

MINUTES

MINUTES of the meeting of **WESSEX SYNOD** on Saturday 12th October 2024 at United Church Winchester.

The Moderator welcomed all to the meeting including those watching on the YouTube link which had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Moderator reported that there were delays on public transport leading to some late arrivals to Synod. The Moderator constituted Synod.

Tim Searle gave announcements on behalf of the United Church.

The Moderator led Opening Worship: Psalm 150 was read as was Philippians 4:4-9. The Moderator introduced the Synod Prayer written by Cara Heafey and illustrated by Ann Bulley. The Moderator asked members of Synod to take copies of the bookmark and postcard for each member of their churches.

The Moderator referred to those Ministers celebrating Jubilee:

- i. Celebrating 70 years: Tony Tucker, ordained in 1954.
- ii. Celebrating 60 years: Stephen Thornton and Derek Wensley, ordained in 1964.
- iii. Celebrating 50 years: Cliff Bembridge, Margaret Evans, Richard Davis, Bernie Collins, ordained in 1974.
- iv. Gwen Collins began missionary service with CWM in 1994, and was ordained in 1994, so was marking 20 years service as a missionary, and 30 years service as a minister.

The Moderator reported that certificates have been presented to some of the above in their local churches but Bernie Collins, Gwen Collins and Stephen Thornton were presented with their certificates by the Moderator at the meeting.

Communion was shared and the Moderator thanked Helen McTiffin for the work involved preparing the Communion table.

The Moderator welcomed. Roo Stewart, Head of Public Issues and member of JPIT, and an ecumenical visitor from St. Francis' Church, Chandler's Ford. Several were attending Synod for the first time and the Moderator welcomed them.

The Moderator explained the use of the coloured cards during discussion and decision. An informal show of cards indicated very strong support for Holy Communion at the start of the meeting.

Attendance

22	URC Ministers and CRCWs
31	Church representatives
1	Ministers of other denominations
3	Retired Ministers/CRCWs
0	Ordinands
19	Others holding Synod appointments
13	Visitors
89	Total

24S29 Pastoral News: The Moderator commented that in the Synod Directory which had recently been circulated the Moderator's address is given as the Synod office. This is correct for

correspondence relating to his Moderatorial duties but the Moderator reminded Synod that the manse address is freely available from the Synod Office.

The Moderator directed members of Synod to the Update on Ordinands, Ministerial and Church Changes included in the Synod Papers. The Moderator commented that:

- i. Nigel Appleton has held many roles in the Synod and has stepped down from all these roles because of ill health.
- ii. Sue Nichols will finish her training in June 2026 not June 2028 as indicated in the Update.
- iii. Lordwell Siame has been elected to serve a second term as Bishop in the Lusaka Presbytery of the United Church in Zambia. The Moderator has sent a message of congratulation.

The Moderator directed Synod to the Obituary printed in the papers to Barbara Meachin and invited Synod to stand in silent remembrance and led in prayer for all those individuals and churches mentioned in the Update.

24S30 Apologies: Apologies had been received as listed below.

9	URC Ministers
26	Church Representatives
3	Ministers of other denominations
1	Ordinands
15	Retired Ministers
5	Others
59	Total

24S31 Minutes of the last meeting, 24th April 2024: The Clerk advised that there had not been any notice of amendments to be made to the Minutes of the last meeting as published in the Synod papers and the Minutes of the meeting were agreed unanimously.

24S32 Matters Arising: None.

24S33 Order of business and Announcements: The Clerk reported that there may be flexibility in the order of business. Only one Stepwise video would be screened. Members were asked to ensure they had signed up for the afternoon workshops. The Clerk reminded Synod members that the meeting was being livestreamed.

24S34 Wessex Trust Report: Romilly Micklem brought the report which had been circulated separately to the Synod papers. In the Grants, loans and permissions:

- i. Former Summertown URC: Romilly Micklem explained that although the church has closed the buildings are still in use. The Synod is receiving income from the use of the premises in excess of the costs incurred.
- ii. The grant to Southampton Avenue St. Andrew's of £5,360: This is towards the cost of a one-year extension to the employment of the Community Development Worker.

Romilly Micklem thanked all those churches which have sent in copies of their accounts but advised that more than half have not yet submitted their most recent accounts.

Romilly Micklem brought Resolution T1:

RESOLUTION T1

The Wessex Synod approves an offer of £135,000 to the Inter-Synod Resource Sharing pool for 2025.

This was agreed unanimously.

Romilly Micklem brought Resolution T2:

RESOLUTION T2

The Wessex Synod approves the request to make donations to the central Ministry and Mission Fund of up to £75,000 from Synod funds for each of the years 2024, 2025 and 2026, to maintain the overall payment from Synod funds at the 2023 level.

David North thanked all churches that have sent in their offers of M&M payments for 2025 and urged those churches which had not yet done so to please send him their offers.

Resolution T2 was agreed unanimously.

Romilly Micklem referred Synod to Annex A of the report, Finance and Grants Paper for Synod – October 2024.

The Moderator invited matters for clarification.

- iii. Regarding LEPs, could a distinction be made about whether a different process will be followed for listed and non-listed church building applications, clarification was sought over the word “Major” in “Major Building Projects”, also that the Mission Development Group allocation is not included in the Paper. Romilly Micklem gave clarification, stating that it is difficult to explicitly include LEPs in such a policy; a major part of the assessment of any application for a building project is the mission of the church and this applies to listed as well as non-listed buildings; major building projects might be taken to be those £100,000 and over and Romilly Micklem suggested such projects would be a long time in the planning but that DSOs should be contacted by churches planning such projects in the early stages of such planning; the Mission Development Group allocation has been fully expended. If the Group have further financial requests these should come to the Trust through the Synod Executive.
- iv. Further clarification was sought over the expressions Buy in and Buy out in the section of the report United Reformed Church Ministers’ Pension Fund (URCMPF) deficit. Romilly Micklem offered clarification.

Romilly Micklem brought Resolution T3:

RESOLUTION T3

The Wessex Synod adopts the grants policy set out on pages 7 to 11 of the paper “Wessex Trust Finance and Grants Paper for Synod—October 2024”, attached at Annex A to the Trust Report to the October 2024.

The Moderator invited further questions of clarification and then of discussion in the report as a whole:

- v. Could the Trust offer further guidance on the completion of grant applications if application to the Trust was reduced to once a year? Synod was reminded that the Synod Development Support Officers for personnel applications, the Synod Property Officers for capital applications, the Synod Children and Youth Development Officers for applications relating to children’s and youth work are those to guide churches through the application process and churches are encouraged to contact the officers at the earliest possible opportunity when considering possible projects.

- vi. Could the application(s) form be simplified? Romilly Micklem advised that all that is asked on the form is essential, but that the Trust is always seeking to simplify the application form(s).

Resolution T3 was agreed unanimously.

Romilly Micklem introduced Resolution T4 and the Moderator invited questions for clarification:

- vii. Will it be possible for the feasibility study proposed at the Gosport: St Columba's site to be a learning resource for other churches considering their eco-church status and future? Romilly Micklem commented that should a new-build eco-church result on the Gosport: St. Columba's site this may well be a first for the URC. The Moderator said the possibility was noted.
- viii. It was questioned whether there is anything in particular hindering the sale of the site at Bury Road? Romilly Micklem explained that several applications for planning permission have been made over the years that would have enabled the sale of that site but that these applications had not been approved.

Romilly Micklem brought Resolution T4:

RESOLUTION T4

The Wessex Synod wishes to explore the possibility of a new-build eco-church on the Gosport: St Columba's (9C05) site and authorizes a budget of £10,000 to develop a feasibility study, plans and more detailed costings. The Wessex Synod notes that this is an 'in principle' decision at this stage and does not constitute a commitment to building the new church.

In discussion it was suggested that the proposed budget of £10,000 to develop the feasibility study, plans and more detailed costings was insufficient. An amendment was proposed that the stated figure for the budget authorized be amended from £10,000 to £20,000, proposed by Tim Searle, seconded by Gordon Woods. The amendment was agreed unanimously.

Romilly Micklem brought the amended Resolution T4:

RESOLUTION T4

The Wessex Synod wishes to explore the possibility of a new-build eco-church on the Gosport: St Columba (9C05) site and authorizes a budget of £20,000 to develop a feasibility study, plans and more detailed costings. The Wessex Synod notes that this is an 'in principle' decision at this stage and does not constitute a commitment to building the new church.

This was agreed unanimously.

Janet Bousfield representing Gosport United Reformed Church, St Columba expressed grateful thanks for the support of Synod to the Resolution.

The Moderator thanked Romilly Micklem, the trustees and the staff of the Trust for all their hard work.

The Moderator led Synod in prayer.

24S35 Synod Executive: The Clerk presented the report.

- i. A video was screened of the Synod Big Day Out 2024, Seeds of Faith. The Clerk expressed thanks to all who assisted at the event, all who attended and to members of the organising Task Group. There will be another Synod Big Day Out and the Clerk invited anyone wanting to volunteer to serve on the planning Task Group for the next Big Day Out to speak to one of those who had served on the Task Group. The Moderator advised that there are conversations with the Southampton Methodist District towards their possible participation in the event. The Video and photographs of the banners from churches are on the Synod Website.

[Big Day Out 2024 | URC Wessex Synod](#)

The Clerk asked representatives to take the church banners ~~posters~~ produced for the Big Day Out 2024 back to their churches.

- ii. The Clerk reported that the M&M task group is currently putting together a new role description for the M&M secretary.
- iii. The Clerk highlighted the paragraphs relating to Nominations in the report, especially the need for trustees and someone to take on the role of the Zambia link lead.

The Clerk brought Resolution 1:

RESOLUTION 1

Wessex Synod approves the Appointment of the Revd Mike Thomason as Deputy Convener of Synod Meetings.

- iv. It was noted that the spelling of Convener needed clarification. The email addresses for committee conveners is spelt “convener”.
- v. It was asked if this is an open-ended appointment? The Clerk explained it is hoped another volunteer, possibly a lay person, might come forward.

Resolution 1 was agreed unanimously.

Six representatives to General Assembly 2024 were present and identified themselves to the meeting. The Clerk advised that in 2025 General Assembly will meet in July and be recalled in November to consider the Church Life Review. A message will be sent out in December 2024 seeking volunteers to represent Synod at Assembly 2025.

The Moderator reported that no objections had been raised to Resolutions 26 and 28 referred from General Assembly to Synods.

24S36 Good News Story IBEX – Churches working with the Economy: Esther Ridsdale addressed Synod on the work of IBEX, working with the economy, Influencing, Briefing, Enabling, Extending. IBEX seeks to look both ways, taking the Christian message to the Economy and making the Economy part of the Faith agenda. One of the afternoon workshops for Synod is led by Esther Ridsdale on Wellbeing Created Church.

24S37 Good News Story Army Chaplaincy: Stuart Turner is a URC minister serving as an army chaplain and addressed Synod.

The Moderator led Synod in prayer for those in chaplaincy, the armed forces, schools, hospitals, hospices, the economy and the workplace.

Synod broke for lunch, during which a Safeguarding Surgery with Sharon Barr was available as was a Buildings Surgery with Graham Barber and Nicola Werro.

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Synod reconvened at 2.10pm.

24S38 Commitment for Life - Faith Wills: Synod watched a video, Faith Will, inspiring those in congregations to make a gift in their will to their local church and to Christian Aid. Copies of a leaflet "Faith Will... Unlock the power of gifts in Wills" was made available to representatives.

24S39 Ministries & Learning Report: Wayne Hawkins brought the report.

Wayne Hawkins reported that this is the first time that the current numbers of ministers to be deployed in the Synod have been presented. There has been an increase in the number to be deployed within Wessex Synod presently to 29 ministers and section 1.1 in the report gives the target number for each Synod Pastoral Committee area. Wayne Hawkins advised that M&L are expecting to be developing profiles to enable ministers to move into the Synod.

The Moderator invited questions about the sections:

- i. 1.3, Elders in Local Leadership: In answer to a question Wayne Hawkins explained that sections 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 referring to deployment of ministers, active retired ministers and elders in local leadership represent a package that might help us understand leadership in local churches going forward.
- ii. The Church Life Review may well offer a perspective on how lay workers employed in local churches might be regarded as part of the ministry team.
- iii. Can M&L give consideration to the training that is needed for elders particularly in churches that are in ministerial transition? Mary Thomas speaking in her role as DSO and as Convener of Ministries declared there is material on Elders' development online as is the training Hub for elders to engage with but that elders' training is very much a watching brief. Mary Thomas advised that Ministries Department is always wanting to hear from churches on the training needs they perceive.
- iv. 5. Stepwise – it was clarified that the two attendees on Stepwise that have been accepted for Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher training came from both courses that have been run.

The Moderator thanked the committee for all their work.

24S40 Mission and Outreach, Le Weekend: Speaking as the European Partner Link Person, Helen Everard gave the date for Le Weekend in 2025 as being 2nd-4th May 2025 at Luneray in Normandy.

24S41 Workshops: Three workshops were offered, Creating Wellbeing in Church and Community, led by Esther Ridsdale from IBEX - Churches working with the Economy; Stepwise Faith Filled Life, led by Mary Thomas & Ruth White; Taking Action on Poverty, led by Roo Stewart.

Synod broke for the workshops at 14.29 and the Moderator asked Synod to reassemble at 15.40.

24S42 Stepwise 2025: Synod watched a video from the central Stepwise team, which included information on being a mentor and the new Faith Filled Environment which would be available in 2025.

24S43 Thank You: The Moderator thanked everyone for offering such encouragement to him in his taking up the role of Synod Moderator.

The Moderator thanked the Clerk for all her hard work and Deborah Walker who has played a vital role in enabling Synod to take place. The Moderator thanked the team at Winchester United Church especially Janet Messer and Steve Barber who had served on the tech team and for those

who had served refreshments in the kitchen. The Moderator gave special thanks to David Wong for playing the organ and the piano at very short notice during worship.

The Moderator thanked Roo Stewart, Esther Ridsdale, Mary Thomas and Ruth White for leading the afternoon workshops and thanked Michael Ruskin for travelling so far to attend as the representative from the Channel Islands.

The Moderator thanked everyone who had made the meeting of Synod possible:

Tim Searle led Synod in an act of Closing Worship.

There will be two meetings of Synod in the Spring of 2025.

The business was finished, and Synod was adjourned at 4.02pm to meet again online on 27th February 2025, or at such other time and place as may be necessary.