reports

Synod had received Committee reports.

In addition to the reports the following comments were brought to Synods attention from:

The Treasurer – The URC is setting up national fund of £2m to help with utility bills. Other Synods are supplementing it with up to a further £4m. Major use will be to help churches address their energy use, especially in making buildings energy efficient.

Synod Support Scheme – Grants totalling approximately £34000 were offered to 30 churches and other money is being held back for those with later applications.

Warm Spaces – has been successful but the accounting needs tightening up.

Synod Mission Capacity Fund - Not there on Website yet, because of capacity issues at Synod. However the Treasurer is happy to send out a form to those who are interested.

The Safeguarding Officer – Mr Matt Knowles, our Synod Safeguarding Officer has two key areas to highlight:

- Desperately getting training in place to comply. Fresh dates offered including Foundation & Intermediate courses.
- Churches need to get Safeguarding returns in asap. If there is a problem please call the office.

20. Synod Life

The Clerk then addressed Synod with the following business:

As mentioned in Synod Council Report The Clerk brought Synod's attention to a piece of business enacted at the November Assembly Executive. Assembly Executive Paper A1 relates to the addition of extra past Moderators to the General Assembly Roll of members <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Assembly-Executive-2022-A1-Former-Moderators.pdf>. The resolution associated with paper A1 was passed unanimously at Assembly Executive. However as it contains the amendment to the Structure of the URC, Synods have the opportunity to object by passing their own resolution to the effect that this matter "be not proceeded with". Synod Council recommends that this does not happen. However if it be that a resolution to that effect comes from the floor of Synod then Synod will be able to vote accordingly. In either event the Clerk will inform the General Secretariat of the mind of Yorkshire Synod.

No resolution was forthcoming from the floor of Synod.

The Clerk then moved the following resolutions as outlined in the Synod papers.

- **Resolution No 6**
Synod appoints Rev Barry Welch to serve as a Yorkshire Synod's representative to General Assembly Missions Committee and as a member of Synod Council for a three year period until March 2026.
The Resolution passed unanimously.
- **Resolution No 7**
Synod appoints Rev Annette Haigh to serve as a member of the Property Committee for a three year period until March 2026.
The Resolution passed unanimously.
- **Resolution No 8**
Mr Steve Armitage had stood down as a member of the joint Northern/Yorkshire Listed Buildings Advisory Committee. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mr Steve Armitage for his work in this field and wishes him well for the future.
The Resolution passed unanimously.
- **Resolution No 9**
Mr Bill Flett had stood down as a member of the joint Northern/Yorkshire Listed Buildings Advisory Committee. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mr Bill Flett for his work in this field and wishes him well for the future.
The Resolution passed unanimously.

The Clerk indicated that since the papers were distributed he had received extra names to add to the list of those for whom I am asking Synod's agreement to represent Yorkshire Synod at this year's General Assembly. Therefore Resolution 10 reads as originally published with the addition of Mrs Claire Westgarth, Mrs Gillian Chapman and Rev Zaidie Orr to that list.

- **Resolution No 10**
Synod appoints the following to be part of its representation of 16 people to the URC General Assembly meeting to be held between 30th June 2023 and 3rd July 2023: Mr Tim Crossley, Rev Fran Kissack, Rev Jamie Kissack, Mr Daniel Raddings, Katherine Buckland, Megan Westgarth, Ms Lydia Raddings, Mr Dan Morrell, Mrs Claire Westgarth, Mrs Gillian Chapman, Rev Zaidie Orr,
The Resolution passed unanimously.
- **Resolution No 11**
Synod records with sadness the closure of Trinity Church, Keighley (URC/Baptist) on Sunday 28th October 2022. Synod offers thanksgiving for the life and witness of its members over the years since its foundation in the C18th, its work as a pioneer in ecumenism with the Baptist Church from 1970 as Christchurch Keighley and from 1997 with the Knowle Park and Ingrow URCs at its Fell Lane site.
The Resolution passed unanimously.

- **Resolution No 12**

Synod appoints Alan Onslow to serve as a member of the Property Committee for a three year period until March 2026.

The Resolution passed unanimously.

21. Thanks

The Clerk offered thanks to

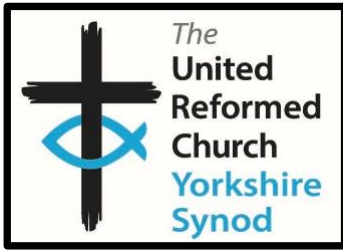
- Rev Jamie Kissack for leading us today
- Those who have participated: Rev Zaidie Orr, Helen Owen & Dan Morrell.
- To Lawrence Heath Moore, Jacob Lowe, Reuben Watt & Dan Morrell and the Herringthorpe URC team for behind the scenes work
- To the Office Staff, Sally, Anne Rachel and Hayley for coping with way Synod has been put together this Spring and for their continuing work for the Synod between meetings
- All who have joined us and have coped with this hybrid way of doing Synod. The Clerk asked representative to take back to your churches not just your impressions of the day but also the information you have received and share it with your congregations. He also asked for feedback as the Synod team need to know what we did well, what needs improving and how we do this kind of meeting in the future.
- To the good folk at Herringthorpe URC for allowing us to use their buildings at short notice and for their hospitality this morning, this lunchtime, and hopefully after we adjourn.

22. Closing Worship including in Memoriam

Closing worship was led by members of Herringthorpe URC and included the Synod's In Memoriam (appended to the minutes).

23. Synod Concluded to meet again on 14th October 2023 at Holme URC, Bradford.

Signed.....Date.....



Yorkshire Synod In Memoriam October 2022 to March 2023

Ministers

Rev'd Marjorie Ayton	Minister	Stanningley 1962-81, West Leeds Team 1977-81 & Armley 1993-97
Rev'd Harold Dixon	Minister	Pickering 1992-1998

Elders

David Hill	Elder	St Andrew's Sheffield
Elaine Clewer	Elder	Trinity Keighley
Dr Ron Sweeney	Elder	The Bridge Church, Otley
Raymond Davison	Deacon/Elder	Lidget Green Congs & URC & Cornerstone Great Horton, Bradford
Heather Norton	Elder	The Michael Church, Sheffield
Ken Hunt	Elder	The Bridge Church, Otley
Marjory Sexton	Elder	Dacre
David Ridgeway	Elder	Dacre
Eileen Carling (104)	Elder	Heath, Halifax

Non-Elders (but who contributed to their church)

Dorothy Perrott	Westfield URC, Wyke
Audrey Rhodes	Heckmondwike URC
Alex Blackband	Bilton Grange URC
Miriam Waters	Halifax Group
Carla Featley	Brackenhall URC
Andrew Hartley	Beeston Hill
Brian Devitt	Idle Upper Chapel