

MINUTES

MINUTES of the meeting of **WESSEX SYNOD** on Thursday 2nd February 2023, held on Zoom.

The Moderator, the Revd. Clare Downing, welcomed members to the meeting and constituted the Synod.

Attendance

30	URC Ministers and CRCWs
39	Church representatives
0	Ministers of other denominations
0	Retired Ministers/CRCWs
0	Ordinands
6	Others holding Synod appointments
0	Visitors
75	Total

23S01 Welcome to Ecumenical visitors and new members of Synod: The Moderator welcomed members of Synod to the meeting, reminding Synod that it had been agreed at the last meeting that the Spring meeting of Synod should take place on Zoom over two evening meetings. The Moderator indicated that the efficacy of the two evening meetings on Zoom could be reviewed at the Synod meeting in October 2023.

The Moderator welcomed those new to Synod, asking those present for the first time to “raise their hands”. Courtney Brown from Collinwood URC and Sheilagh Courtnege from Shanklin URC were duly welcomed.

The Moderator led opening prayers, reading from 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Christ the Power and Wisdom of God. The song “God’s Own Fool” by Michael Card, performed by TheNCrew was screen-shared.

The Moderator reminded members of Synod and visitors of the Guidance paper which had been emailed with the Notice of Synod which gave guidance on the use of Zoom for the present meeting and informed Synod that the Red and Green buttons on the Reactions tab were not available to test the temperature of the meeting and that an additional poll would be used to that end.

Members were reminded to “raise their hand” when wishing to speak and to lower their hand having done so. The other Reactions options would not be used. The Moderator advised that the Chat function was open but would not be monitored by the Moderator or the Clerk. Notice was given that the meeting was being recorded by Revd Graham Hoslett for the purposes of taking the Minutes, and that the recording would be deleted following the production of the Minutes.

23S02 Apologies: The Moderator asked that any further apologies to those already received should be emailed to the Clerk by the end of the meeting.

Apologies were received from

4	URC Ministers
4	Church Representatives
1	Ministers of other denominations
0	Ordinand
11	Retired Ministers
7	Others
27	Total

23S03 Minutes of the last meeting: Siobhan Antoniou asked for an amendment to the Minutes – under Attendance no Ordinands were listed as present, though Siobhan had been. With this

amendment the Minutes were agreed with unanimity. No matters arising from the Minutes were identified as not included in the agenda for this meeting. The Clerk reported that there was no change to the Order of Business.

23S04 Children and Youth Work Committee: Revd Josh Thomas presented the report, highlighting:

- i. The Big Day Out, which will be repeated in 2024. Mr Thomas encouraged those who had enjoyed the event held in 2022 to volunteer to the Clerk to join the team planning Big Day Out 2024.
- ii. It was great that Camp was able to resume to full capacity in July 2022 and for the second year running. Following the launch of URC Children there will be two separate camp weekends, the Youth Camp with Phil Ray taking the lead and the Children's Camp with Ruth White taking the lead.
- iii. A correction to the Report: The Report states that the Celebration Day which had been planned for November would take place on 22nd April at High Cross, Camberley. Mr Thomas advised that, given other events taking place throughout April, it has been decided not to hold the event in April 2023. It is hoped it may be possible to hold a Celebration Day later in 2023 or possibly in early 2024.
- iv. Mr Thomas referred to the review he is planning to hold as convener of C&YW to ensure the Synod are employing the CYDOs to their full potential. C&YW will be looking to draw a team together of a wide range of people who have worked alongside and benefitted from their involvement in the past.

Mr Thomas invited Ruth White to speak to the good news story written by her in the papers: Ruth commented that it had been a challenging question to share a particular way her work had specifically benefitted churches but that in the example shared in the papers it had been exciting and encouraging for her to work with Gosport URC to help the church consider what it needed and could afford, and to assist them in putting together an inspiring and very good application to the Trust for support.

Ruth reminded Synod that Vision Days for local churches are key and that the CYDOs and DSOs are available to support churches in exploring their hopes and plans for the future.

Ruth commented on a new resource FACT (Faith Adventures for Children Together) which is being produced centrally. This will be a weekly Bible-based resource for children's groups from the URC. This is being showcased, prior to its launch from 1st May 2023, and an online walk-through and introduction to the resource with members of the writing team had already been held on 1st February, with two further online introductions available on 4th February 2023, 10.30am, and 11th March, 10.00am. There is a group on Facebook that those interested may join at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/512896934320244>

23S05 Anti-racist church video: The Moderator introduced the video "Telling it Like it is – Uncovering White Privilege in the Church", Working towards becoming An Actively anti-Racist Church, produced in association with the URC Mission Committee, which was screen-shared - the video is available on the URC YouTube channel and at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MrzfzX5gGs>

Members were then assigned to Zoom Break Out rooms to discuss the questions:

1. Did the content of this film come as a surprise to you?
2. If yes, the content did come as a surprise, how might this film change the way you approach your church setting?
3. If no, the information does not come as a surprise, what are the examples of discrimination you've witnessed in your setting?

The Moderator asked for a member in each Breakout Room to make notes and email these to the Clerk after the meeting.

Synod took a comfort break at 7.40pm.

Synod reconvened at 7.55pm.

23S06 Sharing of any views from the Breakout rooms: The Moderator reminded those who had been taking notes in the Breakout Rooms to email these to the Clerk and invited the sharing of any initial comments arising from the video. None were immediately forthcoming.

23S07 Mission & Outreach Committee: Revd Ray Stanyon presented the report, and invited comments and questions:

- i. Regarding Warm Welcome Spaces Revd Dr. Sarah Hall commented that many churches have opened such spaces but some with only limited attendance: Could those churches that have established well-attended Warm Welcome Spaces offer any guidance? The representative from Shanklin URC commented in the Chat function that the Warm Space at Shanklin is “going quite well”. Another church indicated that their Warm Welcome is busy in the mornings but not so much in the afternoons.
- ii. Revd Nigel Appleton commented that Revd Helen Everard is now likely to be going to Zambia in the early summer and not the Spring as indicated in the report, as the event around which her visit is timetabled has been rescheduled to early July 2023. And there will be other opportunities for churches to receive visits from and for those wishing themselves to make a visit to the Lusaka Presbytery, and Mr Appleton will be advising of these in Sharing the Vision shortly.
- iii. Revd Helen Everard referred to Le Weekend, planned from 31st March to 2nd April. Publicity will be circulated soon to those who have indicated interest in attending and will be made available on the Synod website. Le Weekend this year is titled “New Beginnings”, and will include an opportunity for participants to attend the Moderator’s Farewell Service.

23S08 Synod Executive report: The Clerk explained that a full Synod Executive Report will be included in the papers for the April 2023 Synod Meeting but that there are a number of matters that needed to be dealt with prior to that meeting:

- i. Constitutional change to the structure from paper A1: The Clerk directed Synod to the constitutional change to the structure agreed at Assembly Executive, referred to Synods. The Moderator explained that Synod is not required to give assent to the change to the Structure but to indicate if Synod wills the changes indicated ‘be not proceeded with’. The link to paper A1 which had been presented to the Assembly Executive had been shared in the Synod papers, members of Synod being invited to email the Clerk with any reasons to object. The Clerk advised that no objections had been received.
- ii. The Clerk reported that since the writing of the report the Synod Communications Strategy Task Group has booked its first meeting which will be held on Zoom on 7th March 2023, 7pm. Anyone else with an interest in or expertise to offer to the Group should email the Clerk to volunteer.
- iii. In 2022 it had not been possible to issue a Synod Directory, partly as a result of the late issuing of the Annual Church Returns. A 2023 directory is planned, which will be issued as far as possible electronically. Those requiring a hard copy will be asked to contact the Synod Office accordingly. Anyone needing up to date contact details are asked to contact the Synod Office in the meantime. The Clerk reported further that church secretaries should expect notice of the Annual Church Return portal to come from Gillian Jones at Church House (the email will come from ministries.admin@urc.org.uk).

- iv. M&M Fund letters. The Clerk apologised to those churches which have not received their M&M letters. Processes have been put in place to ensure that M&M letters will be sent out in good time this year. The Clerk asked churches to contact her if there are any further concerns.
- v. Synod Executive is taking the next steps following the news of the move of the Moderator. A Group is being put together to write the profile and an interview panel will be established and a timeline identified for the appointment process. Churches and other groups will be asked to offer feedback to the profile writing group and will be advised of this as soon as possible after the group is formed. The Farewell Service for the Moderator will take place 1st April at London Street URC, Basingstoke, at 3pm, and those wishing to come should please RSVP to the Synod Office for catering purposes.
During the transitional period the Synod Executive is identifying those who might best cover the different aspects of the Moderator's role within the Synod, and there will be a letter advising churches of the contact names when this list has been completed.

23S09 Nominations: The Clerk presented the list of Nominations in the Synod papers and advised of amendments to the list of names included in the Synod papers:

- i. Mrs Pam Humphreys is nominated to be the SPC(SE) Area Lay Preaching Coordinator, not Area Preaching Coordinator
- ii. District Council, in addition to the SPC convenors and the representative from the SPC(NE) indicated in the report, the Clerk advised that the SPC(SW) representative to District Council will be Paul O'Connor. SPC(NW) and SPC(SW) will advise of the nomination of a representative following their next meetings.
- iii. The names of co-opted members to the Synod Meeting and the Wessex Trust will be brought to the next meeting of Synod.

Other changes to the list of nominations were advised from the floor of Synod.

- iv. Under General Assembly Representatives, Mrs Jill Abraham should read Mrs Jill Abrahams. The Moderator asked any other typos be advised to the Synod Office.
- v. It was suggested that ex-officio members should not be included in the list of Nominations. The Clerk will give attention to this when the Nominations Committee reports to Synod in the future.
- vi. The Clerk also highlighted the nomination of David North to serve as Synod Treasurer.

The Clerk brought Resolution 1 to the Synod:

RESOLUTION 1

Wessex Synod approves the list of Appointments submitted by Nominations Group.

Ruth White was given permission to speak and commented that there is no Racial Justice Advocate on the list. The Clerk advised that the Racial Justice Advocate had decided to stand down, and a new nomination had not yet been forthcoming.

With the additions and corrections mentioned above, and any further typos still to be received, Resolution 1 was agreed by consensus.

The Clerk drew attention of Synod to the vacancies remaining in the report asking members of Synod to send names to her of those who might be called to the roles with the reason why they might be felt to be called to them.

23S10 General Assembly Representatives: The Clerk reminded Synod that its representation to General Assembly 2023 is 16 in total, of which 5 must be lay representatives, 5 Ministers, 2 youth reps. No youth reps have yet been nominated, but Laura Everard stated that Wessex Synod Youth

Exec meets shortly, and Laura will seek to ensure this will be included on their agenda youth representatives may need to obtain permission to be absent from their work or studies. The Clerk also advised that information about the “What Do You Think?” event for young people has just been received, and will be circulated through the CYDOs.

There being no further discussion, the Clerk brought Resolution 2:

RESOLUTION 2

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

The resolution was agreed by consensus.

The Moderator thanked all those representing the Synod and serving in the roles and led a prayer of thanksgiving for those laying down responsibilities and those taking them up. The Moderator prayed for David North and those representing Synod at General Assembly.

23S09 Resolution from URC (Wessex) Trust Ltd: The Moderator invited Revd Dr. Romilly Micklem to propose Resolution 3:

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

Clarification as to the basis of the figure of £150,000 was requested. Dr. Micklem explained that this figure is based on the forecast of the monies that may be available for grants without jeopardising the remaining expected demands on the Trust, such as the contributions to the central Ministers’ Pension Fund over the next years and Listed Buildings.

With this clarification the resolution was agreed by consensus.

23S10 Future Review of the format of the Spring meetings of Synod: The Moderator explained that she and the Clerk had set the agenda of the present and the next Synod meeting dividing the reports from Committees which were expected to be brought to each meeting. The Moderator suggested it might be good to review the online meetings of Synod held this year at the in-person meeting in October.

23S11 Address by the Alternate Chair: By agreement with the Clerk, and in his role of Alternate Chair, the Revd Nigel Appleton addressed the Moderator on behalf of the Synod, thanking God for her inspiring sensitive, caring, leadership and ministry to the variety of theological outlooks and worship styles represented within the Synod over the last nearly 12 years as Synod Moderator, giving thanks for her humour and lightness of touch. Mr Appleton assured the Moderator of the blessing and prayers of the Synod for her continuing ministry as Moderator of North Western Synod.

Nigel led Synod in a prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession for Clare.

23S12 Closing prayers: The Moderator thanked the Tech team Revds David Downing, Michael Hopkins and Ray Stanyon, and Ruth White (Safeguarding), and invited prayer for Roger Clark who had been unable to attend Synod. The Moderator thanked Revd Nigel Appleton as Alternate Chair, Karen Bell as Clerk, all the convenors of committees that had reported to this Synod meeting, and

Deborah Walker. The Moderator thanked Synod for Synod's support during her time as Moderator of Wessex Synod.

The Moderator led in closing prayer.

Synod closed at 20.41.

The next meeting is online (Zoom) on Tuesday, 25th April 2023, 6.30pm.