

Minutes of the meeting of the Yorkshire Synod of the United Reformed Church held on Thursday 7th October 2021 and Saturday 9th October 2021.

Part One; Thursday 7th October 2021 at 6.30pm via the Zoom Digital Platform

1. Present

The Clerk indicated that those present on the Thursday Evening as well as those attending the physical Synod on Saturday 9th October, and those apologising for absence would be collated and reported at the Saturday session.

2. Synod convened

Synod was convened by Rev Jamie Kissack. A welcome was extended to all who attended 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. Welcome and Worship

Rev Zaidie Orr opened this session with a short act of worship and a period of prayer linked into the evening's keynote presentation on the Legacies of Slavery and Anti-Racist Church including an animated version of the story of Zaccheus.

4. Legacies of Slavery

Synod welcomed Rev Zaidie Orr and Rev Kevin Snyman who have been invited to present to Synod 'The URC & the Legacies of Slavery'. In doing so they linked the work being done through the URC's Global and Intercultural Ministries and the Council for World Mission to highlight modern and historic slavery, how it affects us here and now and how by becoming an anti-racist church the URC can be a force for good. Underpinning all this is the biblical questions of who is my neighbour. The URC has good intentions, but can the URC put them into practise. The three key areas which the URC's own task group recommend are a full apology and confession over historic links to slavery, reparations to those still affected and to address white privilege within the church and throughout society. The task group is still open to comment and is looking to bring concrete proposals to General Assembly in July 2022.

The notes and full PowerPoint presentation are appended to these minutes and are available separately from the Synod Office.

5. Yorkshire Synod Response to URC Pensions challenge

Synod invited the Treasurer, Rev Simon Copley, to outline the latest developments in the quest to resolve the issues surrounding the URC Ministers' Pension Scheme. He expanded on his submitted report and explained the reasoning behind the figures being offered by Yorkshire Synod, how they related to offers of help from other Synod trusts and how affordable they are. He also challenged individual churches to look at whether they could earmark a percentage of their investments to underwrite some of the Ministers' Pension schemes deficit.

The Treasurer mentioned that the existing contributions made through the Synod's Closed Church policy will remain in place and by agreeing to the commitment to the Ministers' Pension Fund as outlined in the report Synod can contribute effectively and prudently.

The Treasurer then moved the following:

Resolution No 3

Yorkshire Synod approves the decision of the directors of the United Reformed Church (Yorkshire Province) Trust Ltd to make to the URC Trust from 2021 to 2024 the payments as outlined in the Synod Treasurer's Report, section 1b for the sole purpose of funding the pensions of ministers and church related community workers.

The resolution passed without any votes against.

Resolution No 4;

Yorkshire Synod approves the decision of the directors of the United Reformed Church (Yorkshire Province) Trust Ltd to make the following conditional offers to the URC Trust from 2025 to 2030 the payments outlined in the Synod Treasurer's report, section 1b for the sole purpose of funding the pensions of ministers and church related community workers, noting that these amounts will only be asked for if subsequent actuarial valuations of the MPF demonstrate that these are necessary.

The resolution passed without any votes against.

6. Jubilee 2022 Challenge

This element of the meeting was led by the Moderator, Rev Jamie Kissack. The Jubilee 2022 challenge is one which challenges Yorkshire Synod to become a Missional Synod. The Moderator mentioned that we are in a unique situation whereby lockdown has afforded us a period of reflection on what we are called to do. Jubilee 2022 is the opportunity to press onward with the questions of how we become a missional Synod.

Synod was sent out into several break-out rooms tasked with addressing several questions:

- i. Could this relate/connect with the life of your local church?
- ii. Do you have any questions for Synod?
- iii. Have you any alternative focus points or suggestions?

On returning to plenary session several themes began to emerge including questions on what is the difference between mission and missional, an awareness that there is a change in focus from trying to keep churches open to opening up the Kingdom – not bums on seats but feet on streets, a need to focus on our own volunteers and how they can improve their connections with the wider community, and finally whatever we do as churches has to be relevant.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8.45pm, to be reconvened at Longcauseway Church, Dewsbury at 10.00am on Saturday 9th October.

Part Two; Saturday 9th October 2021 at 10.00am at Longcauseway Church, Dewsbury and streamed live via the Yorkshire Synod website and YouTube channel.

8. Synod Reconvenes

The Moderator, Rev Jamie Kissack everyone who had travelled to Longcauseway Church, Dewsbury and indicated that the session was being lived streamed.

It was noted that due to being "pinged" by the NHS Covid-19 App and was awaiting the result of a PCR test, the Clerk, Mr Tim Crossley, was absent as he has been advised to self-isolate.

Therefore, Synod was asked whether it was happy that Mrs Jane Bunyan-Murray, the Synod Property Officer, took notes, which it did.

9. Attendance and Apologies

The figures for both the Thursday and the Saturday sessions were as follows: There were 51 Lay people, 19 Ministers, 5 Retired Ministers, 0 CRCW and 2 Lay Pastors representing 46 churches, Yorkshire Synod Youth, Leeds Universities Chaplaincy and Sheffield Teaching Hospitals Trust, Apologies were received from 19 Lay people, 6 Ministers, 5 Retired Ministers and 2 CRCWs.

10. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2021 on the Zoom Digital Platform had been circulated. The minutes were duly agreed to without amendment and were signed and dated by the Moderator, Rev Jamie Kissack.

The Clerk indicated that Synod has met once since March 2021, on 28th August 2021 at Central URC in Sheffield for the induction of Rev Barry Welch into the Sheffield Team pastorate. The Clerk welcomed Barry to Yorkshire on behalf of the whole Synod and prayed that his time in Sheffield will bear much fruit.

11. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the said minutes.

12. Programme/Agenda

Following the original mailing out of Synod papers, they were also uploaded to Facebook and to the website. Thanks to Dan Morrell for organising that.

There were a few amendments to some of the resolutions, primarily to improve their grammar and understanding. In addition, there were changes to Resolution 6c and two new resolutions: Resolution 4a referring to the Budget and Resolution 19 referring to Listed Buildings Advisory Committee which were laid before Synod.

13. Synod Notices

Synod representatives were asked to take note of the information which had been sent out in the Synod mailing, in particular the instructions regarding identification on Zoom by Place of Church & name for those dialling in and for those meeting in person to abide with the protocols being used by our host church, Longcauseway Church.

Thanks offered to those who had already submitted names for the In Memoriam element of the day's worship and requested that further names may be submitted via the Chat facility within Zoom or e-mailed directly to clerk@urcyorkshire.org.uk.

Representatives were asked to let Synod Office know of attendance as soon as you can in order that the records can be as accurate as possible. Finally, the Clerk asked for feedback to be sent to the Synod Office; the office e-mail being office@urcyorkshire.org.uk

14. Date and Place of the next Synod meeting

Synod was informed that the next scheduled meeting of Synod will be on Saturday 12th March. However, where it meets and the format it takes is yet to be decided. Synod will make every endeavour though to continue with the usual pattern of meeting on the second Saturday in October and the second Saturday in March.

The Clerk indicated that the three churches who have recently offered, but missed the opportunity, to host Synod (St Andrew's Skipton and Kings WAY Ossett) are still happy to host,

but other volunteers are more than welcome to offer. Once a decision is made then churches will be informed.

15. Appointment of Tellers

It was agreed that Mr John Rider and Mrs Susan Lord act as tellers if the need arose.

16. Worship

The Moderator, Rev Jamie Kissack led worship on the theme of listening, vision and the challenge of the future. He linked this element of the day's proceedings with what was to come and that in all cases Christians should bear witness to the fact that all things are made in Christ.

17. URC Jubilee 2022, the Yorkshire Response

From the start the Moderator stressed that this is "our" conversation, and not one that is driven from the office. This session was a follow-up to the work begun on the previous Thursday evening (item 6 above) and comments were invited from the floor.

- Yes, we can go big with mission, but as with the story of the Road to Emmaus, it must start at a small level.
- Mission is something that must run through everything. It starts with listening to people, then we can invite them, then the hard part – praying with people. There is a need to be confident in our faith.
- Not only does Synod need to be missional, so do individual Churches.
- Motivationally we need to get it right: "it's not bums on seats, its feet on streets".
- The intentionality of being available is important.

Jon Steel responded by thanking everyone for their contributions. All the comments are helpful. He pointed out that it is nothing new to be missional, it is a case of doing it now, with relevance and into 2022 with the 2 key questions: Who are we as Christians and Who are we here for as Christians? We need to make ourselves open to God, we need to ask God to move us, to speak to us and change us.

The Moderator tested the feeling of Synod and it was that Synod was content to move towards a more proactive missional Synod.

Synod was reminded about the preliminary videos regarding Jubilee 2022 including this one on the URC You Tube channel: <https://youtu.be/3crc-4C0i8k>

18. Synod Life and Synod Business

The Moderator opened this session and reminded Synod of the ways and means by which the business of Synod is to be conducted.

19. Resolution 1

Synod receives the report of its Council.

This was agreed unanimously.

20. Resolution 2

Synod receives the reports from its Committees and Groups as presented in the attached papers where appropriate.

- Ministries Committee*

- ii. *Children and Young People's Committee*
- iii. *Safeguarding Committee*
- iv. *Treasurer/ Financial Resources Committee*
- v. *Listed Buildings Advisory Committee*
- vi. *Eco Group*

Synod was asked whether there were any questions relating to the submitted reports that would not arise elsewhere in the agenda. There were not and the reports were received unanimously.

21. Synod Budget

The Treasurer noted that the Pensions aspect of the budget with its associated papers had been passed on the previous Thursday (item 5 resolutions 3 and 4). Here he explained the changes which had to be utilised to work out this budget. It is intentional that within the "new Developments in Training" section provision has been made for Elders and Lay Preachers. As it is not clear when Synod will look to fill the vacant Development Officer position the money being saved is being put to this good use. Synod is also looking at the Digital Divide question and has money set aside to alleviate it. Synod is still running at a deficit, but as yet this is not a major issue: The Financial Resources Committee is there to advise on these matters and will act on Synod instructions.

It was noted that in the passing of resolution 4 a loose end had unravelled regarding the future financing of Synod Mission Fund. Therefore, the Treasurer moved **Resolution No 4a**; *Synod approves the temporary suspension, with immediate effect, of all policies in respect of proceeds from sale of properties allocated to the Synod Mission Fund. This suspension to be reviewed at the October 2022 Synod.*

The resolution was passed unanimously.

The Treasurer then moved **Resolution No 5**;

Yorkshire Synod, meeting at Longcauseway Church, Dewsbury on 9th October 2021 both receives and agrees to the Synod Budget as submitted.

The resolution was passed unanimously.

22. Listed Buildings Advisory Committee

The Moderator, (in place of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee Convenor) introduced the submitted papers and the plan to create a new Listed Buildings Advisory Committee covering both Northern and Yorkshire Synods. Synod was informed that each Synod needed to have an active and effective committee and that Northern Synod was also meeting to consider the same resolution now put.

Resolution No 6

Yorkshire Synod, meeting at Longcauseway Church, Dewsbury on 9th October 2021, resolves the following.

- a) *Synod acknowledges with thanks its existing Listed Buildings Advisory Committee and agrees to form a new united Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, to fulfil its duties under the Ecclesiastical Exemption across the geographic areas of the Northern and Yorkshire Synods under [The United Reformed Church And The Planning \(Listed Buildings And Conservation Areas\) Act 1990 Procedure For Control Of Works To Buildings](#).*
- b) *Synod adopts the terms of reference for the joint Listed Buildings Advisory Committee set out in the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee report the October 2021 Synods, and requests that any subsequent amendments be agreed by both synods.*

- c) *Synod appoints Steve Armitage, Peter Conwell, Bill Flett, Liz Haestier, Robert Hoyle, Rev Andrew Lonsdale and John Niven to the joint Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, to serve from 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2024.*
- d) *Synod appoints the Northern and Yorkshire Synod Property Officers as members ex officio of the joint Listed Buildings Advisory Committee.*
- e) *Listed Buildings Advisory Committee reserves the right to co-opt additional members as necessary.*

The resolution was passed unanimously.

23. Safeguarding Committee

The Moderator, in the physical absence of the Clerk and the Safeguarding Committee Convenor outlined that the provision of Safeguarding oversight in the Northern and Yorkshire Synods was being addressed. Currently the two Synods share Mr Matthew Knowles as Safeguarding Advisor and to streamline the lines of communication and management plans are being put in place to create a single committee to oversee this aspect of Synod life in accordance with the recommendations of “Good Practice 5”, which has been adopted by General Assembly. Therefore, the Safeguarding Committee propose the following:

Resolution No 7

Yorkshire Synod accepts the recommendation of Yorkshire Synod’s Safeguarding Committee and agrees to enter into formal discussions with Northern Synod to create a Joint Safeguarding Group.

The resolution passed unanimously.

24. General Assembly Report

Rev Fran Kissack, one of the Synod’s representatives to General Assembly 2021 offered Synod and overview of the proceedings of General Assembly 2021.

After the cancellation of GA 2020 it was good to have a General Assembly in 2021, even though it did meet online. The experience was made all the better through the use of the “Wonder Me” software which enabled more people to meet up virtually between sessions. It was good to recognise the bigger body than the local church and the technology helped in that.

There was a high proportion of young people attending and the daily Youth Magazine was an excellent addition to the weekend’s information stream. And for those attending from Yorkshire, they were treated to an online quiz on the first evening.

Daily Devotions on the website are doing well to the extent that a dedicated Digital Ministry post is being created. Churspacious as a ministry was equally valued as was the work of the Children & Young Peoples group including the links with Pilots.

There were some structural matters to attend to including the adoption of the Safeguarding and MIND resolutions and the reversion to annual General Assembly meetings. This change back to annual General Assemblies means that Mission Council, under its new name of Assembly Executive, will now also only meet annually.

Resolutions were passed condemning Modern Day Slavery, committing to be an Anti-Racist Church, as well as ten very important resolutions on the Israel-Palestine situation. Full details can be found on the URC website:

https://urc.org.uk/images/General-Assemblies/Assembly2021/Book_of_Reports_2021_web.pdf

The Moderator added that consideration of General Assembly resolutions 39 and 44 will be brought to the March 2022 Synod.

24. Leading Your Church into Growth (LYCiG) report

Rev Ashley Evans reported that the first in-person conference is to be held. With a new format and a new handbook, the hope is to be more helpful towards those churches who are aiming to be missional churches. Not only does it affirm the 4 “Ps” – Prayer, Presence, Proclamation and Persuasion – it adds another at it helps with Persistence, giving support to those actually leading churches into growth.

24. Personalia and Church Resolutions

The Clerk, in the Synod Council Report, indicated that important elements of Synod life are marked in Resolutions 9 to 19 as outlined in the Synod Council report. The following resolutions mark the people and events of Synod, in particular between March 2021 and October 2021. Sadly, there are more folk standing down than stepping up, but I hope that as we move out of these years of pandemic more people will hear the call to contribute to the on-going life of the Synod.

Resolutions 9, 10, 11, 12 and 19 give thanks for the work of Mrs Ruth Roddison on Children and Young People’s Committee, Mrs Pauline Blackman and Miss Sarah Dodds on the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, Rev Tony Lee as a Trustee of the Cottingley Project and Rev Matt Stone on Ministries Committee.

Resolution 13 celebrates both previous and future service in that Rev Fran Kissack has agreed to continue for a further 3 years as one of our Assembly Executive representatives whilst **Resolution 14** recognises Mrs Terasa Raddings’ commitment to working as a Synod appointed Trustee of the Cottingley Project.

Sadly, we have permanently lost three of our churches since March 2021. Pickering URC, Eccleshill URC and Christ Church with Trinity URC Kirk Ella URC have all closed their doors this summer, **Resolutions 15, 16 and 17**, whilst the amalgamation of Hall Gate Doncaster and Intake URCs to create Ardeen Road URC Doncaster is marked in **Resolution 18**. I am also aware that there are other churches whose names and witness may be brought to the next Synod meeting. I hope that you will share with Synod Council in the prayers granting them strength to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord as they journey through the next few months.

Therefore, following resolutions were moved:

Resolution No 9

Mrs Ruth Roddison has stood down as Convenor of the Children and Young Peoples Committee. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mrs Ruth Roddison for her years of service to Synod in this and other roles within the Children and Young Peoples Committee.

Resolution No 10

Mrs Pauline Blackman has stood down as a member of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mrs Pauline Blackman for her years of service to Synod in this role.

Resolution No 11

Rev Tony Lee has stood down as a member of the Trustee body of the Cottingley Project. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Rev Tony Lee for his many years of service to the Cottingley Project on behalf of Synod. Synod in this and other roles within the Children and Young Peoples Committee.

Resolution No 12

Rev Matt Stone has stood down as Stipendiary Representative on the Ministries Committee. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Rev Matt Stone for his service to the Synod and the Ministries Committee in this role.

Resolution No 13

Synod thanks Rev Fran Kissack for her three years of service as Synod Mission Council representative and appoints her to serve a further three-year term until March 2024 as Synod Assembly Executive representative.

Resolution No 14

Synod appoints Mrs Terasa Raddings to serve as a Trustee to the Cottingley Project.

Resolution No 15

Synod records with sadness the closure of Pickering United Reformed Church on 11th May 2021. Synod offers thanksgiving for the life and witness of its members over the years since its foundation in 1788 and most recently its work in the Ryedale area of Yorkshire.

Resolution No 16

Synod records with sadness the closure of Eccleshill United Reformed Church on 9th June 2021. Synod offers thanksgiving for the life and witness of its members over the years since its foundation in 1823 and most recently its work in that part of Bradford.

Resolution No 17

Synod records with sadness the closure of Christ Church with Trinity URC, Kirk Ella, Hull on 30th September 2021. Synod offers thanksgiving for the life and witness of its members over the years; Trinity since 1898, Christ Church since 1964 and together since 1993.

Resolution No 18

Synod records the amalgamation of Hall Gate, Doncaster United Reformed Church and Intake United Reformed Church to create Ardeen Road United Reformed Church, Doncaster. Synod offers thanksgiving for the life and witness the constituent churches and prays that the new church well in its future endeavours.

Resolution No 19

Miss Sarah Dodds has stood down as a member of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Miss Sarah Dodds for her years of service to Synod in this role.

All Resolutions, 9 to 19 were passed unanimously.

25. Eco Strategy

The Synod Green apostle, Mrs Alex Jowitt with Mr Rod Morrison, with others, led the presentation of the Synod's Environmental Strategy including the following video showcasing the recent Yorkshire JPIT conference <https://youtu.be/AsnTjMv85ul> and introduced the Synod Environmental policy. The policy as submitted is to be uploaded to the Synod Website from where it can be readily downloaded or printed.

The key areas to note are 3.5 – the aim is for there to be more than one Green Apostle and 3.5.1 there is a drive to sign up the Synod to the Eco Synod awards. Those who are interested can contact Alex Jowitt and Rod Morrison via the Synod Office. Item 4.3 in the policy was highlighted as Eco Synod will be there to help individual churches in all eco activity across all church life. A key area is ensuring that money (through inefficient heating etc) is not wasted in poorly insulated buildings. More information can be found on the A'Rocha website <https://arocha.org.uk/> where resources can be found on worship, teaching, land, buildings, community engagement and lifestyle.

By signing up each church can follow a roadmap to improve their environmental footprint.

From the floor there were comments of both support and concern – one area of concern being the emphasis on using digital meetings as the main forum for discourse. It was clarified that it was only a guideline and that the means by which meetings took place was at the discretion of each church.

Mrs Alex Jowitt on behalf of the Eco Group then moved

Resolution No 8

Yorkshire Synod, meeting at Longcauseway Church, Dewsbury on 9th October 2021 both receives and adopts the Yorkshire Synod Environmental policy.

This was passed and the Moderator and Green Apostle will sign it at a mutually convenient place and time.

26. Synod IT Strategy

Mr Dan Morrell led this overview of the recent work of the IT Group which had been meeting regularly over the previous 18 months. The aim of the group is to support Synod and churches with their immediate IT needs, but the plan now is to look beyond that.

Digital presence is now something that will not go away. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated a process that was already developing within church in general and the use of IT by churches to deliver worship and more has expanded at an incredible rate. The IT group appreciates that all things digital is not for every church and not for every occasion, but it is now a permanent part of our Synod life. Therefore, to bring all these things together the following strategy is being worked on.

- Website – a call for more news items, stories, contribution. The website needs to be dynamic and relevant.
- Courses – the IT group is constantly looking to provide courses to expand the knowledge and skills within churches enabling them to be more proactive digitally.
- Use of “Reception Churches” which would be hubs from which worship and other resources can be transmitted. Initial thoughts are along the lines of one church per Mission & Care group.
- Development of Hybrid meetings whereby those attending and those dialling in are on equal footing in terms of participation and decision making.
- Training: currently the training programmes are reactive and the IT group will still run courses based on the needs of churches. However, proactive training is being looked at to broaden experience.

27. Thanks

Thanks were offered by Synod to

- Rev Jamie Kissack for leading us during both Thursday and Saturday sessions
- Those who have participated:
 - On Thursday – Rev Zaidie Orr, Rev Kevin Snyman & the Legacies of Slavery Team, Jon Steel and the Jubilee 2022 challenge team. To Rev Jamie Kissack for facilitating the Break Out discussions on Thursday & Rev Simon Copley for putting into layman’s terms the complexity that is the Ministers Pension Fund
 - On Saturday – Mrs Jane Bunyan-Murray for stepping in at the last minute in place of the Covid-19 struck Clerk, Rev Jamie Kissack for leading us in worship and the input towards the Jubilee 2022 challenge. To Committee conveners for their work in producing reports and all those who have served in the past and in the future.
- Lawrence Heath-Moore, Dan Morrell and Jamie Kissack for behind the scenes work

- Office Staff, Sally, Anne Rachel and Hayley for coping with the strange way Synod has been put together this Autumn
- All who have joined us on Zoom on Thursday & here at Longcauseway today.
- Finally, to the community at Longcauseway for coping with a stranger-than-normal meeting.

28. Closing Worship

Led by Rev Janine Atkinson including the reading of the In Memoriam list, a copy of which will be appended to these minutes.

23. Dismissal and Departure.

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

Yorkshire Synod
In Memoriam

March 2021 to October 2021

Elders

Ronald Crossley	Elder, St Andrew’s Skipton
Bruce Merlin	Elder, Waverley Huddersfield
Audrey Jones	Elder, Headingley St Columba
Joan Sirett	Elder, Gleadless
Ronald Johnson	Elder, Ravensthorpe with Hopton
Mavis Boothroyd	Elder, Ravensthorpe with Hopton
Audrey Evans	Elder, Longcauseway Church
Mona Brewer	Elder, Norristhorpe
Owen Hartley	Elder, St Andrew’s Roundhay
Myrtle Clarke	Elder, Bolton Villas Family Church
Adrian Wells	Retired Minister, St Ninian’s & St Andrew’s Hull
Margaret Charlesworth	Elder, Bolton Villas Family Church
John Hillman	Elder, Hall Gate Doncaster & Ardeen Road URC Doncaster

Non-Elders (but who contributed to their church)

Stewart Telfer St Andrew’s Roundhay