



Minutes of the meeting of the Yorkshire Synod of the United Reformed Church held on Saturday 12th October 2024 at Christchurch, Ilkley.

1. Welcome

The Moderator offered a welcome to all who have attended, and especially to those attending a Synod meeting for the first time. These included Rev's Joe Amoah and Simon Cross, and Helen Snashall who is now working as a Church Related Community Worker in Huddersfield. The Moderator also noted the recent retirement of Rev Heather Pollard.

2. Synod Convened

Synod was convened by the Moderator, Rev Jamie Kissack.

3. Present

There were 38 Lay people, 18 Ministers, 1 CRCW, 1 Lay Leader and 6 Retired Ministers representing 42 churches, Yorkshire Synod Youth, Leeds University Chaplaincy, Leeds Hospitals Trust and Sheffield Teaching Hospitals Trust.

4. Apologies

Apologies have been received from 1 Minister, 1 Retired Minister and 4 Lay People.

5. Minutes

The minutes of the March 2024 meeting were presented, agreed as a true record and were signed by the Moderator.

Synod had also met three times since the March 2024 meeting: on 27th July 2024 at St Paul's Harrogate for the ordination and induction of Rev Joe Amoah; on 3rd August 2024 for the ordination and induction of Rev Simon Cross; and on 28th September for the commissioning of Helen Snashall as the Church Related Community Work Minister into the Huddersfield "Unite, Respect, Connect" project.

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 March 2025 meeting

Synod will meet again on the Saturday, 8th March at Heckmondwike United Reformed Church. 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 the reading chosen by Rev Joe Amoah, Ephesians 4:1-16, on the theme of Fruitfulness.

10. Pioneering Ministry and Intentional Communities

Rev Simon Cross led on Pioneering Ministry and Intentional Communities and how it fits into what Yorkshire Synod is planning for the future. He asked Synod to consider the following questions:

1. What do we understand about 'pioneering'?
2. What is our experience of 'pioneering'?
3. What concerns might we have about 'pioneering'?
4. What hopes might we have for 'pioneering'?

Synod members considered the questions and from the floor the following reflections were raised:

1. Pioneering ministry is doing something different; it is reaching the uninvited; its definition is difficult as environment/context changes; it is meeting people where they are.
2. Synod members' experience of Pioneering Ministry was through non-church environment gatherings, for example in forests, shops, pubs and in developing of intentional communities. Experience shared of taking things outside conventional church environments. Much of CRCW work is pioneering in areas and with people who the church doesn't often try or is unable to reach. Working outside the existing parameters of church and being church in the real world.
3. Concerns included comments on, how do we know it is working; that Pioneering Ministry is dependent on a structured church to underpin it and the ability of "conventional" church to identify what is pioneering, such as questions about the status of Messy Church. Other comments included the worry that we professionalize something that should be part and parcel of existing church life.
4. Hopes offered included, that the Holy Spirit inspires us to change our way of doing church and that we can embrace a church without walls. Also, a hope that within a pioneering church, people will develop their Christianity within the wider church; a hope that we are equipped to go as Christians into the unknown and a hope that pioneering will clarify those areas which make up the essential elements of being Christian.

Rev Cross reminded Synod that General Assembly had agreed that each Synod will have a "Pioneer Ministry" post. The question was asked of Synod of who with, and where it felt that this sort of post might best be deployed? Suggestions about who it should be aimed at included a role across all the Universities within the Synod boundary; working with the very young and to grow that ministry through family development; working with Prison leavers; working with Primary and Secondary Schools to build relationships with the URC; working with those already "Present" in church buildings through more proactive planning. The "where" element had responses which included new housing estates, new towns, areas where Christianity has retreated and areas which could benefit from an ecumenical approach.

In conclusion, Rev Cross noted that "Pioneering" is not the best of terms, but we need to encourage new initiative rather than tie it up in existing red tape. Further comments are welcome as this side to Synod life is only just warming up.

11. Synod Forums.

Rev Jason McCullagh gave feedback on the four Synod Forums held during 2024 at St Andrew's Scarborough on 11th May, Gleadless on 1st June, Salem Burley on 8th June and Christchurch Hipperholme on 6th July.

They were on an open Invitation basis with the structure founded on engaging with scripture and led to feedback on a wide range of topics into Synod. 87 people in total attended.

Rev McCullagh reported on the feedback, listing many of the hopes and fears of those who attended. Much of the feedback has been brought to Pastoral Committee and Synod Council and is in the process of being addressed. One element that has, is that a fresh Lay Presidency course is being put together and details will be circulated of the two sessions being planned.

Finally, Rev McCullagh informed Synod of the dates of next year's Forums in 2025: 24th May, 31st May, 7th June and 12th July. The venues and the format are yet to be advised.

12. Stepwise

Dr Lesley Coote and Rev Rosalind Selby outlined latest news on the Stepwise front and introduced a 6-minute video.

Stepwise is expanding with new streams coming through including "Faith Filled Environment" led by Rev Rosalind Selby. She informed Synod that the stream has been written and is being developed as a web-based course. The plan is for it to be available sometime in 2025. She then explained the other streams within program and pointed interested parties to the link on the main URC website at <https://urc.org.uk/your-faith/developing-your-faith/stepwise/>

Each stream is designed with flexibility in mind with both in person and remote learning available, as well as each stream having its own set of devotions.

The Stepwise videos shown can be accessed here: <https://youtu.be/QT6aQlf5ZGI> and <https://youtu.be/3B4p4mYi2Xg>.

13. 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 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/>

14. Fairtrade and Palestine

The Clerk introduced Hilary Davies, who had brought along the Fairtrade Stall. She had also spent three months in the West Bank earlier this year as an EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme Palestine/Israel). Using a PowerPoint presentation she described her time in Palestine/Israel in April to June 2024 with EAPPI as part of an international team based in the West Bank. The EAPPI programme began in 2002 after a plea from Church leaders in Jerusalem to send a non-violent international presence to the region. It is managed by the World Council of Churches internationally, and by Quaker Peace and Social Witness in the UK and Ireland.

Based in Jericho, Hilary worked with Israeli and Palestinian peace activists as a human rights monitor. This included reporting on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law as well as supporting nonviolent resistance by Palestinians and Israelis.

An important aspect of the role is the advocacy of the work EAPPI does in Palestine and on returning to West Yorkshire she has been giving, and will continue to give, talks to groups on her experience whilst away. Hilary would be very happy to come and share her experiences in the Jordan Valley with you at your Church. If you are interested or want to know more, please contact Hilary at hils38@aol.com. The PowerPoint is available from the Clerk via the Synod Office.

15. Pre-Lunch Announcements

Rev Steven Knapton showcased the renovations recently completed at Hornsea URC and advertised their 150th Anniversary celebration which were to take place during October 2024. The video is available from the Clerk via the Synod Office.

Grace was offered by the Moderator and Lunch was taken.

Over lunch the following promotional video from the URC Communications team was shown:

<https://youtu.be/ceeONbrYtvE>

16. Wilderness

Mrs Megan Tillbrook addressed Synod on the matter of the work being done by the Synod's Wilderness team under the auspices of the Children and Youth Committee as well as highlighting the work the national team is doing. The Synod's team link-in with the National on a regular basis, especially when it comes to promoting denominational events such as Youth Assembly and the Youth Leaders conference (7th - 9th March 2025), the 1T4 Youth weekend (2nd to 4th May) and the Junction 24 event for 18–25-year-olds (31st January – 2nd February). Much of the national resources for Children and Youth work is distributed through the Synod team, including the Advent Packs, and in 2025 expect the Holiday Club 2025 resources to be released in late January/early February. Other resources are readily available, so please either contact Megan at the Synod Office or look online on the Synod or National websites, especially where churches have links with other youth organisations.

Megan also highlighted the Lundie Award, and the fact that Imogen from Westfield Wyke URC was a worthy recipient of the award in August 2024. She also put the word out that nominations are open for Yorkshire Synod Youth Representatives to the national Youth Assembly and for further information (as well as the PowerPoint slides shown) to contact her at

megancyp@urcyorkshire.org.uk

17. General Assembly 2024

Several of the team that went to General Assembly in July 2024 offered their thoughts and reflection on the meeting.

Mr John Eveleigh reflected on the Local Ministry & Mission Review renewal. As the old system was bureaucratic the national Ministries Committee is looking to develop a more 'light touch' version which will encourage churches to ask themselves several questions about their mission. This will help churches to create their own "living document" on which that mission can be based. He also updated Synod on the national Communications strategy and its implementation. At a more local level, individual churches may want to consider getting involved in more local promotion to raise the visibility of the URC & themselves in particular.

Rev Sarah Fitton reported on "Voices & Treasures" which was brought to life through the innovative worship held at General Assembly, led by the GA Moderator's chaplains, Karen Cambell and Rev Stephen Ansa-Addo. She was also encouraged by the contribution by URC Youth and that General

Assembly celebrate the annual community awards, the link to which is here:

<https://urc.org.uk/your-church/church-local-and-global/community-project-awards/>

Rev Fran Kissack led the feedback on the discussions and debate regarding the situation in Gaza and noted that more time was allocated to it than originally planned. Resolutions were passed on the Gaza attacks, calling for peace in the region as well as urging the UK government to end arms sales as well as denouncing all acts of antisemitism and islamophobia. They can be found on the URC website at <https://urc.org.uk/general-assembly-executive-assembly-committees/general-assembly/>. Fran also mentioned that General Assembly encouraged every local church & Synod to reach out to their local inter-faith partners to encourage deeper learning and awareness as well as the request to our Trust companies to be aware of where church and Synod resources are invested.

Other highlights include a stronger partnership with Place for Hope, Legacies of Slavery Fund and the development of national Elders in Local Leadership Policies.

18. Synod Business

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:

The Clerk then moved

Resolution No 1

Synod receives the report of its Council which passed unanimously.

And

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. Children and Youth Work Committee***

which passed unanimously.

19. Synod Finances

The Synod Treasurer, Rev Simon Copley introduced the paper which had been submitted and expanded upon it outlining those areas which required deeper explanation. Key areas of change are the move to look at budgeting over a 10-year period, the support of the Wilderness project and a streamlining over time of funding streams whilst committing to the existing streams.

He noted that the Pensions challenge was not as great as it had been to the extent that Synods may not need to contribute when the fund is revalued in the late autumn. Safeguarding will probably continue to be a major source of expenditure: the Synod (working with Northern Synod) is currently 13 months into the existing structure and the treasurer has budgeted for it to continue beyond the current two-year project after a review is brought to the forthcoming Safeguarding and Synod Council meetings. All in all, the Treasurer noted that Yorkshire Synod is still able to be flexible in the face of the unknown.

The Treasurer then moved Resolution No 3

Yorkshire Synod, meeting at Christchurch, Ilkley on 12th October 2024, resolves the following: To receive and accept the Yorkshire URC Synod Budget for 2025 as circulated, presented and submitted.

which passed unanimously.

The Treasurer then addressed Synod on wider URC matters. The Pensions challenge is looking more positive, and he also mentioned the ongoing Church Life Review, whereby plans are being put forward to make the existing Inter Synod Resource sharing scheme a more relevant and robust operation. He mentioned that the URC Church Building fund has been used, and encouraged churches to use it, especially where projects include plans for fuel efficiency. Currently the Financial Resources Committee are looking to enable the Synod's funding streams to be made more user friendly and simpler. Forms and processes being worked on in the hope that this will help churches to apply for what they need and not for what they are told. The Committee have also agreed to increase the maximum available Synod loans from £15,000 to £25,000. The Financial Resources Committee is also conscious of pressures churches face in relation to Ministry & Mission contributions and is actively looking at Synod policies regarding Closed Churches, Amalgamation and Manses to allow for funding opportunities to be made clearer and fairer.

20. Synod Life

The Moderator drew attention to the first part of the Synod Council report and the list of 12 outcomes which have been identified to work on. It is now work in process.

The Clerk then asked that the Moderator introduce the Yorkshire Synod Ecumenical Strategy (p7 in the Synod Council Report and available from the Clerk via the Synod Office).

The Moderator noted that the strategy speaks for itself, but by listing the strategy's aims, it keeps Synod on track with its thoughts.

The Moderator then Proposed Resolution No 4

Yorkshire Synod, meeting at Christchurch, Ilkley on 12th October 2024, resolves to adopt the United Reformed Church Yorkshire Synod Ecumenical Strategy as presented and reaffirms the URC's foundation in a commitment to ecumenism as a part of our living faith.

which passed unanimously.

The Moderator expanded on some other Committee work, in particular the fact that the Wilderness Worker for the Harrogate area churches advert is live, and that conversations with Bradford churches regarding a second post are starting. The Moderator also mentioned the Synod's Eco Apostles whose questionnaire was sent around and at the moment approximately 20 churches have expressed a wish for help towards a move to net zero. A Meeting has been called for Wednesday 23rd October to start the process.

The Clerk continued and moved the following Resolutions:

Resolution No 5

Synod offers thanksgivings for the life and witness of Luddenden Foot United Reformed Church, and of its members and adherents, which sadly closed on 30th April 2024 after 165 years of service in that community. Synod prays that its legacy continues and for the members and friends of Luddenden Foot URC as they continue their Christian journeys in other places.

which passed unanimously.

Resolution No 6

Synod offers thanksgivings for the life and witness of Flanshaw United Reformed Church, and of its members and adherents, which sadly closed on 15th September 2024 after 158 years of service in that community. Synod prays that its legacy continues and for the members and friends of Flanshaw URC as they continue their Christian journeys in other places.

which passed unanimously.

Resolution No 7

Synod offers thanksgivings for the life and witness of Brackenhall United Reformed Church, its members and adherents which sadly closed on 29th September 2024 after 84 years of service in that community. Synod prays that its legacy continues and for the members and friends of Brackenhall URC as they continue their Christian journeys in other places.

which passed unanimously.

Resolution No 8

Mr Steve Gooder has stood down as a member of the Financial Resources Committee after many years of dedicated service. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mr Steve Gooder for his work in the committee and wishes him well for the future.

which passed unanimously.

Resolution No 9

Mrs Christine Hall has stood down as the secretary to and member of the Ministries Committee after many years of dedicated service. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Mrs Christine Hall for her work in the committee and wishes her well for the future.

which passed unanimously.

Resolution No 10

Ms Katherine Buckland has stood down as a member of Synod Council and as secretary to and member of the Pastoral Committee. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Ms Katherine Buckland for her work in both capacities and wishes her well for the future.

which passed unanimously.

Resolution No 11

Rev Geoff Ellis has stood down as the Non-Stipendiary Minister representative on the Ministries Committee after many years of dedicated service. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Rev Geoff Ellis for his work in the committee and wishes him well for the future.

which passed unanimously.

Resolution No 12

Rev John Jenkinson has stood down as one of the Synod's Retired Ministers' link persons after many years of dedicated service. Synod wishes to place on record its thanks to Rev John Jenkinson for this work and wishes him well for the future.

which passed unanimously.

Resolution No 13

Rev Sarah Fitton has agreed serve as the Stipendiary Minister representative on the Ministries Committee. Therefore, Synod appoints Rev Sarah Fitton to serve as the Stipendiary Minister representative on the Ministries Committee for a period of three years until October 2027.

which passed unanimously.

Resolution No 14

Mr Gordon Justham has agreed serve as a member of the Financial Resources Committee. Therefore, Synod appoints Mr Gordon Justham to serve as a member of the Financial Resources Committee for a period of three years until October 2027.

which passed unanimously.

Resolution No 15

Mrs Claire Nutt has agreed serve as a member of the Pastoral Committee. Therefore, Synod appoints Mrs Claire Nutt to serve as a member of the Pastoral Committee for a period of three years until October 2027.

which passed unanimously.

Resolution No 16

Mrs Margaret Knapton has agreed serve as a member of the Pastoral Committee. Therefore, Synod appoints Mrs Margaret Knapton to serve as a member of the Pastoral Committee for a period of three years until October 2027.

which passed unanimously.

Resolution No 17

Rev Steven Knapton has agreed serve as a member of the Pastoral Committee. Therefore, Synod appoints Rev Steven Knapton to serve as a member of the Pastoral Committee for a period of three years until October 2027.

which passed unanimously.

21. Thanks

The Clerk offered thanks to

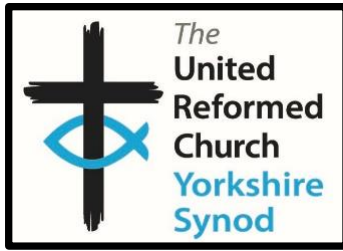
- Rev Jamie Kissack for leading us today.
- Those who have participated: Simon, Jason, Zaidie, Rosalind, Carrie, Hilary, Simon and the General Assembly Team.
- To the Office Staff, Sally, Anne, Rachel and Hayley for coping with the way Synod has been put together this Autumn and for their continuing work for the Synod between meetings. This comes with the request that any papers for the March 2025 Synod meeting are with the Clerk by Mid-February.
- All who have joined us at Christchurch, Ilkley. The Clerk asked representatives to take back to their churches not just impressions of the day but also the information you have received and share it with their congregations. With that came a request 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 Christchurch, Ilkley, for allowing us to use their buildings and for their hospitality this morning, this lunchtime and after we adjourn.

22. Closing Worship including in Memoriam

Closing worship was led by Rev Roberta Topham and members of Christchurch, Ilkley and included the Synod’s In Memoriam (appended to the minutes).

23. Synod Concluded to meet again on 8th March 2025 at Heckmondwike United Reformed Church.

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



Yorkshire Synod In Memoriam March 2024 to October 2024

Elders

Elizabeth Belderson

Betty James

Shirley Lawton

Peter Geoffrey (Geoff) Brogden

Sandra Smith

Frank Taylor

Irene Thynne

Ray Dunn

Frank Dale

Janet Ackroyd

Connie Smallbones

Elder

Elder & Church Secretary

Elder

Elder

Elder

Elder

Elder & Church Secretary

Elder

Elder

Elder

Elder

Dacre URC

Clayton West

Lightcliffe URC & Christchurch Hipperholme

West Park Leeds

Stainbeck URC

Hornsea URC

Emmanuel St John, Scarborough

The Bridge Church, Otley

The Bridge Church, Otley

Denholme

Denholme