



**Minutes of the meeting of the Yorkshire Synod of the United Reformed Church held on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October at Bilton Grange United Reformed Church and on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October via the Zoom Digital Conferencing Platform**

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October**

**1. Welcome**

The Clerk offered a welcome as did the Secretary of Bilton Grange URC, Rev Pauline Calderwood.

**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, in particular Rev Nicola Robinson who had been newly inducted into Synod.

The Moderator noted several departures from the Synod: Rev Janine Atkinson to Exmouth, Rev Clare Davison to South Lincolnshire and Mr Simon Loveitt to St Andrew's Brockley and New Cross in South-east London.

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

**3. Present**

The figures over both sessions were as follows: There were 44 Lay people, 15 Ministers, 3 Retired Ministers, 2 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, 16 Lay People.

**5. Minutes**

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

Synod had met on one occasions since the March 2022 Meeting on Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2022 at Christ Church, Halton, Leeds for the ordination and induction of Rev Nicola Robinson into the newly created Leeds Partnership.

**6. Matters Arising**

None

**7. Notices**

The Clerk gave the notices for the day.

**8. Date and Place of March 2023 meeting**

Synod will meet again on the Saturday, 11th March 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 asked 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, that of “What is Mission? Led by the Synod’s Mission Advocate, Mr Jon Steel.

## 10. “What is Mission?”

The Synod’s Mission Advocate, Mr Jon Steel opened proceedings by offering an introduction to what Synod members were to do in groups of 6 to 8 people. Three “conversations” based on specific questions were planned, each separated by a period of worship, prayer and song.

Conversation 1 - ‘Who are we?’ (Personal)

- Q1 - ‘Think of a time when you felt blessed by your church’; Talk about something you personally really like about your church OR
- Q2 - ‘I wonder how your faith journey began’

Conversation 2 - ‘Who are we?’ (Synod)

- Q1 - Make a list of different words or phrases you might use to describe the Yorkshire Synod of URC - differentiate between gathering and organisation?
- Decide together which are your top 3 words or phrases - write them on post-it notes

This was followed by a plenary feedback session which in turn led to:

Missional Synod introduction

The Moderator emphasised that mission is still central to what the URC is about. Mission is shaped by context; from individual churches to local communities there is no set formula. However the key question now is how should Mission challenge us? The drive for Mission needs to be outward facing, but not necessarily a one way conversation, for it to be outward facing.

Conversation 3 - ‘What do we think we are here for?’

- Q1 - ‘What are we as churches here for?’
- Q2 – ‘Why do we exist?’
- Q3 – ‘What is the point or reason for our churches?’

Representatives were asked to decide which are your top 3 things Synod (or our churches?) are here for.

This was followed by a plenary feedback session with the feedback being taken back to frame the way in which Missional Synod is taken forward. Key elements of that feedback included the need to bring people to Jesus, that Mission can be achieved on a small scale and that Mission can work through nurturing. Allied to this was the acknowledgement that we need to see the world as it is and not as it was and that we will have to use a new language to achieve our Missional goals.

## 11. 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.

## 12. Synod Life

The Moderator led 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 new 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 within the agenda on both Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> October and Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October.

### Resolution No 1

#### **Synod receives the report of its Council.**

Synod agreed unanimously.

### **Resolution No 2**

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

- i. Ministries Committee**
- ii. Safeguarding Committee**
- iii. Treasurer/Financial Resources Committee**
- iv. Property Committee**
- v. Listed Buildings Advisory Committee**
- vi. Keld**
- vii. Children & Young People's Committee**

Synod agreed unanimously.

### **13. Missional Synod Resolutions**

Following on from the morning's discussions, Synod were asked to consider the following resolutions.

#### **Resolution No 3**

**Yorkshire Synod, meeting at Bilton Grange URC, Harrogate on 8th October 2022, resolves the following:**

**That this Synod re-commits to putting God's mission at the heart of our identity and our activity as a Synod.**

In debate it was stated that the Synod is always looking to mission and to putting it at the centre of who we are as a Synod. Questions were asked whether Synod can resource churches to be free to do mission. It was also noted that Synod's work is always ongoing, especially through the efforts of the Pastoral Committee and that this resolution asserts the centrality of mission to Synod's goals. Synod agreed unanimously.

#### **Resolution No 4**

**Yorkshire Synod, meeting at Bilton Grange URC, Harrogate on 8th October 2022, resolves the following:**

**That this Synod adopts the '5 Threads of Mission' as a framework for putting our commitment to mission into practice.**

The appended leaflets had been circulated in the Synod papers and a period of time was used to explain the key areas. In essence the 5 threads enabled Synod to

- Share our stories and experiences of God, Jesus and faith (Acts 1:8; Romans 10:14)
- Build justice and peace, and participate in healing creation (Luke 4:18,19; Isaiah 1:17)
- Partner with other Christians (John 13: 34,35; John 17:20,21)
- Love our neighbours (Luke 10:25-37; Matt. 25:31-36)
- Invite others to meet with God (John 4:29; Psalm 34:8)

Synod agreed unanimously.

#### **Resolution No 5**

**Yorkshire Synod, meeting at Bilton Grange URC, Harrogate on 8th October 2022, resolves the following:**

**That this Synod commits to reviewing our structures and processes, to make sure that they embody and facilitate our commitment to mission, and tasks the Synod Council with carrying this out and reporting back to Synod meetings.**

Jon Steel opened this by explaining that this will allow Synod to task Synod council with reviewing how the Synod works to ensure that the structures and processes are focused on the 5 threads of mission, and from that to allow Synod to support our churches to do the same. Although Jon Steel has begun talking with Synod Committees, this resolution enables the work to be done in a more formal setting. It may lead to structural change, but the aim is to enable Synod's mission to be stronger. Questions over feedback expectations led to an amendment being proposed with the words "reporting back to each Synod meeting" replacing "reporting back to Synod meetings". The amendment was not passed.

On putting to Synod, Resolution 5 as originally moved was passed.

#### **14. General Assembly Reports**

The Clerk introduced four of the sixteen people who represented Yorkshire Synod at the 2022 General Assembly and invited them to offer an overview on two of the many areas covered. Jamie Kissack offered Legacies of Transatlantic Slavery and the affirmative anti-racist resolutions. It had been a difficult journey for the denomination, but the result was a unanimous affirmation of apology. Wording to this, and all the other subjects mentioned, can be found at

<https://urc.org.uk/general-assembly-executive-assembly-committees/general-assembly-general-assembly-papers/>. As yet the follow up in Yorkshire is to be formulated.

He also offered the Eco Church resolutions, with the URC Commitment to net zero by 2030 being a big challenge to us all.

Tim Crossley covered the affirmation that Local Ecumenical Partnerships are still at the heart of the URC and that their value to our united nature is undeniable. He also brought to Synod the daily bible study, this year concentrating on Jubilee and that jubilee can be constant.

Fran Kissack also offered 2022's URC Jubilee; with its excellent branding as well as the biblical context in Leviticus 25 and Luke 4.

In addition the Mental Health First Aid resolution from Youth Assembly, whereby the plan is that everyone in each church to be trained to do this. The skillset is very subtle and the hope is that these trained people will be a long term asset to each church.

Finally, Dan Morrell brought Synod's attention to the Lay Pioneering work being done in the URC and the speed in which it had appeared. The Newbigin Pioneering Hub is ready with a new marks of Ministry approved by General Assembly for it. He also brought the age old problem of GA Nominations to Synod's attention. The finding of people to do the church's work has always been a challenge and the ongoing Church Life Review is looking into this and other similar questions to bring back to General Assembly in 2023.

#### **15. Committee Reports**

Synod had received Committee reports.

In response to questions, the Clerk was able to update Synod on the situation at Saltaire, whilst the Treasurer was able to refer questions regarding mileage rates to the business session scheduled for Synod's Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October session.

#### **16. Yorkshire Synod Locally Recognised Youth and Children's Leaders Policy and an introduction to URC Children**

The conveners of Ministries Committee and Children and Young People's Committee jointly presented the submitted paper to Synod prior to the resolution due to be considered on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup>. However the key presentation by Mrs Megan Tillbrook was an overview of the newly rebranded URC Children. It is a new umbrella body for 0-12 year olds with the added emphasis on more child led resources. A video was shown, the link to which is on the URC website. Synod was also brought up to date with how the Big Day Out had gone and the plans for the work of the Children & Young People's Committee in light of Megan's impending maternity leave.

Synod offered their congratulations and prayers to Megan.

## 17. Saturday Thank Yous

The Clerk offered thanks to

- Rev Jamie Kissack for leading us today
- Jon Steel who has led the Synod's Missional challenge this year
- Those who have participated in the day's proceedings
- Dan, Lawrence and the Bilton Grange team for their behind the scenes work
- Office Staff, Sally, Anne, Rachel and Hayley for coping with the way Synod has been put together this Autumn
- All who have joined us and have coped with this hybrid way of doing Synod. Please 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. The Clerk also asked for feedback as the Synod team needs to know what we did well, what needs improving and how we do this kind of meeting in the future.
- The good folk at Bilton Grange for allowing us to use their buildings and for their hospitality this morning, this lunchtime, and hopefully after we adjourn.

## 18. Closing Worship

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

## 19. Synod adjourned until 6.30pm on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October

## 20. Synod reconvened at 6.30pm on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October on the Zoom Digital Conferencing platform

## 21. Opening Prayers

Prayers led by the Moderator, Rev Jamie Kissack

## 22. Synod Mission Capacity Fund

The Treasurer, Rev Simon Copley introduced this paper, explained the need for it and how it would be managed. He mentioned that there was a gap in funding for "back office work" not covered by the existing Synod Mission Fund or the various "Vision & Opportunity" grants opportunities. This fund would be there to enable churches to concentrate on new mission by providing a means of resource release. The funds are currently limited and applications which offer the opportunity to match fund would be looked on favourably. It is available for the duration of the 2023 budget and it will come back to October 2023 Synod for evaluation. In debate it was made clear that the fund has capacity to resource multi church projects. He then moved the following:

### **Resolution No 6:**

**Yorkshire Synod, meeting on the Zoom Digital Conferencing platform on 13th October 2022 resolves to create a Synod Mission Capacity Fund as described in the submitted paper and to be administered by members the Synod Mission Fund panel.**

Resolution passed unanimously

## 23. Synod Budget

The Treasurer introduced the 2023 budget, copies of which had been circulated. He offered thanks to the Financial Resources committee and to the Synod's Accounts Team whilst he had been on sabbatical during 2022. He drew attention to the following: foregoing of the Synod levy, emphasis on looking to invest in church work and a new IT budget. The biggest thing though is setting aside £100,000 to help churches with energy costs. This is a work in progress and the means by which these funds are distributed will be worked out soon and it is hoped will be run in conjunction with the national church's £2 million fund. Similarly Synod is able to set aside a sum to enable churches to buy in services which would then allow their missional capacity to increase. It is a modest sum

compared with existing grant streams and is covered by the projected increase in property sales. The Treasurer said that the current plan would be for Yorkshire Synod to help Yorkshire churches, but is open to sharing with less financially rich Synods.

From the floor the question of mileage rates was raised. The feeling of the Financial Resources committee was that the increase to 30p per mile for volunteers was adequate and that it was following Government guidelines. Employees (inc Ministers) do get 45p per mile as per Government guidelines which is not changing.

The Treasurer then moved the following:

**Resolution No 7**

**Yorkshire Synod, meeting on the Zoom Digital Conferencing platform on 13th October 2022 agrees to the Synod Budget as circulated and submitted.**

Resolution passed unanimously

**24. Yorkshire Synod Locally Recognised Youth and Children's Leaders Policy**

Megan Tillbrook had introduced this in her report on Saturday and it has been requested that a formal resolution recognising the policy, the work that has been done on it and ultimately adopting it should be brought to Synod this evening. She added that the paper is not a means of putting hurdles in the way but a means of celebrating existing experience and nurturing those who want to develop as Youth and Children's Leaders.

Therefore she moved the following:

**Resolution No 18**

**Yorkshire Synod, meeting on the Zoom Digital Conferencing platform on 13th October 2022 resolves to adopt The Yorkshire Synod Locally Recognised Children's and Youth Leaders Policy as described in the submitted paper.**

Resolution passed with two abstentions.

**25. Safeguarding and Safer Recruitment**

Matt Knowles, the Synod's Safeguarding Officer expanded on the Safeguarding report and explained the transition to online training. He also expanded on the Safer Recruitment element of the report, explaining that whilst DBS checking is not Safer Recruitment in itself, the process by which we get to the offering of a DBS check is. He is working on making this a much easier task for all those involved in it.

He also mentioned and Synod welcomes, Mrs Paula Kitson to the Synod staff, where she will be working as the Synod's Safeguarding Support Officer, in partnership with Matt, and in conjunction with Northern Synod.

**26. Synod Council Report and Personalia Changes**

The Clerk drew Synod's attention to the Synod Council Report and to the personalia changes noted within.

**District Council:** The Clerk outlined the fact that there is still a District Council and that it acts infrequently (if at all). Those who sit on it – as outlined at the March 2019 Synod – have come to the end of their term. Rev Angela Hughes, Rev John Jenkinson, Mr Trevor Orr and Mr John Rider are happy to serve again, Mrs Kathy Webb has desired not to stand again and Mrs Gill Chapman is happy to be considered.

Therefore the Clerk moved the following:

**Resolution No 8**

**Synod thanks Rev Angela Hughes, Rev John Jenkinson, Mr Trevor Orr and Mr John Rider for their three years of service as Synod representative to the Yorkshire District Council and appoints them all to serve a further three-year term until October 2025.**

**Resolution No 16**

**Mrs Kathy Webb have stood down as Synod representative to the Yorkshire District Council. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mrs Kathy Webb for her time and wish her well for the future.**

**Resolution No 17**

**Synod appoints Mrs Gillian Chapman to serve as a Synod Representative to the Yorkshire District Council for a three year period until October 2025.**

Synod resolved all three resolutions unanimously

**Assembly Executive & Synod Council:** With the retirement of Mrs Rosie Buxton from her Synod roles, we require a new Assembly Executive representative. As this role now requires someone who is also an attendee at General Assembly. Therefore the Clerk moved:

**Resolution No 9**

**Synod appoints Mr Daniel Raddings to serve as a member of Synod Council and as a Yorkshire Synod Representative to Assembly Executive.**

Synod resolved the resolution unanimously

**Eco Group/Green Apostle:** The Moderator explained that the Synod had been running with one Green Apostle and that he hopes to put together a team of Green Apostles. At the moment there is just the one name to bring to Synod, but over the winter the plan is to encourage more people to join the team. Therefore the Moderator moved the following:

**Resolution No 10**

**Mrs Alex Jowitt will be standing down as the Yorkshire Synod Green Apostle in the autumn of 2022. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mrs Alex Jowitt for her work in this field, for enabling a smooth succession to take place and wishes her well for the future.**

**Resolution No 11**

**Synod appoints Mrs Helen Owen as one of Yorkshire Synod's Green Apostles for a three year period until October 2025.**

Synod resolved both resolutions unanimously

The Clerk then moved the following resolutions:

**Resolution No 12**

**Dr Moira Gallagher has stood down as Yorkshire Synod Interfaith Representative. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Dr Moira Gallagher for her work in this field and wishes her well for the future.**

**Resolution No 13**

**Mrs Hilary Walker has stood down as a member of the Welfare Committee. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mrs Hilary Walker for her years of service to Synod in this role.**

**Resolution No 14**

**Synod appoints Rev Chris Wood to serve as a member of the Welfare Committee for a three year period until October 2025.**

**Resolution No 15**

**Synod appoints Mr Ian Henderson to serve as a member of the Investment Sub-Committee for a three year period until October 2025.**

**Resolution No 16**

**Mr John Rider has stood down as a member of the Property Committee. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mr John Rider for his years of service in this role.**

**Resolution No 19**

**Synod records with sadness the closure of Armley United Reformed Church on Wednesday 20th July 2022. Synod offers thanksgiving for the life and witness of its members over the years since its foundation in 1866 and most recently its work in the west of Leeds in partnership with the Methodist and Baptists churches.**

Synod resolved all six resolutions unanimously

**27. LYCiG (Leading Your Church into Growth)**

Rev Ashley Evans informed Synod that the Yorkshire LYCiG team are looking to host a national URC LYCiG conference in the same way as they had hosted a Northerly Synods one.

LYCiG is working with the Pastoral Committee to use LYCiG techniques when talking with individual churches.

As ever Rev Evans is offering himself as Synod Evangelist to any church in Synod as well as offering the LYCiG material to any church who feels that they want to explore growth.

**28. Closing Worship**

Closing worship was led by the Moderator.

**29. Synod Concluded** to meet again on 11th March 2023 at Holme URC, Bradford.

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





# Yorkshire Synod In Memoriam

March 2022 to October 2022

## Ministers

Rev Gill Brown      Zion Wakefield, Airevale Group, Emmanuel Waterthorpe

## Elders

Alun Jones      Elder & Secretary, Waverley URC, Huddersfield & Former District Secretary.  
Elizabeth Aizlewood      Elder & Lay Preacher, Central Sheffield  
Joyce Poot      Elder, Saltaire URC  
James Throssell      Elder, Headingley St Columba & former Convener of Finance & Legal Committee,  
member of Investment Sub-Committee & interim Trust & Property Secretary.  
Kathleen Foreman      Elder, St Andrew's, Scarborough.  
Eileen Carling      Elder, Heath URC aged 104.  
Ian Flannigan      Elder, St Paul's, Harrogate.  
John Abel      Elder, St Paul's, Harrogate.  
Mick Nicholls      Elder, Ardeen Road, Doncaster  
Joyce House      Elder, Christchurch, Ilkley  
Anne Ray      Elder, West Park, Leeds  
Roy Biggins      Elder, The Michael Church, Sheffield  
Prue Davison      Elder, The Bridge Church, Otley