

**Minutes of the meeting of the Yorkshire Synod of the United Reformed Church held on  
Saturday 9th<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at Moldgreen United Reformed Church, Huddersfield**

- 1. Synod convened**  
Synod was convened by Rev Kevin Watson.
- 2. Welcome**  
Mr Mark Binns of Moldgreen URC welcomed Synod to Huddersfield and gave the House Notices.
- 3. Greetings**  
Rev Kevin Watson welcomed everyone including new representatives and those at Synod for the first time – 9 in total, as well as those visiting and observing.
- 4. Present**  
There were 70 Lay people, 27 Ministers, 8 Retired Ministers, 1 CRCW and 1 Lay Pastor representing 64 churches.
- 5. Apologies**  
Apologies were received from 8 Lay people, 5 Ministers and 3 Retired Ministers.
- 6. Minutes**  
The minutes of the Synod meeting held on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2018 were agreed and signed by Rev Kevin Watson with the following amendment to page 6. This comes under item 20 – Financial Resources. The original minute read *“Willie Duncan explained points related to Synod Financial Resources.”* The minutes in the minutes book have an added sentence following on from this which reads: *Synod members received a summary of the income and expenditure for 2017 with explanation and were made aware that copies of the full accounts could be obtained from the Synod Office.*
- 7. Matters Arising**  
There were no matters arising from the said minutes.
- 8. Agenda**  
There were no additional items.
- 9. Synod Notices**  
The Clerk asked that Synod representatives to take note of the information they had received with the Synod mailing and of a number of extra resolutions on the sheets which should have been found distributed on the seats.
- 10. Date and Place of the next Synod meeting**  
Synod next meets on Saturday October 12<sup>th</sup> 2019 at Herringthorpe United Reformed Church, Rotherham and thereafter it will continue with the usual pattern of meeting on the second Saturday in October and the second Saturday in March.
- 11. Appointment of Tellers**  
The following were appointed as tellers for this meeting of Synod:  
Mr Tim Crossley, Rev Angela Hughes, Mrs Val Morrison, Rev Jason McCullagh.
- 12. Opening Worship**  
Led by Rosie Buxton and the Huddersfield Churches Group.
- 13. Visions of the Future for the URC.**  
Alan Yates, immediate Past Moderator of the URC was invited to speak on his visions of the future for the United Reformed Church.  
He presented a series of scenarios which could be the future for the denomination, each of which led to varying fortunes for the URC. However, his main thrust, as a strategy consultant, was that there was a need in the URC to concentrate the resources of the church in areas from which those resources can be effectively distributed for successful mission. He recognised that it might come

across as ‘them in London’ deciding what we do, but his thinking had been driven by the current Yorkshire/Northern Synod co-operation.

“A Burning Platform”

Mr Yates explained this particular metaphor from the oil industry, but stated that the state of the URC had not reached that point, but that isn’t likely to be the case for ever! In fact, he said, there are a number of people, particularly in the less-well-off Synods, who are already saying they can smell the smoke! There are forces at work which necessitate change. Currently they will not close the URC down, but if the URC does not act, then these forces may well do. A worse-case scenario would be the reduction of the number of Synods to 4 or 5, and this will have a serious impact on local churches and missional activity. Furthermore, if the current decline of between 3% and 5% per annum continues then this case is all too possible.

“Front Office, Back Office”

Despite this being another management-speak bit of jargon associated with prioritising activities in times of resource shortage, the premise is valid for the URC. Thus the back office functions for the URC, at least in part, are identical to business back-office functions, such as, finance, operational IT, HR, facilities management. Likewise knowing who our “customers” are gives us an insight as to knowing what our front-office functions should be and what they need to deliver. For example, mission, worship, counselling, community service etc.

Front-office strategies would typically **not** reduce the capacity of customer-facing people or processes. For us, this implies, at least at present, maintaining the number and outward focus of Synods. Back-office strategies would seek to have an efficient and effective single, common process for the entire organisation. Gone are the days when we can afford to do the same thing 13 or 14 different ways! Suffice to say though it is not a London-centric centralisation, but an attempt to use the best people in the best available place for a specific aspect of Back Office management.

“Money”

Mr Yates illustrated the Money question with his experience of visiting the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Ghana. Here they are a poor church but behaved as though they were rich. In contrast, we are a rich church that behaves as if we are poor! Our policies are set conservatively to ensure we hold back money for a raining day; and boy is it raining now! Additionally, Mr Yates noted the disparity in the wealth of our Synods. His solution: amalgamate the various URC trusts into one; then we should spend, say, 5% pa on resources to support mission in local churches ... not on buildings, but on people.

In doing this the URC could focus on the needs of local congregations, by reducing the administrative burden on both churches and synods thus releasing more resources exclusively focused on local needs. This can be done by adopting the Front/Back Office approach: identify the 20% of Back Office process that cause 80% of the burden and to define precisely what the Front Office needs are. It means the URC could invest 5% of our total liquid assets every year in missional, people based activities. Back Office processes could be combined (but not necessarily Londonised) and local mission could be re-energised.

Synods would still have a function – providing regional expert resources, providing local insights and identifying local priorities and to provide (as it does now) pastoral care for ministers, missionaries and churches.

In conclusion Mr Yates re-iterated that they are only his thoughts, and do not carry a URC stamp of approval, but the statistics do show a steady decline, valuable assets and a mindset of acting like a poor church. Change will take time, it won’t be easy, but when the time comes when we need to change the only option will be drastic surgery.

The answer – Pray and be bold.

#### **14. Community of Protestant Churches in Europe**

Miss Sarah Kissack presented a report on the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe conference held in Basle, Switzerland in September 2018. She had attended the General Assembly of CPCE as a volunteer worker, helping to prepare the venues for the various sessions. The theme – “liberated, connected, committed” – was thoroughly explored, despite the work and she was heartened by the sense of camaraderie which developed within the team as a whole. Sarah also mentioned that a key reason for going was the newly elected tripartite Presidium consisting of Miriam Rose, Gottfried Locher, and Rev Dr John Bradbury – a URC minister. She thanked all who gave her the opportunity to take part in this assembly and thanked Synod for allowing her to present her experiences.

## **15. Child Friendly Church Awards**

Introduced by Rev Kevin Watson the churches at Herringthorpe and Heckmondwike were awarded certificates to mark the renewal of their Child Friendly Church Awards, whilst the Northcliffe Church in Shipley was presented with a certificate marking their first Child Friendly Church Award.

## **16. Announcements**

- The Big Day Out: this is to be at Flamingo Land on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September. Early bird price is £20 up to end of May, and £22.50 thereafter. The aim is for at least 1000 to attend – old & young. Details via Synod Office although all churches have been informed as well.
- Heather Raistrick advertised the Yorkshire Assembly, to be held at Scarborough Spa on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May. Details have been sent via Church Secretaries and if needed there will be financial help available for transport costs through the new Synod Clerk, Tim Crossley, at the Synod Office, email clerk@urcyorkshire.org.uk.
- The Elders Conference is still on at St Andrew's Roundhay on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> March and there are still places available.
- Alastair Forsyth mentioned the forthcoming Educational trip to Israel and Palestine. All being well a presentation will be made to the October 2019 Synod.
- Mr Alex Walker mentioned the ongoing consultation regarding the appointment of a new Moderator to succeed Rev Kevin Watson in 2020. Comments to be forwarded via churches by April 21<sup>st</sup> please and also informal feedback will be received by the panel during the Lunch interval.
- Rev Ashley Evans reminded the meeting of the Lead Your Church Into Growth (LYCiG) day on 1<sup>st</sup> June. Contact Ashley for more details.
- Mrs Alex Jowitt, Synod's Green Apostle, drew Synod's attention to the "Eco Synod". This endeavour is to draw attention to churches the need to be more aware of environmental issues and it will be expanded upon at the October 2019 Synod. Please contact Alex for more details.
- Mr Alan Kendall, our Pilots Officer, introduced a short presentation on Friends On Faith Adventures – a new scheme to encourage the post primary/pre-teen age group to remain within the church environment. 8 churches are to be asked to trial the work and the feedback will be brought back to Synod in October 2019.

## **17. Lunchtime adjournment**

Rev Kevin Watson said Grace and Synod adjourned for lunch.

## **18. Vision and Opportunity.**

Rev Jamie Kissack led the presentation by the Vision and Opportunity group which has worked hard to ascertain what churches need in the Synod to provide mission. Rev Ashley Evans gave an overview of what is on offer through the Vision and Opportunity (V&O) scheme. Rev Simon Copley reminded Synod that Church Life Review had been re-branded in this V&O process under the Inviting Forward banner. This focusses on what we do well and as such Synod will help churches do what they do well. Further information may be got from Rev Dr Jim Coleman on his return from sabbatical at the end of March.

From the floor it was stated that many churches replied to the questions posed in the main concerned church finances, buildings and leadership. In reply the group stated that resources were to be made available and that the group has met, or will meet, all the Mission & Care Groups, as well as many individual churches. The message is – Let us know what you need and we will try and make it happen.

Rev Jamie Kissack in moving Resolution 3 stated that it was based on discussions between the V&O group and Financial Resources Committee. The £1 million allocated to this work is to be released over two financial years, with the second year's funding being released according to the feedback received from the first release. Mrs Val Morrison added that the £150,000 allocated in year

one for property is in effect mission maintenance money, whilst Rev Jason McCullagh stated that the £50,000 for training is ideal for funding the likes of LYCiG work and schemes to support the work of Churches, Elders, Leaders etc.

Other questions from the floor asked about whether LEP's were eligible – which they were, and whether there was any need for Quinquennial surveys to be taken into account – which would be taken on a case by case basis, though this aspect of property policy had no real bearing on the V&O scheme.

### **Resolution No 3.**

*In accordance with the decision of the Financial Resources Committee of the Yorkshire Synod to budget for the release of £1M of the Synod's resources over the next two years, Synod agrees to the following allocations of funds in the 2019 financial year:*

- *A sum of £3000 to each church of the Yorkshire Synod.*
- *A sum of £150,000 to be made available to the Yorkshire Synod Property Committee to support local churches in the good stewardship of their buildings.*
- *A sum of £50,000 to be made available to, and shared between, the Synod Pastoral Committee, the Synod Training Officer and the Synod Evangelist to support churches and individuals in their mission and out-reach.*

The resolution was passed unanimously.

## **19. Resolutions from Pastoral Committee**

Rev Jason McCullagh introduced the following two resolutions to Synod and the background was presented by the Pastoral Committee Administrator Rev Peter Jordan.

### **Lay Presidency**

The background to the reasoning behind the resolutions was explained and it was emphasised that churches must first approach Ministers of Word and Sacrament to preside, that individuals must have a pastoral relationship with the church and that all lay presidents are to be thoroughly trained. From the floor various questions were asked including the following:

The role and status of Ordinands in the revised policy – agreed that this was ambiguous and that their position was to be revisited in relation to this matter.

The term 'of good standing' was queried, and this was deemed to be within the remit of the Pastoral Committee.

### **Resolution No 4**

*Synod agrees to update its policy on Lay Presidency in accordance with the decisions of General Assembly in 2016 and this Synod in 2017 as follows:*

*Churches must understand that:*

- *They should first approach Ministers of Word and Sacrament with whom they have a pastoral relationship to preside at their services which include the sacraments. (A church in vacancy with a lay Interim Moderator who regularly leads worship should invite that Interim Moderator to preside.)*
- *Lay Presidents must be people in a pastoral relationship with the church, who have a good understanding of what they are doing and a spiritual awareness of the importance of the role.*
- *Authorization will be given after undertaking relevant training which will be provided by the Synod, to include recognition of the historical and theological background of the three strands which make up our denomination, as well as practical training for the administration of the sacraments'*
- *The Synod Pastoral Committee will maintain a record of all those named individuals who regularly lead worship and who may need to preside in the case of pastoral necessity. Applications for new authorizations should be submitted to the Pastoral Committee, who will liaise with the relative Synod Pastoral Elder (who may in case of need authorize an Authorized Person from another church to preside at the sacraments at a church other than their own, if so requested by the inviting church).*

- *Dates of Pastoral Committee meetings should be available to churches and additional requests for authorisation for one-off occasions will be considered by the Pastoral Committee at their regular meetings. The Convenor of the Pastoral Committee may authorize individuals in the case of emergency.*

Therefore, with the caveat that the role of Ordinands was to be further explored, the resolution was moved and passed unanimously.

### **Terms of Settlement**

Rev Peter Jordan also presented the background to Resolution 5. The basic premise is to ensure that the maintenance and good order of manses was regularised.

The questions from the floor asked variously about who was to do the inspection, whether the occupants may decorate to their own style and whether external help in this matter would be available. The answers to all were that each case would be looked at individually and if help was requested then it was to be offered and found. Other comments included a statement that it is good practice as it ensured that manses were to be kept in a fit state and that in all cases the relationship between the minister and the church/pastorate should also work both ways and always be in a good state.

### **Resolution No 5**

*Synod agrees:*

1. *to amend the Terms of Settlement for Stipendiary Ministers by adding the words "There will be an annual building inspection of the manse." under item 3 (Housing) after the words .....decoration of the manse so that item 3 will then read:*

3. *Housing*

*The minister will live in the manse provided at*

.....

*The pastorate will pay the Council Tax, water rates and any other tax[es] on the manse in full; will insure the building and accept responsibility for the maintenance and decoration of the manse. There will be an annual building inspection of the manse.*

*[Or The minister will live in a house within the pastorate area towards which the pastorate will pay a housing allowance according to the 'Plan for Partnership'.]*"

2. *That the final paragraph of the Terms of Settlement will now read:  
The terms of this agreement will be reviewed initially after six months and then annually by the pastorate. It may also be reviewed when changes are made to the national and/or Synod guidelines."*

The resolution was passed unanimously

## **20. Matters referred from General Assembly**

The Clerk introduced a series of matters, printed in the Synod Papers on pages 7, 8, 9 and 10, which were discussed by General Assembly (or in one case by Mission Council) during 2018. These have now been referred to Synods for consideration because they would involve changes to the Structure of the Church.

In relation to each piece of business, unless Synod passes a resolution that the matter "be not proceeded with", and that Synod notifies the General Secretary of the same by the date indicated (31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 or 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019), the Synod will be deemed to accept the Assembly resolution by default.

The four changes on pages 7 and 8 were accepted unanimously.

The addition to the promises made by Elders on page 10 was accepted.

The resolution regarding the upper age limit for URC youth was accepted unanimously.

## 21. Synod Council Report

### **Resolution No. 1**

*Synod receives the report of its Council.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

### **The District Council**

#### **Resolution No 6**

*In accordance with The URC Manual Synod, Section B, the Structure of the United Reformed Church - B 2 (3) – The District Council, Synod agrees that the District Council shall consist of:*

- *The Moderator of the Synod (for the time being)*
- *The Pastoral Committee Convenor (for the time being) as President*
- *The Synod Clerk (for the time being) as secretary*
- *Five representatives from throughout the Synod to represent the local churches and to serve for a three-year term to March 2022.*

The resolution was passed with one abstention

The Rev Angela Hughes, The Rev John Jenkinson, Mr Trevor Orr, Mr John Rider and Mrs Kathy Webb have agreed to serve as local church representative on the District Council.

#### **Resolution No 18**

*Synod appoints The Rev Angela Hughes, The Rev John Jenkinson, Mr Trevor Orr, Mr John Rider and Mrs Kathy Webb to serve as members of the Yorkshire District Council for a period of three years to March 2022.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

## 22. Committee Reports

### **Resolution No 2**

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

The resolution was passed unanimously

## 23. Synod Personnel

New appointments:

The following resolutions were put to Synod:

#### **Resolution No 7:**

*Synod appoints Mrs Jane Anne Frame to serve the Pastoral Committee as the Retired Ministers Link for the eastern area of the Synod for a three-year term until March 2022.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

#### **Resolution No 8:**

*Synod appoints Mrs Heather Raistrick to serve as Convenor of the Yorkshire Assembly for a three-year term to March 2022.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

Re-appointments:

There are also a number of people who have agreed to serve again as indicated on page 4 of the Synod Council report.

The following resolutions were put to Synod:

#### **Resolution No 9:**

*Synod thanks The Rev David Coote for his three years of service to Synod on the Investment Sub-Committee and appoints him to serve a further three-year term until March 2022.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

**Resolution No 10:**

*Synod thanks Dr John Cornell for his three years of service as a member of Synod Council and appoints him to serve a further three-year term until March 2022.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

**Resolution No 11:**

*Synod thanks The Rev Matt Stone for his three years of service as a member of the Ministries Committee and appoints him to serve a second three-year term to March 2022.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

**Resolution No 12**

*Synod thanks Mr Alex Walker for his three years of service as a member of Synod Council and appoints him to serve a further three-year term until March 2022.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

Votes of thanks:

We also have a number of people who have completed their terms of office and to whom our thanks are due and it is only right that these people are thanked individually and not en-block.

The following resolutions were then put to Synod.

**Resolution No 13:**

*Synod wishes to place on records its thanks to Mrs Sue Ripley for her service to Synod as Convenor-elect of the Yorkshire Assembly from October 2013 to October 2014 and as Convenor since October 2014.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

**Resolution No 14:**

*Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to The Rev Bob Heathcote for his services to Synod as the Administrator for the Ministerial Self-Appraisal Scheme.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

**Resolution No 15:**

*Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to The Rev Tony Lee for his six years of service to Synod as a member of Synod Council.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

**Resolution No 16:**

*Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mr Simon Loveitt for his six years of service to Synod as a member of Synod Council.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

**Resolution No 17:**

*Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to The Rev Dr James Coleman for his service to Synod as one of the Synod representatives on Mission Council.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

There were also a series of additional resolutions which missed the Synod paper posting deadline, but were distributed to the meeting regarding the personnel of the Synod.

Katherine Buckland has agreed to serve as a member of the Children and Young People Committee

**Resolution No 19:**

*Synod appoints Katherine Buckland to serve on the Children and Young People Committee for a three-year term to March 2022.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

Mrs Rosie Buxton has agreed to serve as one of the Synod's representatives on Mission Council

**Resolution No 20**

*Synod appoints Mrs Rosie Buxton to serve as one of its representatives on Mission Council for a three-year term to March 2022.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

Ashley Evans, Val Morrison and Jason McCullagh have all agreed to serve again on the stated committees

**Resolution No 21**

*Synod thanks the Rev Ashley Evans for his services to Synod as a member of the Synod Council and re-appoints him to serve a further three-year term to March 2022.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

**Resolution No 22**

*Synod thanks Mrs Val Morrison for her services to Synod as Convenor of the Property Committee and re-appoints her to serve a further three-year term to March 2022.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

**Resolution No 23**

*Synod thanks The Rev Jason McCullagh for his services to Synod as Convenor of the Pastoral Committee and re-appoints him to serve a further three-year term to March 2022.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

Dr Christopher Evans, who moved to Yorkshire last year from Wessex Synod, and is a member at the Bridge Church, Otley, has agreed to serve on the Financial Resources Committee for a three-year term to March 2022.

**Resolution No 24**

*Synod appoints Dr Christopher Evans to serve as on the Financial Resources Committee for a three-year term to March 2022.*

The resolution was passed unanimously

**24. Thanks**

The Synod Clerk expressed his thanks to Rev Kevin Watson for his leadership as well as thanking everyone here at Moldgreen for their hard work in preparing for and organising today. He also thanked those who provided the music for worship, all those who have provided the hospitality during the day and thanked those who have helped to make our lunchtime interesting and ensure that we have access to fair trade goods and information

Thanks were expressed to the Synod Office Staff – Sally, Anne, Rachel and Hayley who put in all the hard work behind the scenes stuffing envelopes and so on and especially Hayley who was present reimbursing travelling expenses.

At this point Rev Kevin Watson intervened to lead the Synod in offering a huge expression of thanks to the outgoing Clerk, Mr Chris Reed. Chris, he said, was the rock on which he had relied on so many times and simple thanks does not do justice to the time, work, devotion and effort Chris has put in over the years. A huge expression of thanks was also offered to Chris's wife, Janet, who was and is Chris's support in so many ways. With that the incoming Clerk, Mr Tim Crossley presented Mrs Reed with a floral tribute and Synod acclaimed Chris and Janet for their work over the years.

**25. Closing Worship**

Rev Kevin Watson then led the closing service which included the "In Memoriam" and the induction of Mr Timothy James Crossley as the new Synod Clerk.

## In Memoriam

Rev Kevin Watson remembered in prayer, Ministers and Elders who had died since the last meeting of Synod.

- Rev Arnold Harrison – Moderator Yorkshire Synod 1997-2008
- Constance Gilbey – Flanshaw URC
- Rose Stakes – Flanshaw URC
- Helen Summersgill – St Andrew's, Skipton
- Rev Stanley Jones – Minister, St Paul's Harrogate 1980-1990
- Andrea Varnavides – St Andrew's Roundhay
- Rosemary Taylor – Hall Gate, Doncaster
- Andrew McMurray – Headingley, St Columba
- Dr Sheila Hamilton – Headingley, St Columba
- Ronnie Elise – Holme Church
- Chris Clark – Pudsey URC

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