

**Minutes of the meeting of the Yorkshire Synod of the United Reformed Church held on
Saturday 10th March 2018 at Central United Reformed Church, Sheffield.**

1. Welcome

The Rev Zaidie Orr, from the Sheffield Team Ministry welcomed Synod to Sheffield and gave the House Notices.

2. Synod convened

Synod was convened by the Moderator, The Rev Kevin Watson.

3. Greetings

The Rev Kevin Watson greeted everyone and welcomed new representatives and those at Synod for the first time, including The Rev Tim Lowe from St Andrew's, Roundhay, Leeds.

4. Present

There were 45 Lay people, 23 Ministers, 5 Retired Ministers, 2 CRCWs and 1 retired CRCW.

5. Apologies

Apologies were received from 20 Lay people, 9 Ministers and 9 Retired Ministers.

6. Minutes

The minutes of the Synod meeting held on Saturday 14th October 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by The Moderator.

7. Matters Arising

Since the meeting in October, Synod had met on two other occasions

Synod met at 7.45pm on Thursday 26th October 2017 at Cottingley Local Ecumenical Partnership (URC, Methodist and Anglican) for the Commissioning Service for The Rev Tony Lee who is working with the church in the local community and on the Cottingley Estate.

It met again two days later at 2.00pm on Saturday 28th October 2017 at St Andrew's, Roundhay, Leeds, for the induction of The Rev Tim Lowe to St Andrew's.

8. Agenda

Since the Synod papers went to press, information had been received from Church House on the new Data Protection Regulation which would come into effect in May, so there was to be an additional agenda item before the lunch break.

The resolution on the URC Environmental Policy would be taken later than it appeared on the agenda in order that there could be feedback from the young people who were going to look at this issue after lunch.

An additional paper with extra resolutions 17 and 18 had been distributed.

9. Synod Notices

The Clerk asked that Synod representatives to take note of the information they had received with the Synod mailing. In particular there were two flyers per person to take back to churches on the new Stepwise programme.

10. Date and Place of the next Synod meeting

Synod would meet again at 2.00pm on Wednesday 16th May for the induction of The Rev Angela Lawson to Stainland and Holywell Green, Halifax.

It would then meet on Saturday 26th May at 2.00pm for the induction of Rosie Buxton to the CRCW (Church Related Community Work ministry) in Huddersfield.

Synod would also meet in the near future for the induction of The Rev Samantha Sheehan to the Generation Y Special Category Ministry post in Leeds. A date had yet to be arranged.

The usual pattern of meeting on the second Saturday in October and the second Saturday in March would then continue with the meeting in October on Saturday 13th at St Andrew's, Roundhay, Leeds and then next March (2019) meeting on Saturday 9th.

11. Appointment of Tellers

The following were appointed as tellers for this meeting of Synod:

The Rev Simon Copley, The Rev Fran Kissack, The Rev Jamie Kissack and The Rev Zaidie Orr.

12. Opening Worship

The Rev Kevin Watson led the Synod in the opening worship on the theme of Death to Life with a reading from Ephesians 2: v1-10. He drew a parallel with the "dry bones" of the Yorkshire Synod and the new life of resurrection.

13. Dan Morrell

Dan Morrell, the immediate past Moderator of the URC Youth Assembly, speaking about the youth of the URC reminded Synod that he spoke on behalf of a third of the URC. He said he felt his role as Moderator of the Youth Assembly was to serve as an advocate for young people and remind people that they were still there.

Young people needed their voices to be heard. This was so important because young people were not just the church of tomorrow they were the church of today. Jesus Christ blesses children and we should value them too. Young people were worth hearing, he said. They were passionate about the world we lived in and they were passionate about our church. The church was part of their lives and the number of people attending Youth Assembly was increasing each year.

The theme of this year's Youth Assembly had been "We are all invited" – invited to be one in union with Christ. Churches needed to be "intentionally inclusive". Everyone needed an "hello" but not everyone needed to be on a committee. And were not those who did not like singing hymns part of the church? It was now time to express church in a different way.

Sometimes, we became so caught up in looking for God in buildings that we missed the quiet whisper. God will pop up in places that we don't expect in so many different ways.

14. Synod Youth

Stefanie Hoyle, one of the Synod's two Children and Youth Development Practitioners, told Synod that she endorsed everything that Dan had said. Seventy-five percent of those who came to faith did so below the age of 25 and she suggested that Synod should set the Children and Youth budget first.

Megan Tillbrook, the other Children and Youth Development Practitioner, said they continued to travel round the Synod to churches which invited them to talk to ministers and Elders. They had been on the Lead Your Church into Growth course and also to Youth Assembly and they came back inspired having taken a group of 14 young people from the Yorkshire Synod.

They were organising a number of events. These would include a Big Church Gathering on Saturday June 9th at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park which was free and would be for all ages and would include a DIY sculpture challenge. A residential Youth Weekend Away was being planned for September 28th – 30th and there would be a Young Adults Weekend away aimed at 17 to 25 year-olds at Edale from June 29th to July 1st. Later this year there would also be a number of Children's Roadshows.

Megan also referred to the meeting of the five Northerly Synods in January. The children and youth group was arranging an event during the summer of 2019 which would be called URChildren First. Further details would be available later.

15. General Data Protection Regulation

The Clerk showed a PowerPoint presentation received from Church House on the new regulations coming into effect on May 25th. Following the presentation, it was agreed that it would be sent to all churches in both PowerPoint and pdf format.

16. Announcements

These included a reminder from the Trust and Property Secretary, Mrs Sheila Duncan, that those churches which had not already passed the necessary resolutions to enable them to have delegated powers to hire out their premises should now do so as soon as possible. There would be a help desk in the foyer during the lunch break to deal with any questions churches might have. Mrs Val Morrison reminded members of the annual Elders conference at St Andrew's, Roundhay, on April 28th and pointed out that this year the event was open to anyone interested in attending. It was not necessary to be an Elder. Barry Parker spoke about Palestinian Goods and the Fair Trade stall.

17. Lunchtime adjournment

The Rev Kevin Watson said Grace and Synod adjourned for lunch.

18. The Rev Ashley Evans, Synod Evangelist

The Rev Ashley Evans referred to the paper "A Crisis and an Opportunity" which had been circulated at the October Synod meeting and encouraged churches to respond in order to help work out the vision for the future.

He also spoke about the next Lead Your Church into Growth course which would be held at The Hayes, Swanwick in September. The first 20 people to commit to going would get their place at half price. The Synod Development Officer also had a small fund to help defray the cost of attendance.

19. Synod Council Resolutions

A number of resolutions had been recommended to Synod by Synod Council.

Resolution 4:

Synod agrees that the post of Synod Evangelist should be extended for a further five years when the current term ends and that the current post-holder, Rev Ashley Evans, should continue in the post.

The Rev Ashley Evans left the room while the resolution was discussed. The resolution was passed unanimously.

Resolution 5:

Synod agrees that Geraldine Sands is re-appointed as joint Safeguarding Advisor for the Yorkshire and Northern Synods for a further two years on completion of her current term.

The resolution was passed unanimously.

The Synod Development Officer, The Rev Dr James Coleman, spoke to his paper "Inviting Forward" and the following resolution was passed unanimously.

Resolution 6:

1. Synod receives the report on 'Inviting Forward'.

2. *Synod welcomes the introduction of 'Inviting Forward' as our new way of reviewing the life and mission of our churches and encourages congregations to take up the invitation to engage in the process.*
3. *Synod notes the establishment of an appreciative inquiry steering group and agrees that it should have responsibility for developing and monitoring the 'Inviting Forward' programme.*
4. *Synod appoints the Revd Dr James Coleman to serve as convener of the appreciative inquiry steering group for a three-year term to March 2021.*
5. *Synod agrees to change the name CLR (Church Life Review) Co-ordinator to Inviting Forward Co-ordinator.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

20. Stepwise Programme

The Rev Zaidie Orr and The Rev Dr James Coleman presented a short video on the Stepwise Programme which is the URC's new discipleship programme. Stepwise will become available on a phased basis from September 2018, providing participants with a combination of learning opportunities through: a local group, one-to-one sessions with a mentor, project-based activities, and online materials.

21. The Northerly Synods Update

Representatives of the five Northerly Synods met in Newcastle at the end of January. There were five task groups – Information Technology, Children and Youth, Local Leadership, Ministries and Property.

Dan Morrell who was a member of the IT Group said the one of the key things was the establishment of an online presence to provide resources, virtual learning and communication with each other. The other was live streaming and video conferencing using Lifesize video conferencing software. This could avoid the need for people to be travelling to meetings during the evening rush-hour. Church House was investigating this and the Yorkshire Synod already had a Lifesize Licence.

John Rider had been part of the Local Leadership group. This group felt that the use of the term "lay" should be avoided and an alternative term should be used. Mersey Synod had developed pastoral procedures and the group was looking at how this could be adapted for use by all five Synods. They felt there was a need for grants to enable training for local leaders. It was also suggested that there should be a joint website with resources for all five Synods to avoid duplicating five similar sets of material. The group would also continue to look at patterns of leadership that engendered growth.

The Rev Jamie Kissask spoke very briefly about the Ministries group which was looking at ways of responding to the challenge of providing ministry. Synod had already heard of the work of the Children and Youth group in the morning and there was nothing to report from the Property group.

22. The Synod Council Report

The Synod Clerk moved **Resolution 2:**
Synod receives the report of its Council.

The resolution was passed unanimously.

The Rev Alison Micklem raised a concern about the membership of the Synod Clerk Review Group which had been widened to look at other posts and roles which would become vacant in the near future when the current post-holders retired or came to the end of their term. She

was concerned that the current post-holders were members of the group and felt that this was wrong. Others pointed out that the post-holders would not be taking decisions about the future of their roles but that it was essential that they were present as many of them worked in isolation and only they knew what their role involved. Alison agreed that there was a need to know what the post-holders work involved and she accepted a guarantee from the Moderator that her cautionary note had been taken on board.

23. Committee Reports

The Moderator moved **Resolution 3:**

Synod receives the reports from its Committees, Development team and Pilots Officers.

The resolution was passed unanimously

There were no questions for the Committee Convenors but Mrs Val Morrison, Convenor of the Property Committee reminded Synod that the committee was in urgent need of new members. She also pointed out that the committee was holding its meeting in the evenings during the summer to make it easier for other people to attend.

24. The Moderator's Report

The Moderator moved **Resolution 1:**

Synod receives the report of its Moderator

The resolution was passed unanimously.

In addition to his written report, The Moderator said that all Synods were facing the same challenges as Yorkshire and there was no magic wand. The first challenge was the cost of running the URC. Churches often complained that they were not getting out what they were putting in, but they should be asking what could they afford to put in. The situation had been made worse in Yorkshire by relating M&M contributions to scoping and giving relief when a church was without ministry of word and sacrament.

He said a review of M&M contributions was now well overdue but we could not do this without a treasurer. He also pointed out that the Charity Commission takes the view that manse are for housing a Christian minister and not for use as a source of income.

The Synod needs to serve the local church but too many churches had money squirreled away. We were, he said, in a proverbial mess but we have God with us and that is all we need.

25. Changes in Personnel

A number of people had agreed to serve the Synod and the Synod Clerk moved resolutions 8 to 11 en bloc.

Resolution 8:

Synod appoints The Rev Jamie Kissack to serve as convener of the Ministries Committee for a three-year term to March 2021

Resolution 9:

Synod appoints The Rev Tim Lowe and Mr Dan Morrell to serve on the Children and Young People Committee for a three-year term to March 2021.

Resolution 10:

Synod appoints Ms Eryl Ward and Mrs Debra Milnes to serve on the Safeguarding Committee for a four-year term to March 2022.

Resolution 11:

Synod appoints The Rev John Parker to serve on the Ministries Committee to represent retired ministers for a three-year term to March 2021.

The resolutions were passed unanimously.

A number of people were standing down or had come to the end of their term of office. The Clerk moved the following resolutions individually and all were passed unanimously.

Resolution 12:

Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to The Rev Alison Micklem for her services to Synod as Convener of the Ministries Committee.

Resolution No 13:

Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mr Justin Charlesworth for his services to Synod as Synod Treasurer.

Resolution No 14:

Synod wishes to place on records its thanks to Mr Jim Robertson who has faithfully served on the Property Committee for ten years until standing down last November.

Resolution No 15:

Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mr John Neal for his service to Synod over many years as a member of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee since its inception in 1994.

Resolution No 16:

Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mr Derek Thomson for his services to Synod as a member of Synod Council since 2014.

The Clerk then moved the additional resolutions 17 and 18 on the additional paper referred to earlier:

Resolution 17:

Synod thanks Mr Simon Loveitt for his services to the Ministries Committee as the representative for Church Related Community Work Ministry and re-appoints him to serve a second three-year term to March 2021.

Resolution No 18:

Synod appoints the following as Yorkshire members of General Assembly 2018:

*Lay: Katherine Buckland
David Miall
Nsubisi Mwakasungura
Terri Raddings
Chris Reed
Ron Sweeney
Janet Virr
Kathy Webb*

*Ordained: Caroline Andrews
James Coleman
Simon Copley
Fran Kissack
Angela Lawson
Simon Loveitt
Tim Lowe
Justine Wyatt*

26. The United Reformed Church Environmental Policy

Synod returned to the resolutions recommended by Synod Council with discussion of Resolution 7 on the URC Environmental policy. The young people had been discussing this during the day and Stefanie Hoyle reported on their views. They felt that we as Christians should make our voice heard. There was a need for education and guidance. There was also a need to take action and their ideas included meat free days, veggie nights, community clean-ups, recycling and cutting down on plastic use as well as using solar panels and using ethical and fair-trade shops.

The Synod’s Green Apostle, Mrs Alex Jowitt, said nobody was trying to put another millstone round the Synod’s neck. It was another step forward.

The Moderator moved **Resolution 7:**

Synod commends the URC Environment Policy to Synod; for each congregation to determine its current environmental “footprint” or impact and to develop a plan for the coming five years towards a more sustainable future for this Synod, our church and individually.

The resolution was passed with one abstention and none against.

27. In Memoriam

The Moderator remembered in prayer, Ministers and Elders who had died since the last meeting of Synod.

- Michael Sinclair, The Bridge Church, Otley
- Alan Lowe, Christchurch, Ilkley
- Elsie Blackburn, Goole Central Church
- Barbara Hayes, Intake, Doncaster
- June Longbottom, Pudsey
- Margaret Kitchin, St Andrew’s, Rounday
- Ralph Skelton, The Michael Church, Sheffield
- Joan Chulmondeley, URC in South Leeds
- Derek Leighton, URC in South Leeds

28. Thanks

The Moderator thanked everyone at Central for their hospitality and hard work in preparing for and organising the day.

29. Closing Worship

The Rev Simon Copley led the closing worship

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