

Meeting of The United Reformed Church Wessex Synod



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Meeting ID: 428 112 2198

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Thursday 2nd February 2023

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AGENDA

18:00	Registration for Voting Members - V	
18:15	Registration for Non-Voting Members - X	
18:30	Welcome & Synod constituted by the Moderator	
18:35	Opening devotions	Moderator
18:45	Welcome to ecumenical visitors and new members of Synod	Moderator
	Apologies	Clerk
	Minutes of previous Synod	Clerk
	Matters Arising	Clerk
18:50	Children and Youth Work Committee	Josh Thomas
19:05	Anti-racist church video	Moderator
19:15	Breakout rooms	
Break from 19:30 to 19:45, please be back by 19:45		
19:45	Share any views	
20:05	Mission & Outreach Committee	Ray Stanyon
20:30	AE Paper A1	Clerk
	Resolution 1 - Nominations	
	Resolution 2 - General Assembly	
20:50	Resolution 3 – Wessex Trust	Romilly Micklem
20:55	closing prayers	Moderator

Next meeting of Synod: Online on Tuesday 25th April 2023

UPDATE ON ORDINANDS, MINISTERIAL AND CHURCH CHANGES

Ordinands and CRCWs training for Ministry

Name	College	Ministry Category	Finish Date
Gillian Bailey	Westminster	Non-Stipendiary Ministry Model 4	June 2023
Ruth Dewis	Westminster	Stipendiary Ministry	June 2023
Alice Gilbert	Northern	Church Related Community Worker	June 2023
Siobhan Antoniou	Northern	Stipendiary Ministry	June 2024
Simon Peters	Northern	Stipendiary Ministry	June 2026
Abigail Perrow	Westminster	Stipendiary Ministry	June 2026

Ministerial Changes

- 31st October Tim Clarke ended his SCM post at IBEX and commenced transitional ministry in the South East Area whilst continuing to serve at Buckland, Portsmouth.
- 31st December Helen Garton moved from Oxford St Columba's and Cumnor to the Synod of Scotland

Deaths

- 18th October Chris Copley

Changes before next Synod

- 28th February Richard Becher retires from Lymington URC and moves to West Midlands Synod.
- 11th March Longham URC Thanksgiving Service
- 31st March Clare Downing finishes role as Moderator of Wessex Synod and moves to North Western Synod.

MINUTES

MINUTES of the meeting of **WESSEX SYNOD** on Saturday 8th October 2022, held at Woking URC.

The Moderator, the Revd. Clare Downing, welcomed members to the meeting and constituted the Synod. Keith Bradley, Woking URC Church Secretary, gave the safety announcement.

Revd Lucy Brierley and members of the worship group at Woking URC led Synod in opening worship: The Woking Children's Singing Group sang the song "Everlasting God, the years go by..." and the Young People's Group led a presentation with flags including the song "Come, Lord Jesus", reflecting on diversity, division, and the healing and unity that God brings through Jesus Christ. The Church Secretary led in prayer.

Attendance

23	URC Ministers and CRCWs
39	Church representatives
0	Ministers of other denominations
0	Retired Ministers/CRCWs
0	Ordinands
10	Others holding Synod appointments
10	Visitors
82	Total

22S21 The Moderator reported that because of ill health Karen Bell, Synod Clerk, was unable to attend Synod. The Moderator brought Resolution 1, not included on the published agenda:

RESOLUTION 1

Synod agrees to appoint Michael Hopkins to act as Clerk for this meeting.

This was agreed unanimously.

22S22 Welcome to Ecumenical visitors and new members of Synod: The Moderator welcomed those observing Synod online on YouTube and reminded Synod that some of the workshops later in the afternoon would be hybrid meetings, as indicated on the agenda.

The Moderator welcomed those for whom this meeting of Synod was their first and welcomed ecumenical guests, Revd Dr David Hinchliffe, Chair of the South East Methodist District, Revd Andrew de Ville, Chair of Southampton Methodist District, and the Revd Dr. Lordwell Siame, Bishop of the Lusaka Presbytery, United Church of Zambia. Patrick Wintrebert from the Nord Normandie Region of the Eglise Protestante Unie de France had sent his apologies, as had the Rt Revd Richard Moth, Bishop of Arundel and Brighton, and the Rt Revds Andrew Watson, Bishop of Guildford and Dr. Jo Bailey Wells, Bishop of Dorking.

The Moderator explained the Consensus Decision making process followed at Synod.

22S23 Pastoral news: The Moderator referred Synod to the update on Ordinands, Ministerial and Church Closures in the Synod papers, noting the deaths of Revds Jim Forster (an obituary to whom was included in the Synod papers), Richard Wiggins, and Brian Treharne (obituaries to follow).

The Moderator led Synod in a time of prayer.

The Moderator highlighted the inductions of Revds Helen Everard and Alison Toplas, to Fleet URC and Beacon Hill URC respectively, neither having moved into the Synod, and the Revds Melanie and Darren Pike (Baptists) inducted to United Church Ferndown. The Moderator also referred to

Caversham Park, Reading, mentioned in the report, which has ceased to be a Local Ecumenical Partnership (UMBCE) and has become a URC.

22S24 Apologies were received from

11	URC Ministers
11	Church Representatives
0	Ministers of other denominations
1	Ordinand
24	Retired Ministers
7	Others
54	Total

22S25 Minutes of the last meeting: The Minutes were agreed and will be signed as a correct record. No matters arising from the Minutes were identified as not included in the agenda for this meeting.

22S26 Order of business and announcements: The acting Clerk had no changes in the order of business to notify.

22S27 Welcome from the Mayor of Woking: The Moderator welcomed the Mayor of Woking, Cllr Saj Hussain, to Synod, and invited the Mayor to address Synod. In welcoming Synod to Woking the Mayor referred to the building of the Mosque and the Buddhist Temple in Woking by way of illustrating the diversity represented throughout the town, and to the valuable working together by the churches and faith communities. The council grants relaxation of car parking charges to any faith group that wishes to apply. The Mayor welcomed Synod to the town.

22S28 Synod Executive: The Moderator presented the report, and in doing so highlighted that:

- i. Those interested in attending Assembly in 2023 or in the future should speak to other members of Synod who had attended in the past, and to contact the Clerk if they would like to represent the Synod in 2023.
- ii. Anyone interested in assisting with the formation of a Wessex Synod Communication Strategy and willing to be part of a task group to do so is asked to email Revd Graham Hoslett at graham.hoslett1@outlook.com
- iii. Members of Synod were asked to consider members in their churches who might be being called by God to serve on the various Synod and Assembly committees and roles
- iv. It had not proved possible for the new Synod website to go live by the day of Synod. The website would now be live on Sunday, 9th October 2022.
- v. In response to a question concerning the feedback sessions on General Assembly, the Moderator intimated that no further feedback sessions to those already offered and referred to in the report were planned and directed members of Synod to the link to the papers and Record of Assembly on the Synod website and to the list of Resolutions of particular interest to local churches, Synods and Ministers attached at the end of the report
- vi. Anyone willing to be part of the organising group for another 'Wessex Synod Big Day Out' is asked to volunteer to the Clerk

The Moderator brought Resolution 2 to the Synod:

RESOLUTION 2

Synod resolves that a Task Group be set up to plan for a further Big Day Our in Spring 2024.

The Moderator invited Synod to raise any questions for clarification:

- Were there any financial information or statistics that could be given to indicate the success of the Big Day Out 2022? Revd. Dr. Romilly Micklem, convenor of the Wessex Trust, advised that the cost of the Big Day Out had been approximately £14,000, not including the contributions of those attending on the day. The Trust had originally offered to cover up to £10,000, but this offer had been extended. Romilly expects the costs for the proposed Big Day Out 2024 to be less, and asked that the Planning Group make it clear from the beginning of the event being promoted that there will be a ticket price for those attending.
- A big expense was the use of Eventbrite for the bookings. It is hoped that bookings for 2024 will be directly through the new Synod website.
- Although it had been a great day out in 2022, is there confidence that there is appetite for the same event every two years? Another member of Synod referred to the members of their Messy Church who had enjoyed the event so much that they were sure their Messy Church would go en-masse in 2024.
- The Moderator said that the rationale for the proposal that any Big Day Out in 2024 should be at the same site was that it had been so popular.

The resolution was agreed by consensus.

22S29 Safeguarding Reference Group: The acting Clerk presented the report.

The Moderator commented that it is hoped that Good Practise 6, due to be launched in 2023 as mentioned in the report, will be clearer in its purpose than GP5 and less overwhelming in terms of the volume of material.

Safeguarding training continues to be offered in person and online.

22S30 Ministries & Learning Committee: Revd Wayne Hawkins presented the report, and questions and matters of clarification on the report were invited.

- It was stated in the Pastoral Committees section of the report that more might be reported at Synod regarding the two transitional ministries in the SPC(SE). Mr Hawkins invited Revd Dr Sarah Hall, convenor SPS(SE), to speak, who explained that two transitional ministries have been granted to enable the pastorates to identify their mission and ministry at this time. The SPC is excited at the possibilities such transitional ministries may offer and hopes that the congregations involved will welcome this development.
- Tony Brett, convenor of the SPC(NW) wished to thank Revd Hawkins for leading the Ministries & Learning Committee together through the consultation process that had led to this point and thanked the members of the SPCs for their service and asked churches to hold SPCs and the M&L Committee in prayer during the continuing process.

The Moderator invited Revd Nigel Appleton as the Alternate Chair to chair Synod at this point, enabling the Moderator to join Mr Hawkins in presenting the Synod Ministerial Deployment Strategy.

Mr Hawkins introduced the proposed strategy. Doing so, Mr Hawkins reminded Synod that the strategy seeks to identify how the Synod might best deploy a declining resource across a challenging geography, against what is not a blank piece of paper. M&L have led an open consultation, inviting ideas as to how to address the challenges faced. The adoption of a strategy is the first step, how then to implement and also encourage ministries within the churches and pastorates follows, led by SPCs and facilitated by M&L.

The Chair invited members of Synod to raise matters for clarification:

- Could an indication be given of the numbers of Stipendiary and Non-Stipendiary Ministers, Church Related Community Workers currently in the Synod?

- A typo in the last of the bulleted Principles on page 23 of the reports was corrected “Ministries and Learning” not “Mission and Learning”.
- Could further indication of the timescale envisaged for the implementation of the strategy be given?
- How will any criteria of mission and mission potential be measured – such criteria for deployment may be more subjective in evaluation than church membership?

Mr Hawkins replied that work is taking place toward identifying the sorts of criteria that would help clarify mission and ministry in the different contexts churches serve to inform how resources might best be deployed, and Ministries and Learning and the Mission Development Group will be engaged in conversation about this.

The Moderator stated that 12 months ago there was a deployment of 37.5 Full-time Equivalent Ministers across the Synod, and that by 2026 the Synod deployment will be reduced to 23 FTE Ministers. This is a significant change. The strategy is to seek to manage the deployment we will expect, bearing in mind that some churches have been without a Minister for several years. The Moderator commented that the Presbytery of Lusaka of the United Church of Zambia had 58 ministers serving 350,000 members in the Presbytery – Nigel Appleton reminded Synod of the workshop that afternoon that might be informative.

Further matters for clarification:

- The strategy proposed might seem to rely on the goodwill between URC churches but do local churches recognise each other sufficiently to ensure the successful implementation of the strategy? More isolated URCs may struggle to make common cause and live in partnership with neighboring URCs.
- Is there an intention for churches on the edges of the Synod to be transferred into neighbouring Synods?

The Moderator advised that boundaries between Synods have never been absolute and there have always been conversations between Synods regarding churches on the boundaries, as there have been when it comes to changes between SPCs within the Synod. The acting Clerk reminded Synod that Synod boundaries are determined by the General Assembly, and that Assembly has hitherto only changed Synod boundaries where this has been requested.

No further matters for clarification being identified, Mr Appleton directed Synod to form breakout groups within the main meeting to identify questions to be heard during the forthcoming discussion that would instruct the decision-making process.

Following discussion in small groups the following questions were raised:

- Could more information be given about the timescale for implementing the strategy, bearing in mind that some churches and pastorates have been without deployed ministry now for some time.
- What might be the order of trying to approach the resumption of pastorates joining the Vacancy List, and what is the expected interaction of this process with the current undeclared vacancies?
- What are the approaches of other Synods, and to what extent have we learnt from other Synods?
- The strategy seems to offer a welcome flexibility, but such flexibility might also bring complexity. How will we ensure that the strategy as stated will not lead to Ministers being overloaded.
- How are our ecumenical partners responding to similar challenges, and have conversations taken place with them?
- How much does the strategy as proposed represent what churches have said or has there been strong steering taking place? Is strategy the right word, would it be best to describe this as a roadmap?

- The strategy might seem to be more about what the Synod requires, rather than that those involved in ministry have a sense of fulfilment.
- Will environmental concerns also factor in how we shape ministry? If so, could this be the subject of another bullet point in Step 3, possibly including reference to the use of technology in reducing carbon footprint and spreading worship resources?
- One of the principles talks about ecumenism, but the strategy does not seem to refer to ecumenical partnerships as much as it could.
- The convenor of Children and Youth Work Committee asked that C&YW also be included in the conversations between M&L and MDG toward clarifying mission and ministry criteria.
- Should we continue to deploy full time stipendiary ministers into roles other than what might be described as pastoral charge roles?

Mr Hawkins and the Moderator responded:

- Regarding timescale the first step alluded to in the strategy is that M&L ask the SPCs to come to M&L with proposals of pastorates to be declared vacant by the end of the first year. The Moderator and Revd Hawkins will be meeting in the coming weeks to discuss further the particular process for implementation of the strategy. It is important that SPCs bring proposals for permission for pastorates to be declared vacant to M&L to ensure this is a Synod strategy for deployment and not four individual SPC strategies.
- Other Synods – we have received documents from other Synods, which have informed the consultation and strategy arising from it.
- SPCs are well placed to consider geographical constraints.
- The Moderator and Mr Hawkins both meet regularly with ecumenical partners and colleagues, and such conversations have assisted in the formation of the proposed strategy.
- Mr Hawkins said it would be good for C&YW committee to be included in the conversation between M&L and MDG, and that it would be straightforward to add environmental concerns to the criteria for M&L when hearing from SPCs the suggestions for the shape of group pastorates that may emerge.
- Technology isn't in the proposed strategy because churches and respondents to the consultation had not indicated this at the time.
- The order of the return to pastorates being declared vacant requires the adoption of such a strategy as that proposed to enable this to take place fairly.
- It is recognised that flexibility may also lead to complexity.
- To what Ministers of Word and Sacraments are deployed is a difficult question – when the Development and Support Officer posts, for example, were advertised, the posts were open to both lay and ordained applicants. The DSOs, although not in pastoral charge, do offer pastoral ministry at times within their roles.
- As far as sense of fulfilment for those engaged in full time Stipendiary Ministry within the Synod is concerned, it is recognized that the more creative and developmental work that Ministers can engage in is sometimes circumvented by the other tasks of ministry. But such concerns might best be addressed by Ministers in the context of their ongoing pastoral supervision.
- Mr Hawkins suggested that in terms of contribution to the proposed strategy, 60% of the strategy was instructed by the direct response of churches, 20% from the meetings of M&L reflecting on the consultation, and 20% from conversations with other Synods.
- An additional concern was raised from the floor of Synod: Is enough attention given generally to how teams in pastorates are structured, and how team leadership is carried out? Mr Hawkins responded that the need for training would be included in the implementation of the strategy going forward.

Mr Hawkins moved Resolution 2:

RESOLUTION 2

Synod accepts the Wessex Synod Ministerial Deployment Strategy and asks Synod Pastoral Committees to begin discussions as to how the strategy can be taken forward across the Synod.

Resolution 2 was carried overwhelmingly with no votes against.

The Moderator thanked Mr Appleton for chairing that part of the Synod meeting.

Synod broke for lunch, during which a Buildings Surgery was available with the relevant Synod staff (Graham Barber and Nicola Werro).

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22S31 Ministry & Mission Fund Report: Colin MacBean presented the report, and doing so apologised that the letters inviting 2023 M&M contributions of pastorates had not been issued by the time of the meeting as indicated in the report, but would be out by the end of the week.

22S32 URC (Wessex) Trust Limited Report: Revd. Dr. Romilly Micklem presented the report, and asked for a correction to the report to be noted: In Section 4, Finance, United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund (URCMPF) deficit funding – the path towards the closure of the present fund has taken longer than anticipated and that as such the first tranche (£1.2 million) is not now expected to be paid by the Trust until the end of the year. This correction was noted.

Dr. Micklem also highlighted:

- i. Covid emergency funding scheme: The scheme is still open as reported, but no request has been received by the Trust for assistance under the scheme for many months and Dr. Micklem expects the Trust to close the scheme at its meeting in November.
- ii. Warm spaces – there is the possibility of a proposal coming to the Trust from the URC General Assembly Finance Committee and the Synod Moderators of a financial scheme to provide support to churches to provide Warm Spaces in the current fuel crisis. The Trust will be considering this at its meeting in November.

The following matters for clarification and questions were raised:

- Elstead church wished to thank the Trust for their assistance in dealing with their recent building problem, and offer particular thanks to Nicola Werro, Synod Property Officer (North).
- Is there a reason why the Trust accounts are not presented at Synod? The convenor replied that anyone wishing to see copies of the accounts could email him or visit the Charity Commission website. The suggestion that a link be included in subsequent Trust reports to the relevant Charity Commission website page was warmly received by Synod, as were the suggestions that a workshop session could be included at the next in-person meeting of Synod for anyone wishing to interrogate the accounts, and an "Easy-Reader" version of the accounts could also be included in the Trust report.

Dr. Micklem moved Resolution 3:

RESOLUTION 3

Wessex Synod approves a grant of up to £135,000 from the General Fund of the Wessex Trust to support the URC's Inter-Synod Resource Sharing for 2023.

In answer to a matter raised for clarification, the convenor of the Trust commented that the withdrawals from the General Fund to the ISRS have increased over the last years.

Resolution 3 was agreed by consensus.

Dr. Micklem brought Resolution 4:

RESOLUTION 4

Wessex Synod endorses the decision of the Trustees to transfer £50,000 from the General Fund to the Church Mission Fund.

One matter for clarification was raised, whether the figure of £50,000 represented what has already been committed by way of grants offered by the Trust, to which the convenor answered that it did.

Resolution 4 was carried by consensus.

22S33 Ministry with Trans, Non-binary and Intersex People in Oxford: The Moderator invited Chrissie Chevasutt, appointed in January 2022 by St Columba's United Reformed Church in Oxford to the role of outreach worker for the trans, intersex and non-binary communities, to address Synod.

Chrissie thanked Synod for the welcome.

Chrissie began by explaining that 40% of funding for the role to which she has been appointed had come from the Trust, and Chrissie wanted to feedback the joy and thanks of many whose hearts in the trans, intersex and non-binary communities have been warmed as a result.

Chrissie has been working over a period of years with the marginalised, and empathises with those in church life who find their own theology and understanding challenged.

The Moderator led Synod in praying for Chrissie in her journey and role, asking God's blessing on her and those she works with.

22S34 World Church Group: Revds Helen Everard and Nigel Appleton presented a verbal report. Ms Everard is hoping to have a meeting on Zoom with colleagues from France, towards possibly holding a Zoom event with our friends in the Eglise Protestante Unie de France in Advent. Mr Appleton then spoke of the relaunching of the partnership with the Southampton District of the Methodist Church and Lusaka Presbytery of the United Church of Zambia.

- i. The new programme should have been launched in 2020, but from January 2023 the new 4 year programme should begin, partly funded by Westminster college, and also by Southampton District, and the Trust.
- ii. It is envisaged that two Ministers or senior lay members of the Presbytery will spend a term at Westminster College, with someone from the Synod invited to spend a term in the UCZ university and the Lusaka Presbytery.

- iii. Another element of the programme is to invite some ministers from the Lusaka Presbytery to join the Wessex Synod Ministers' Spring School, as well as provide increased opportunities for congregations in the Synod and the Presbytery to share fellowship.
- iv. Mr Appleton wished to encourage churches to explore the possibility of such links, and asked that those interested in being a partner congregation should contact him.

22S35 Small Mission Grants: Revd David Downing addressed Synod about Small Mission Grants (up to £500) that are available by application to the Trust.

22S36 Workshops: The Moderator invited Synod to move to the workshops, these being:

- i. Opening our hearts to a God and theology that welcomes and affirms Transgender, Intersex and Non-binary people, led by Chrissie Chevasutt
- ii. Paddington's Post Pilgrimage Party: what did we learn and what's next, led by the Synod Youth Executive
- iii. Exciting Possibilities in Mission with Zambia (also Hybrid -Zoom), led by World Church Group
- iv. Eco-Church and General Assembly Resolution 17 (also Hybrid - Zoom), led by Church & Society

Following the workshops, the Moderator welcomed Synod back into plenary session.

22S37 Presentation of Children and Youth Friendly Church Awards: A Children and Youth Friendly Church Award was presented by the Moderator to Petersfield and Liss URC, the certificates and plaques received on behalf of the church by Revd Josh Thomas and Jo Hopkins, the Church and Community worker at Petersfield and Liss.

Mr Thomas referred Synod to the flyers handed out advertising the Celebration Day event being held at London Street URC, Basingstoke, on Saturday, 26th November 2022, beginning with workshops from 10am-12pm, a Celebration Worship and Lunch (provided) from 12pm-2.00pm, and further workshops from 2pm-4pm. The Godly play training session will be limited to 15 participants in total. All are welcome to the event, but booking is necessary, through the Synod website.

22S38 Thanks: The Moderator expressed her thanks to the team at Woking URC, to those who had volunteered as stewards, serving the refreshments, and involved in leading worship. The Moderator also thanked the Synod Office team, and Deborah Walker in particular, also the Clerk for all her work in organising this meeting of Synod and Revd Dr Michael Hopkins for standing in for the Clerk in her absence at the meeting. The Moderator thanked representatives and those attending Synod from local churches, for all the work going on in the churches across the Synod, and Revd Graham Hoslett for taking the Minutes.

Dr Hopkins thanked the Moderator for her ability and charm in expediting the business of the day.

22S39 Closing worship: Revd Lucy Brierley and the worship team from Woking URC led closing worship, beginning with a sung version of Psalm 139. Revd Helen Everard brought the reading from the Bible, Ephesians 4:1-16, and Revd Dr. Lordwell Siame spoke on the passage after bringing greetings from the United Church of Zambia. As we live as a church together, Dr. Lordwell Siame encouraged us to consider how we can co-exist and be interdependent.

Synod closed at 16:25.

The next meeting is online (Zoom) on Thursday, 2nd February 2023, 6.30pm.

OBITUARY

The following obituary will be part of "Celebrated Lives"
which is a collection of life stories which appear in the URC Year Book

Brian David Treharne

27 March 1937 – 1 September 2022 – aged 85

St Margaret's, South Shields, 1965-70; St Martin's, Saltdean, 1970-77; Christ Church, Leatherhead, 1977-2002; Bookham 1990-2002.

At six foot five inches, Brian had a long back. It was symbolic of his life's work, as one of those who was the backbone of the church's life and work for more than 55 years.

Born in Cardiff in 1937, Brian's National Service was with the RAF at GCHQ, where he was a Russian translator. From 1957, he was in Cambridge, first reading for the Classical Tripos at Queens' College, and then preparing for Presbyterian ministry at Westminster College. He was ordained in 1965 and inducted to serve St Margaret's Church in South Shields. There were just two other pastorates: 1970-77 with St Martin's, Saltdean, and then 25 years with Christ Church, Leatherhead, with Bookham URC was added for the final three years.

Brian's work beyond the local church included nurture of ordinands, chaplaincy to students, diverse responsibilities for Southern Synod and Wimbledon District Council, and a sustained stint on the URC's ministerial Assessment Board. He was Secretary of Westminster College's Board of Studies, and chaplain to the Rt Revd Norman Birnie, one of the last Moderators of the Presbyterian Church of England General Assembly. Ecumenical commitments were a thread through his ministry, and found particular expression in retirement, when he served Methodist churches in and around Cranleigh, preaching until 2019.

Although his great height and black robes brought considerable presence, it was comfortable and gentle and unassuming. His ministry was characterised by a lightly worn scholarship, a careful and unfussy leadership of worship, a thoughtful and wise pastoral care, and a capacity for warm friendship.

Throughout his ministry, Brian's companion was Sheena, whom he had married (with rare spontaneity) in 1963. They were a fine team, and when Sheena died in 2012, Jo and Heather, their daughters, admired how he honoured her by striving still to live his God-given life to the full, through sport, singing, current affairs, and holidays.

Brian died just as Cranleigh Methodist Church welcomed Paul Glass to be the circuit's superintendent minister. Brian had encouraged Paul's Christian life more than 40 years earlier. Paul said: 'Brian was a minister of the Gospel. He treasured scripture, studied it, wrestled with it in the Greek, was eager to share the truths it contained. He dedicated his life to making Jesus known and his love, peace, grace, forgiveness, power, compassion and justice were shot through Brian's life and being.'

Brian had planned the funeral and thanksgiving services, and, as if it was his final sermon, left us with words of Charles Wesley: "By faith, we know you strong to save – save us, O Saviour always near! All that we hope, by faith we have, future and past subsisting here."

Written by Nigel Uden

SYNOD EXECUTIVE REPORT

The full Synod Executive Report will be included in the April Synod Meeting, however please note below some areas for consideration that have resolutions attached.

1. From Assembly Executive

There was one constitutional change to the structure **from paper A1**, which have been referred to Synods for consideration,

1. Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Assembly Executive resolves that the Immediate Past Moderator of the General Assembly shall be an Assembly Officer, with immediate effect.

2. Assembly Executive resolves to initiate a change to paragraph 2(6)(i) of the Structure, removing text struck through, and new text in italics:

The current text reads:

(i) ~~Two in total~~ *Such* number as the General Assembly shall from time to time determine from the following: former Moderators of the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, past chairmen of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, past presidents of the Congregational Church in England and Wales, former Moderators of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, former chairmen or presidents of the Annual Conference of the Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, former presidents of the Annual Conference of the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ in Great Britain and Ireland, provided that such former officers are members of the United Reformed Church and that they shall have been elected by a college consisting of all such past and former Moderators, presidents and chairmen as are members of the United Reformed Church;

3. Under paragraph 3.1 of the Structure, the matter is referred to Synods, with responses to be with the General Secretary not later than 31 March 2023.

Whilst it is not a requirement to discuss this, the link to Paper A1 is below, if anyone has any reasons to object, then please email the clerk@urcwessex.org.uk by the 27th of January.

If as a Synod, it is felt that we have any objections to this resolution we will need to pass a resolution that they 'be not proceeded with'.

Link to Paper A1

<https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Assembly-Executive-2022-A1-Former-Moderators.pdf>

2. Nominations

We do have some vacancies as noted on the nominations list, if you or someone you know may be a good fit then send names and why you think they are called, to Karen at clerk@urcwessex.org.uk

Some good news. David North from St Columba's Oxford has been nominated to serve as Synod Treasurer. Please pray for him as he takes on this role. We also thank Peter Stevenson for the work he has undertaken during the period of vacancy.

3. Appointments List

The nominations group bring the appointments list to you for approval. Thank you to all who are finishing a period of service, those who continue to serve and those who are starting their service in 2023. Please support all with prayer and continue to pray for discernment on those who could be called to serve.

RESOLUTION 1

Wessex Synod approves the list of Appointments submitted by Nominations Group

Attached is the list of those who have agreed to become synod representatives at General Assembly 2023. There are some vacancies so if you have been thinking about this then do let me know.

RESOLUTION 2

Wessex Synod approves the list of representatives to General Assembly and allows Synod Officers to appoint replacements should it prove necessary.

Karen Bell. January 2023

clerk@urcwessex.org.uk

General Assembly Representatives

Lay	Ministers
Miss Karen Bell	Revd Glyn Millington
Mr Clive Snashall	Revd Lucy Brierley
Mr David North	Revd Stephen Ansa-Addo
Mrs Jill Abraham	Revd Tim Clarke
Mrs Linda Jackson	Revd Wayne Hawkins
Mrs Sheilagh Courtnage	Revd Wendy White
Ms Pat Oliver	Revd Wilbert Sayimani

Reserves:

Mr George Faris

Revd Helen Everard

NOMINATIONS LIST

Appointments for Synod March 2023

Key:

New Appointment	Extended Appointment	Vacancy
------------------------	-----------------------------	----------------

Group		Who	End
OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES			
	Synod Clerk	Miss Karen Bell	
	Synod Minutes Secretary	Revd Graham Hoslett	2025
	Synod Treasurer	Mr David North	2027
	Deputy Synod Treasurer	Vacancy	
	<u>APPOINTEES</u>		
	Trust Convener Line Manager	Vacancy	
	DSO Line Manager	Revd Wayne Hawkins	2026
	CYDO and Safeguarding Officer Line Manager	Revd Josh Thomas	2027
	Clerk Line Manager	Revd Pauline Main	2025
	Safeguarding Line Manager	Vacancy	
COMMITTEES AND GROUPS (members listed exclude all <i>ex officio</i> members)			
Synod Executive	Convener:	Moderator	
	Secretary:	Synod Clerk	
	Minute Secretary:	Synod Minutes Secretary	
	Members:	NW Revd Pauline Main	2023
		NE Revd Mike Thomason	2026
		Mrs Emily Gadd	2027
		Mrs Sheilagh Courtnage	2027
	Plus: Conveners from Children & Youth Work, Ministries & Learning and Wessex Trust; Synod Treasurer and the Synod representative to the Assembly Mission Committee.		
Nominations Group			
	Convener:	Synod Clerk	
	Members:	Synod Pastoral Committee Conveners	
		One person from each SPC	
Mission & Outreach Committee:			
2023 - this will be a new joined Mission Committee to focus on Enabling			
	Convener	Revd Ray Stanyon	
	MDG Convener	Revd David Downing	2024
	C&S Convener:	Revd Tim Clarke	2026
	WCG Convener:	Revd Helen Everard	2026
	MDG Secretary:	Revd Glyn Millington	2024
	WCG Secretary:	Mr Philip Bonnier	2024
	Rural Link (MDG) :	Vacancy	
	Commitment for Life Advocate:	Mrs Christine McMillan	2027

	Inter-Faith Advocate:	Revd Paul O'Connor	2027
	Racial Justice Advocate:	Vacancy	
	Green Apostle:	Revd Mike Shrubsole	2025
	European Partner Link Coordinator (France):	Vacancy	
	Global Partner Link Coordinator (Zambia):	Revd Nigel Appleton	2023
	Methodist Link (WCG):	Mr Cecil King	
	Members:	Revd Adam Payne	2026
		Revd Wendy White	2026
		Revd Stephen Ansa-Addo	2027
		Vacancy	
		Vacancy	
Ministries and Learning Committee			
	Convener:	Revd Wayne Hawkins	2025
	Secretary:	Revd Graham Hoslett	2025
	Lay Preaching Commissioner:	Vacancy	
	Synod Ecumenical Officer:	Revd Harry Lanham	2027
Synod Pastoral Committees:			
North East	Convener:	Revd Lucy Brierley	2025
	Area Lay Preaching Co-ordinator:	Mrs Karen Smith	2025
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Berkshire:	Vacancy	
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Surrey:	Revd Michael Hopkins	2023
	Members (5):	Mr Bob Robertson	2026
		Vacancy	
		Revd Graham Hoslett	2024
		Revd Michael Hodgson	2024
		Mrs Wendy Dunnett	2026
North West	Convener:	Mr Tony Brett	2024
	Area Lay Preaching Co-ordinator:	Vacancy	
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Berkshire:	Vacancy	
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Oxfordshire:	Revd Glyn Millington	2023
	Members (5):	Revd Robert Barthram	2023
		Mrs Cynthia Bartlett	2026
		Mr Roger Clark	2024
		Mrs Fiona Hobson	2024
		Mr Clive Snashall	2025
South East	Convener:	Revd Sarah Hall	2025
	Area Preaching Co-ordinator:	Mrs Pam Humphries	2027
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Hampshire:	Revd Harry Lanham	2027

	Members (6):	Mr Peter Jolly	2023
		Mrs Sue Sapsard	2023
		Mr David Childs	2024
		Mrs Sue Brown	2025
		Vacancy	
		Vacancy	
South West	Convener:	Revd Peter Clark	2026
	Area Preaching Co-ordinator:	Mrs Maggie Larkin	2026
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Dorset:	Vacancy	
	Members (7):	Revd Wilbert Sayimani	2027
		Mr Andrew Hirst	2026
		Revd Paul O'Connor	2026
		Mrs Linda Pain	2025
		Revd James Whately	2025
		Vacancy	
		Vacancy	
Spirituality Group Convener		Revd Alison Toplas	2025
Listed Buildings Advisory Committee			
	Convener:	Revd Michael Hodgson	2025
	Secretary:	Revd Glyn Millington	2025
	Members:	Mr David Illingworth	
		Mr Gareth Jenkins	
		Revd John Lee	
		Mr Matthew Maier	
		Mr Kevin Morris	
		Revd Martyn Needs	
		Vacancy	
		Mr Graham Barber (co-opted)	
		Mrs Nicola Werro (co-opted)	
Ministry and Mission Fund Secretary			
Children's & Youth Work Committee			
	Convener:	Revd Josh Thomas	2026
	Secretary:	Vacancy	
	Paid Youth/Families Workers' Representative:	Mrs Jo Hopkins	2025
	Camp Planning Convener:	Vacancy	
	Members:	Revd John Downing	2023
		Revd Andrew Hall	2024
		Helen Everard	2027
		Vacancy	
		Vacancy	
		Vacancy	
	Synod Youth Executive Representative:	<i>filled by rotation of SYE</i>	

Alternate Chair of Synod Meeting		Revd Nigel Appleton	
District Council	Moderator		
	President	Revd Michael Hopkins	2027
	Secretary	Mr Keith Bradley	2027
	Members (4)	Conveners of the Synod Pastoral Committees	
	Members (4)	NE Mrs Karen Smith	2027
		NW	
		SE	
		SW	
<u>REPRESENTATIVES TO OTHER GROUPS AND COMMITTEES</u>			
Assembly Executive		Moderator	
		Synod Clerk	
		Mr Clive Snashall	2026
		Revd Tim Clarke	2026
Youth Representative to URC Youth Executive Assembly		Miss Maya Withall	
Assembly Nominations Committee		Synod Clerk	
Southampton University Chaplaincy – Chair of Support Group		Revd Trish Davis	
Assembly Mission Committee		Revd Ray Stanyon	

MISSION & OUTREACH COMMITTEE REPORT

Assembly Mission Committee meets the day before Wessex Synod and no papers are circulated yet. Also our previous three mission groups in Wessex have not met recently. Hence this report is short and with a Wessex Focus

Structure

The most notable thing to report is a trial of a new structure for our meetings. As several items appear on more than one agenda, we now are going to trial a joint meeting of the three groups as one committee. This will be for a year and will rely on written reports for efficient meetings.

As a result of this change, we expect there to be three longer meetings per year, which initially will be in person on a Saturday morning. Whilst in the future we will continue to look for new members to these groups, in the first instance we will be running with existing members until we know the final future shape. All three groups have reached out to Wessex URC Youth but as yet we have not had any at our meetings despite willingness to change times and the mixed-method of meeting.

I will be convening the newly combined group and Philip Bonnier will be secretary (existing World Church group secretary).

Le Weekend (World Church)

This takes place in the UK from March 31st to April 2nd and plans are developing – please look out for details. We hope to offer some sort of Hybrid involvement also. Helen Everard also convened an Anglo-French zoom for Advent on Saturday 3rd December, to produce a prayer reflection in French and English to be shared with all our churches in Wessex Synod and Nord-Normandie region.

Zambia Link (World Church)

Two Zambian ministers will be in the UK in the Spring and will be attending the Wessex Synod Ministers' Spring School between 17th-20th April in Salisbury. Wessex Ministers will be appointed to "buddy" our partner visitors to ensure these participants get a full experience of the school. Helen Everard is travelling to Zambia this coming spring also as part of the reciprocal arrangement.

Church and Society

Our Church and Society Group were very encouraged by the attendance at our Workshop at October Synod on Eco Church and the interest in Warm Welcome Hubs. Good discussion continues around how our mission groups can be catalysts for mission across the Synod rather than appearing to be "just" a gathering of interested parties.

Our **Small Grants for Mission** group have awarded two grants of up to £500 towards the costs of setting up Warm Welcome spaces (through Mission Development Group)

Church Regeneration (MDG)

After a very frustratingly long recruitment process, the worker appointed to serve the Synod at Oxford Collinwood Road started in Mid-October but is already galvanising many in the congregation to share even more in the work with renewed confidence. Already there are new faces in worship and a stronger link between the Community and the groups meeting in the church building and the worshipping congregation. Their warm welcome is already up and running and proving a much needed and very much appreciated asset to the community.

Church Secretary, Philip Bonnier, is a key contact to discuss how to combine church funding with that from the local council enabling church to be seen as working within, and alongside, their community as a valued and respected partner.

Ray Stanyon is line managing the worker, with local hands-on support and advice from Philip Bonnier. David Downing (MDG Convener) meets with them to ensure that the aims of the MDG are being met from the start, as well as the obvious benefits to the congregation.

Ray Stanyon
Convener M&O Committee
dso-n@urcwessex.org.uk

URC (WESSEX) TRUST LIMITED RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION 3

Wessex Synod endorses the decision of the Trustees to transfer £150,000 from the General Fund to the Church Mission Fund, bringing the total so transferred in 2022 to £200,000

CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH WORK COMMITTEE REPORT

It has been a very busy but exciting first year as the convener of this group, we have of course, experienced the first 'normal' year in which activities have been allowed to resume and as always, our CYDO team have been at the forefront of putting together training and events for our children, young people and all those who work alongside them. I want to say a big thank you to Ruth White and Phil Ray for their hard work and dedication throughout 2022.

One of the big highlights of the year for me was the Big Day Out up at Hollycombe. Whilst this was not a youth and children's work day, the committee were very much involved in the planning and execution of the event and much of the intergenerational aspect of what we aim to provide was seen very visibly as young and old gathered together and enjoyed such a brilliant occasion worshipping together and enjoying one another's company after what has felt like an incredibly long time. There was plenty of good feedback following the event echoing this and another is in the pipeline – watch this space.

Camp was able to resume to its full capacity back in July and for the second year running, there were camp events for both the younger children and the older youth held alongside each other on the same weekend and in the same venue. These events were great fun but of course, any event like this has its challenges! An 8-year-old is very different to a 17-year-old and their needs and expectations from an event like this do of course, not always match! With the launch of URC Children nationally this year, the committee have taken the very intentional decision to this year separate the two events so that they run on different weekends and potentially in different venues as well. We see this as being a very positive way forward for our Children's and Youth work strategy. Wessex Youth Camp has been hugely successful for as long as many of us can remember and it was right and proper that the children's camp came alongside it in the first instance to draw on the success of the planning team in executing such a high-quality event. However, like a baby bird, we strongly feel that it is time for this project to leave the nest and set out on its own adventure! We are blessed as a synod to have a CYDO team comprising of both a highly experienced children's worker in Ruth and an equally experienced youth worker in Phil and I see this new venture as an opportunity for us as a synod to be using those skills in the best possible way, allowing Phil to focus on facilitating a team to carry on the already successful youth event and Ruth to cultivate a team to really allow 2023 to be the year we pick up on this new brand initiative of URC Children in Wessex Synod.

As convener of this group, I am planning to hold a review looking into how and why we do the things we do and how we are asking our paid employees to use their time, we want to ensure that we are using them to their full potential.

On Saturday 22nd April we will be holding a celebration day at High Cross – Camberley between 10am-4pm. There will be a number of workshops throughout the day focused on how we might engage with the children and young people in our church's or in our community. We will have activities for all ages to take part in and will share a high quality, cooked lunch together as part of an intergenerational time of celebration worship. We hope to have as many people come along as possible so please do put the date in your diary and join us if you can.

I wanted to end my report by sharing two good news stories with you, one from the south of the synod shared by Ruth White and one from the north shared by Phil Ray. I hope they will give you a really good sense of the importance of the work they both do in supporting our churches across

the synod. Please do invite them along to support you in your mission with children and young people and keep them both in your prayers.

Revd Josh Thomas – Convener
minister@petersfieldurc.com

Ruth's good news story

It has been my pleasure to work closely with many churches in the South of Wessex over the last year, helping to develop and celebrate Child Friendly Churches, developing new ways of being church together and more. It was a particular joy, to be able to accompany Gosport URC through their appointment of a Children and Families worker. The church had put in many months of review and prayerful consideration and felt this was the next step in their mission. I was able to come alongside them and support each step of the process, from advertising, shortlisting, interviewing and appointing. Also being able to support an application for a Synod grant to help with the funding of the post. It was a pleasure to be able to commission their new worker (and recommission their established team) in a Sunday Service and I look forward to supporting the work further as they seek to serve the families in their local area. God is already blessing the work and they are seeing the fruits of their prayers and labours.

Phil's good news story

Like Ruth, it has been a pleasure working and journeying alongside many churches in the North of Wessex during the past year. There are a number who have been exploring the Children's and Youth Friendly Church scheme and I look forward to continuing the journey with these churches and others.

Wheatley URC have been on a different journey. After supporting them trying to recruit a part time Youth Worker, which proved unsuccessful, and following further prayerful thought they decided to explore the possibility of inviting a Time for God volunteer to join them for a year. It's right to say that this process initially felt daunting and definitely outside of everyone's comfort zone of experience. However, the process with Time for God proved exceedingly positive and has been rewarding in many ways for Wheatley URC. We commissioned Elisa in September and within the few months following her arrival there have been so many positives, not least to see enthusiastic engagement with Synod youth events, the Youth Assembly, and the facilitating of a Taize youth pilgrimage later this year. Wheatley URC are beyond pleased with Time for God, and have already launched the process for a second volunteer to join them for a year following Elisa. This Spirit led change of direction has been a great experience for the church and has opened far more opportunities and connections in the community than previously imagined, with new individuals and families in the village joining the church because they saw the vision of the project and wanted to be involved and support it. Wheatley URC and I are grateful for the synod trust grant support and we look forward to seeing how this project continues to bear fruit.