



## Minutes of the meeting of the Yorkshire Synod of the United Reformed Church held on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at Central United Reformed Church, Sheffield.

### 1. Welcome

The Moderator offered a welcome to all who have attended, and especially to those attending a Synod meeting for the first time.

### 2. Synod Convened

Synod was convened by the Moderator, Rev Jamie Kissack.

### 3. Present

There were 43 Lay people, 10 Ministers and 5 Retired Ministers representing 32 churches, Yorkshire Synod Youth, Leeds University Chaplaincy and Sheffield Teaching Hospitals Trust.

### 4. Apologies

Apologies have been received from 6 Ministers, 7 Retired Ministers, 1 Lay Leader and 12 Lay People.

### 5. Minutes

The minutes of the October 2023 meeting were presented, agreed as a true record and were signed by the Moderator.

Synod has not met since the October 2023 meeting.

### 6. Matters Arising

None.

### 7. Notices

The Clerk gave the notices for the day including the appointment of Mrs Jane Bunyan and Mr Alastair Forsyth as tellers if the need arose for the counting of votes in any of the day's resolutions.

### 8. Date and Place of October 2024 meeting

Synod will meet again on the Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> October at Christchurch Methodist & United Reformed Church, Ilkley.

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

### 9. Worship

Worship was led by the Moderator, basing the address on Mark 1:14-15 and 1 Cor 9: 16-23. Music was provided by Rev Simon Copley.

### 10. Synod Forums.

Rev Jason McCullagh reminded Synod of the success of the four Synod Forums held during 2023 and that the Synod team and the Pastoral Committee in particular had reflected on them. The feedback was extensive, from big questions relating to wider church issues to church specific ones. A key common element to the discussions was to do with 'culture' in our churches and the need to get it right to align with new people.

He then outlined the plans to hold a further four more Synod Forums at St Andrew's Scarborough on 11th May, Gleadless on 1st June, Salem, Burley in Wharfedale on 8th June and Christ Church, Hipperholme on 6th July.

There is an open invitation, with the structure allowing for the inclusion of and engagement with scripture, and the ability to offer feedback on a wide range of topics to and from Synod Committees. They will be 'bring your own lunch' events, but each church has been asked to provide a sweet.

Anyone can attend any event on any of the days and full details of the four days will be sent out regularly in the next couple of months.

## **11. Early Church Experiences**

Mrs Megan Tillbrook, the Synod's Children and Young People's Practitioner, opened a session on Early Church Experiences

She related a semi-autobiographical story of a 9 year old girl called "Mary", playing with a doll and experiencing the rest of her family crying in the aftermath of a grandparent's death. She noted that this had a lasting impression of what church is. However, she noted that the girl's continued attendance highlighted the importance of doing things right in both church and Sunday School.

Experience informs faith and in this case this experience did not put her off.

### *Break out #1 on Early Experiences*

Feedback from the groups related similar experiences to "Mary": be seen not heard was the most prevalent. Noted that anniversaries and performance can be stressful. Personalities can be key markers. Always good to be felt valued. Experiences very similar – social aspect is key – comfortable. But why is this not apparent now? Difference now is that the culture does not have kids and church mixing.

### *Break out #2 on New People in Church Fellowships*

Other people's stories are the key thing and is our culture helping or hindering. From the point of view of those going to new churches the key is how intentional the welcome is. Questions to grapple with include where can you interact with new folk? Should it be at the start, within or at the end of a service or worship time? The institution of church and all that this entails can be an issue, especially in how new and old contribute and whether current models are right for what God is asking us to do. Alternatively, it has been good to take church outside the buildings they usually worship in. How do we attract; do we do things we like, or do we do things that will attract new people into fellowship? Are we feeding the institution or are we really doing what God asks?

These questions were left open and the responses left on the distributed post-it notes were collected for further analysis by the Synod Team.

## **12. Safeguarding and Safer Recruitment**

Ms Carrie Kaunda, the Synod's Safeguarding Officer introduced herself and outlined the latest developments in the Safeguarding and Safer Recruitment of Synod Life. She explained her role as Yorkshire Synod's Safeguarding Officer and that Matt Knowles is still with us but is working in a more strategic role in conjunction with Northern Synod (with whom we share an oversight committee). In this the Yorkshire and Northern Synods are ahead of most of what is happening in the rest of the denomination. The Safeguarding Team wants safeguarding to be part and parcel of the culture of the church as it is one of the things that allows churches to be a caring

environment. The current denominational guide – Good Practice 6 (GP6) - is to be recommended as this is not just about concern but talks about a caring culture within churches. Ms Kaunda then outlined some changes to training, whereby Foundation training is online (renewable after 3 years), whilst Intermediate and Advanced training will be in person. More information on dates and times will be published on the Synod website

Safer Recruitment in Yorkshire will follow the guidelines being outlined denominationally. The current policy brings it up to date with GP6 and covers both paid and volunteer roles. The Safeguarding team knows that each church is different, but the key thing to do is to ensure that the correct checks are made and recorded effectively.

In response to questions, Ms Kaunda noted that ecumenically things are becoming better and that Synod Safeguarding Officers do speak with their inter-denominational colleagues.

In summing up Ms Kaunda reported to Synod that all churches in Synod had submitted their Safeguarding returns and she offered thanks to all the Yorkshire churches, as well as to the Safeguarding team, for being able to meet this target. Also she reminded Synod that template policies for churches can be found on the URC website at

<https://urc.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-good-practice/>

Finally, she also brought to Synod's attention the fact that it is at this meeting that Synod adopts its Safeguarding Policy – and that Synod should do so on an annual basis. The draft policy that had been circulated in the papers had been agreed by the joint Safeguarding Committee and on their behalf she asked to move the following Resolution:

### **Resolution No 3**

Yorkshire Synod, meeting at Central URC, Sheffield on 9th March 2024, resolves the following: That Yorkshire Synod receives and adopts the Yorkshire Synod Safeguarding Policy: Children and Adults (December 2023) as its formal Safeguarding Policy until March 2025.

The resolution was passed unanimously.

## **13. Repairing Justice**

Rev Zaidie Orr brought Synod up-to-date on the progress of the URC's Legacies of Slavery journey including reparatory actions and training in anti-racism.

Training has started with Prof Anthony Reddie whose experience has been in working with young black men, but not exclusively. These sessions are being rolled out to various groups at a denominational level as the key challenge is with resourcing.

Partnerships are being created with the Caribbean area and Jamaica in particular. Within these areas, focus will be on those parts which have been identified as being direct legacies of slavery, in particular shanty town areas and land tenure issues. Furthermore, the URC is working with local churches in developing "Free Villages" to allow for improving economic status.

In answer to a question regarding training at a local level, Rev Orr hoped that the plan is to cascade training into Synods using training material developed by the denomination. It was noted that any cascading down of training will need to be done in an authentic way and have to be true to those who are trained. The areas for mentoring to be started not only from Transatlantic slavery's source/historical origins but also from areas of greatest impact.

Finally, the work has its basis in the existing CWM link and that they are ahead of the game in terms of Church apologies, reparations, education, citizenship etc.

#### **14. Pre-Lunch Announcements**

Rev Zaidie Orr: Stepwise is a discipleship and the courses are available, especially Faith Filled life and to contact Lesley Coote via the Synod Office. Two new streams coming to a place near us soon – ‘Environment’ and ‘Story-telling’ and both will be accessed either online or face to face. Mrs Val Morrison: The Elders Development Group are hosting another development session, this time at Longcauseway in Dewsbury. See the website for more details or again via the Synod office.

**Grace was offered by the Moderator and Lunch was taken.**

#### **15. The Wilderness Hub**

Mrs Megan Tillbrook addressed Synod on the matter of the Wilderness Hub which is an initiative from the Children and Young People’s Committee.

Synod worked in breakout groups in response to several questions regarding our existing church culture:

- What do you hope to pass onto the next generation?
- What are our traditions?
- What needs to happen to bring our hopes for the next generation and our current traditions together?

Each group asked to list top three answers and these will be collated by Megan Tillbrook. There were a wide variety of responses covering local churches and URC generally. Initial responses noted that belief and the ways that one generation passes onto the next one is similar across experiences as well as noting that our traditions may not go towards attracting people into our church

Representatives were invited to take this back to their churches and it will also be talked about at Synod Forums

#### **WILDERNESS**

The Children and Young People’s Committee (CYP) has a plan for up to five Wilderness hubs within the Synod. A group of churches is in advanced conversation with Megan Tillbrook & Wilderness Team, but there are the resources available for another. Megan Tillbrook is happy to speak with church/es to develop around the Synod.

Mr Dan Morrell, the CYP Convenor added that on the question of the recognition of children’s leaders, Yorkshire Synod is ahead of the game and has provided a lead to the denomination. If churches want to recognise further the work of children & Youth work in their churches talk to either Megan Tillbrook or Dan Morrell.

#### **16. Synod Manses**

Following on from the brief paper offered by the Moderator at the October Synod, the Synod’s Property Officer, Mrs Jane Bunyan, addressed Synod on the progress being made along these lines. In particular mention was made of the group being set up by Property Committee on request of Synod Council to look at all things Manse. Much of the work would be within the existing guidelines set out in the Plan for partnership and the current Synod Manse Policy (available from the Synod Office). Jane Bunyan also reiterated that churches who have manses will be consulted throughout the process.

Questions were taken from the floor regarding the remit, the group and the areas which it will be covering. Synod was assured that matters regarding responsibility for the cost of building surveys and where capital is to be held and directed on the sale of manses would be covered.

## 17. Synod Finances

The Treasurer, Rev Simon Copley, introduced the paper he had authored and expanded on it in those areas which require deeper explanation. In all, the state of the finances was such that the Synod financial team are constantly looking at how to effectively resource the Synod, both in allowing it to work for the churches and to enable it to resource those churches who want to do active missional work. Added to this is the need to be able to meet our responsibilities to the national URC. At present Yorkshire Synod is able to do this. The Treasurer hoped to be able to bring this together when presenting the 2025 budget at the October 2024 Synod meeting.

## 18. Synod Life

The Clerk introduced this section and asked that the following Resolution be brought to Synod as it covers much of the Synod life section of the day's proceedings:

### Resolution No 1

Synod receives the report of its Council. Passed unanimously.

The Clerk then led Synod in moving through those aspects of Synod life which have a bearing on the work of Synod:

1. Synod Evangelist: As the Synod Evangelist, Rev Ashley Evans was unable to attend due to him having another engagement in his diary, but instead sent a video which was played in the hope that it would inspire further engagement with his work as Synod Evangelist and with LYCiG.
2. Assembly Executive Feedback: There had been 2 Assembly Executive meetings since Synod last met, on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2023 to approve URC Budget and between February 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>. Key areas of Synod interest from the February meeting included the proposed changes to the Special Category Ministry Scheme, the continued work of the Church Life Review, the adoption of the Modern Slavery Statement and that a Net Zero Task Group was set up to ensure the adoption of the Environment Policy passed in 2022 is upheld. For full details refer to <https://urc.org.uk/general-assembly-assembly-executive-assembly-committees/assembly-executive/>
3. Committee reports. The Clerk asked that the following Resolution be brought to Synod:

### Resolution No 2

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

- i. Moderator's Report.
- ii. Synod Council Report
- iii. Ministries Committee.
- iv. Treasurer/Financial Resources Committee.
- v. Safeguarding Committee.
- vi. Listed Buildings Advisory Committee.
- vii. Keld Project Report

Passed unanimously

In addition to the papers received, the Convenor of the Pastoral Committee, Rev Jason McCullagh reported that three pastorates are in vacancy (including the CRCW project in Huddersfield). He was also happy to report that Joe Amoah has answered a call into the Harrogate, St Pauls pastorate and Simon Cross has answered a call into the Hull pastorate. There are currently conversations regarding ministry for the Bradford churches and for a third minister for the Leeds partnership. Finally, Synod Pastoral Elders are vital in ensuring a link between Synod and the local church, and more invitations have been sent out, but there is an urgent need for Pastoral Elders to care for the Bradford, Calderdale and Huddersfield and the Don and Dearne areas.

The Property Officer, Mrs Jane Bunyan, addressed Synod and noted that the Listed Building Advisory Committee needs a secretary. She is happy to talk it through with any interested party.

4. The Clerk reminded Synod that the meeting of General Assembly had reverted to an annual cycle and as such it is in Synod's gift to send representatives each year. Each Synod has an allocation of 16 representatives and at present there are 14 names which the Clerk brought in the following Resolution:

**Resolution No 10:** Synod appoints the following to be part of its representation of 16 people to the URC General Assembly meeting to be held between 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024 and 15<sup>th</sup> July 2024: Rev Jamie Kissack, Rev Fran Kissack, Rev Simon Copley, Rev Sarah Fitton, Rev Samantha Sheehan, Rev Chris Wood, Mr Tim Crossley, Mr Daniel Raddings, Mr John Eveleigh, Miss Katherine Buckland, Mrs Claire Nutt, Miss Kacie Hodgson, Mrs Claire Westgarth, Miss Megan Westgarth.

Passed unanimously.

5. The Clerk then introduced the rest of the resolutions for Synod's consideration noting in particular the service of Alan & Janet Kendall.

#### **Resolution No 4**

Synod records with sadness the closure of Stainland and Holywell Green URC on 31st December 2023. Synod offers thanksgiving for the life and witness of its members over the years since its creation in 1996 from the amalgamation of Stainland URC (founded in 1813) and Holywell Green URC (founded in 1868). Passed unanimously.

#### **Resolution No 5**

Revd Heather Pollard has stood down as Stipendiary representative on the Synod Ministries Committee. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Revd Heather Pollard for her work in this committee and wishes her well for the future. Passed unanimously.

#### **Resolution No 6**

Mr Alan Kendall has stood down as a member of the Children and Young People's Committee. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mr Alan Kendall for his work in the committee and wishes him well for the future. Passed unanimously.

#### **Resolution No 7**

Mr Alan Kendall has stood down as the Yorkshire Synod's Pilots Representative after over 20 years of service. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mr Alan Kendall for his work for Pilots over the years and wishes him well for the future. Passed unanimously.

**Resolution No 8**

Professor Richard Whiting is stepping down as the URC Representative on the Leeds Universities Chaplaincy Trust having been in the role for just under 10 years. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Professor Richard Whiting for his work with the Chaplaincy Trust and wishes him well for the future. Passed unanimously.

**Resolution No 9**

Synod thanks Mrs Ailsa Johnson for her three years of service as Convenor of the Safeguarding Committee and appoints her to serve a three-year term until March 2027 as Convenor of the Joint Safeguarding Committee. Passed unanimously.

**Resolution No 11**

Synod thanks Rev Fran Kissack for her service as Synod Mission Council/Assembly Executive representative and appoints her to serve a further one-year term until March 2025 as Synod Assembly Executive representative. Passed unanimously.

**19. Thanks**

The Clerk offered thanks to

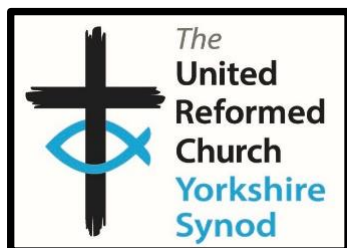
- Rev Jamie Kissack for leading us today.
- Those who have participated: Ms Carrie Kaunda, Rev Zaidie Orr, Mrs Megan Tillbrook, Rev Jason McCullah, Mrs Jane Bunyan.
- To the Office Staff, Sally, Anne, Rachel and Hayley for coping with the way Synod has been put together this Spring and for their continuing work for the Synod between meetings.
- All who have joined us at Central URC, Sheffield and have coped with this return to a simpler way of doing Synod. The Clerk asked representatives to take back to their churches not just your impressions of the day but also the information you have received and share it with your congregations. He also asked for feedback as the Synod Team need to know what we did well, what needs improving and how we do this kind of meeting in the future.
- To the good folk at Central URC, Sheffield for allowing us to use their buildings and for their hospitality this morning, this lunchtime and after we adjourn.

**20. Closing Worship including in Memoriam**

Closing worship was led by Rev Zaidie Orr and included the Synod’s In Memoriam (appended to the minutes).

**21. Synod Concluded** to meet again on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at Christchurch, Ilkley.

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



# Yorkshire Synod In Memoriam October 2023 to March 2024

## Ministers

Rev'd Michael Wear	Stainland & Holywell Green 1971-5; Ravensthorpe & Mirfield, Hopton 1975-81; Argyle Morley & Staple Hill Bristol 1981-4; Brotherton, Castleford & Knottingley 1984-93; Selby & Chaplain Selby Coalfield 1993-2005; South Cave 2001-5.
Rev'd Paul Smith	Nailsea 1963-64, Albion & Parkdale Road, Nottingham 1965-68, Sleaford 1968-71, Brigg 1976-78, Spenborough Group 1980-85, Wigton Moor, Leeds 1985-88.
Rev'd John Belderson	Shepherds Bush 1962-65, Twickenham 1965-74; West Park, Leeds 1971-86, Dacre 1986-98.

## Elders

Olive McKeand	Elder	Riddlesden URC
John Wadsworth	Elder	Knottingley URC, Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher and Local Leader.
Jim Reid OBE	Elder	West Park, Leeds
Cynthia Hunter	Elder	West Park, Leeds
Ethel Atkin	Elder	Heckmondwike
Selen Fajan	Elder	Sheffield, St James
Dr Angus McLeod	Elder	St Columba's York
Brian Robbins	Elder	Norristhorpe URC
Pauline Blackman	Elder	Norristhorpe URC
Barbara Fleetwood	Elder	Moldgreen URC
Maureen Thompson	Elder	Moldgreen URC
Dorothy Adam	Elder	St Andrew's Sheffield
Sheila Sherwell	Elder	Dore & Totley URC