

6.1.2 Movements within Thames North Synod

Revd James Fields appointed Synod Pastoral Consultant (50%) and Interim Minister (50% - St John's Northwood and the Metropolitan North Local Area Group).

Revd John Hardaker has left Christ Church, Hitchin; Ashwell; Cardington, Bedford and Walkern & Sandon churches and was inducted to the St Albans Cluster (Bricket Wood; Chiswell Green; Homewood Road, St Albans and Trinity, St Albans) on 28 July 2018.

6.1.3 Movements out of Thames North Synod

Revd Naison Hove left Askew Road (UR/Methodist) Church in August 2018. He has been inducted as Minister to the Worthing Cluster of churches.

Revd Leonora Jagessar-Visser 't Hooft left Slough, Kingsway; Slough Trinity and Iver St Andrew's Churches in October. She was inducted as minister in the Cadbury Pastorate in November.

Revd Dr Allan Smith left the Hertfordshire University Chaplaincy to become minister in the North Warwickshire Group of churches.

Mrs Penny Pedley (CofE, Methodist appointment) left Ealing Green UR/Methodist Church on 31st August.

6.1.4 In Memoriam

Revd Philip Stewart died on 16th April 2018. He had been ordained as a Non-stipendiary Minister in 1986 and served in the Central and north London District (later, Area) with pastoral charge of Cockfosters URC (1986 – 2003) and Totteridge Union (2003 – 2009). Upon retirement he continued to lead worship and offer pastoral ministry and served as Interim Moderator. He is survived by his wife, Sylvia, two sons, two daughters and grandchildren.

Synod stood in memory of Philip.

6.1.5 Staff changes

Mr Simon Rudiger (CYDO) left Thames North Synod on 31 August 2018 to work for the YMCA in Hertfordshire.

The Moderator spoke briefly in appreciation of Simon's work, whom he would thank on behalf of the Synod as Simon was unable to be present at this meeting. The Moderator also thanked Revd Derek Lindfield for his work as Simon's Line Manager. The Moderator reported that following a review of the synod office staff team it had been agreed to combine the roles of Office Manager and PA to the Moderator and Synod Clerk. Mrs Colleen Fraser had been formally appointed to these roles.

6.2 Induction of Revd James Fields

The Moderator

The Moderator introduced Revd James Fields in his new role of 50% Synod Pastoral Consultant and 50% Interim Minister. The Interim Ministry was currently being served in St John's Northwood and the Metropolitan North Local Area Group.

James spoke briefly about his call. Although he was ordained into the Church of Scotland his association with the URC went back many years: his family lived in Mill Hill and they attended Union Church there. He worked in the URC with a certificate of limited service from the United Reformed Church from 2010. Earlier this year he formally transferred to the URC roll of ministers.

The Moderator then inducted Revd James Fields as Synod Pastoral Consultant and Interim Minister.

- 7. Appointments** (Paper B — available on arrival at Synod) *Synod Clerk*
Synod was asked to ratify the appointment of Mrs Bridget Akinyombo to Synod Executive by the Executive (9 June 2018) acting on behalf of Synod. This was agreed unanimously. Various concerns were expressed about re-appointments to committees and the Moderator proposed that Synod did not vote on the remaining items at this time. A revised paper will be presented to the Synod Executive for approval. The March Synod will be informed of the Executive's decision. This was agreed *nem con*.

- 8. Finance** *The Treasurer, Mr Tony Obi-Ezekpazu*

8.1 2017 Audited Accounts (Paper C1)

Tony introduced the audited accounts. He explained that expenditure for the year was higher than 2016 and detailed some of the larger items of expenditure leading to this: mission expenditure; office expenses and support of the national pension scheme. The accounts were adopted unanimously.

8.2 2019 Budget (Paper C2)

Tony introduced the budget, which is in line with the 2018 forecast. He pointed out the funding increase for resources, mainly mission and people in line with Synod's expressed wish for more funding for mission. The almost £200K payment to ministers' pensions is not expected to repeat in 2019 but this depends on income from other sources, legacies, redundant churches etc.

The Budget has already been approved by Resources and Executive Committees. Synod approved the 2019 Budget unanimously.

8.3 Adeyfield Free Church *Property Development Worker, Revd David Skipp*

There is a need for extra funding for this building project: in March 2015 Synod had agreed to provide funding for moving Adeyfield Free church from its existing site to a new build site within a 999-year leasehold property, in partnership with Hightown Housing Association. The original funding of £2,650,000 was provided as follows: from the Synod £2.25 million made up of a grant, a loan and a bridging loan. The local church hoped to raise the remaining ~£400,00.

Since then there have been significant cost changes: £800K extra in estimates received this year, mainly due to delays caused by defects in the Shell & Core phase of the work, increased VAT, works excluded from fit-out now needed. Also, the professional fees were much higher as the same solicitor could not act for both the Synod and the Trust. Correcting deficits to the Shell & Core cost about £250K and at this time it is not certain who will pay for these. In summary the original costs were estimated at about £3 million; actual are now about £5.1 million.

David outlined the projected worst-case scenario to complete the project of an additional £1,520,000. It is hoped that this will be mitigated by the church's continued fund raising activities targeting additional donations of £780,000.

He emphasised that these costs could not have been foreseen by the church nor the Synod and that no blame attached to either body. It was now important to do whatever necessary to solve the problem. He urged Synod to view the request for additional funding sympathetically.

During the lunchbreak two representatives from Adeyfield Church and David Skipp would be available to answer questions.

In the afternoon a two-part resolution would be put to Synod (see later minute):

9. Feedback on M&M Questionnaire (Paper D)

Convener of the Resources Committee, Dr John Wise

John spoke to the review report; the questionnaire was never intended as a referendum but to inform the requested review of the Synod's M&M formula. Responses to the questionnaire had revealed a basic misunderstanding of the Ministry and Mission Fund and the Plan for Partnership.

Three main issues emerged from the responses:

- (i) Membership versus average attendance at services
- (ii) The inclusion of a ministry element; there was an indication that churches wished this to be taken into consideration. However, it is a complex issue and contrary to the Plan for Partnership.
- (iii) The Jubilee principle – this could be a way of freeing money for mission.

John spoke briefly about the various factors, detailed in Paper D, that needed to be taken into account when discussing the question. He then introduced the questions for table discussion:

- Is membership the most equitable way for determining this element of the synod formula? Should we consider average attendance rather than membership?
- Should further work be undertaken to research the practicality, impact and possible implementation arrangements for an additional ministry element in the formula?
- Do you have any ideas to contribute to these issues?
- Is the jubilee proposal preferable to encouraging churches to apply for mission grants – as an increasing number are now doing each year?

Each table group was asked to appoint a note-taker to write their comments on the sheet provided. The sheets would be collected and a report brought to the March Synod.

John thanked members of Synod for engaging with this issue.

10. Matters referred to Synods from General Assembly (Paper E)

Synod Clerk

a) Changes to the structure of General Assembly, Section B of the URC Manual:

Changes to **2.(6)(a)** to

- i. make the number of synod representatives equal – to be, for the present, sixteen for each synod.
- ii. introduce some flexibility to the 50-50 ministerial/lay divide – requiring at least a third of each synod's representation to be ministerial (this term includes CRCWs) and at least a third to be elders or lay.

Changes to **2.(6)(c and d)** to include the synod moderators in the synod figure above, if their synods so wish, rather than giving them a place at Assembly in their own right.

Changes to **2.(6)(e)** to excuse the Convener of Pastoral Reference and Welfare from membership of Assembly.

There were no objections to the above changes and the Synod Clerk undertook to inform the General Secretary.

b) Proposed changes to the Schedule of the Basis of Union, concerning the promises to be made by elders of the church. The reason Mission Council brought this resolution to Assembly is set out on page 21 of the Book of Reports (<https://urc.org.uk/images/General-Assemblies/Assembly2018/BookofReports2018w.pdf>).

The main point is that the promises presently made by elders say little about what elders are expected to be and to do. This additional promise, although broad and general is seen as weighty and thus fills that gap.

Question and response to be added:

- Q:** Do you promise as an elder of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, unity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always so far as you are able to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?
- A.** By the grace of God, I do, and all these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The matter is also being referred to local congregations. So synod may wish to discuss it at the meeting in autumn 2019, having given local congregations a chance to talk about it first.

The Synod Clerk also informed Synod that the section on the URC website regarding Elders' Training, which had been updated: <https://urc.org.uk/eldership-resources.html>

11. Introduction of the new URC complaints policy and procedure (Papers P1 and Q)

The Synod Clerk spoke to Paper P1, an introduction to the new policy, already in situ, set out in Paper Q, the section of the URC Manual dealing with the new procedure. Normally, Church Meeting is the "gatekeeper" for complaints, acting on the advice of the Elders Meeting. (Ministers have their own separate procedure: Section O.) The new policy and procedure are for situations when outside help is required.

12. Notices:

- i. **Upper Clapton URC:** service of dedication of the new building is on Sunday 21st April 2019 and all are invited.
- ii. **Youth Assembly 2019** is at Whitemoor Lakes, 18–20 January 2019. Synod funding is available for young people who wish to attend, contact Heather Pugsley (Children and Youth Work Advocate, through the Synod Office).
- iii. The **Safeguarding information card** was in the mailing envelopes for Church Secretaries; CCPAS has a change of name to: **thirtyone:eight** to reflect their biblical mandate to 'speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable' Proverbs 31:8.
- iv. Synod has an outside "**Footie**" **emblem** presented at General Assembly: ideas are invited of how this might be used most effectively.
- v. **German Advent and Christmas Carol Service** led by Revd Dorothee Bührma on Saturday 8th December, at Trinity URC, Upminster.
- vi. **The Synod Church and Society Day**, Saturday 27th October 2018 at Grange Park URC, on the theme of Embracing Difference.

13. Prayer Walk

Training Officer, Revd Anne Sardeson

People were asked to stop and take time to meditate and pray with the aid of an accompanying leaflet which encouraged them to use new ideas of how to use the prayer walk.

For those who did not feel able to walk there would be a "virtual" prayer walk, with a slide show of various images.

Members of Synod re-convening after lunch were encouraged by means of decorating card outlines of a body, a foot or a hand on each table, to talk to each other about what they discovered. The prayer walk was very well-received and there was enthusiasm for more of the same.

AFTERNOON

- 14. Westminster College: enabling theological learning** *Alison Gray, Tutor in Old Testament*
Alison spoke about the accessibility of the College: for church or Synod events, for elders, ministers, lay preachers and others. It is also available for ecumenical events and is a good venue for quiet days. Alternatively, members of staff are happy to come out to events in local churches, synods, etc. The College is open to suggestions of what would be helpful. There are new courses in blocks of 3 days or 5 days, such as introduction to the Old and New Testaments, mission and apologetics. All are accredited through Durham University and give credits.

Westminster College has an excellent range of resources and the campus is now home to the Wolff Institute of Abrahamic faiths; the Faraday Institute of Science and Religion and the Cambridge Centre for Christianity Worldwide.

Revd Anne Sardeson, the Training Officer reminded Synod that funding is available for appropriate training/events for individuals, churches, Local Area Groups, etc. Enquirers should contact her.

- 15. TLS/Stepwise Update** *Training Officer, Revd Anne Sardeson*
Parts of the Stepwise materials are now available online. Those wishing to get involved at this stage should sign-up online and inform the Training Officer.
The main roll-out is not till next year as much of the material will not be available until then and the Synod's "big push" will take place when that happens.
Meanwhile, TLS Lite, Aspiring to more, etc are available across the synod (ask Anne Sardeson or John Campbell for details). A new initiative is a Preachers' Circles and details are available on the TNS website. There will be various morning sessions: all-age worship, hymns, PowerPoint, Looking at Luke, etc. If there was demand for it these could be whole-day sessions. Individual sessions could be taken to local churches or Local Area Groups. The Moderator presented certificates to a number of students who had completed TLS courses.

- 16. Adeyfield Building Project** *Property Development Officer, Revd David Skipp*
Concerns were expressed that the exact amount of the funding was left open and there was no cap. The practical difficulties of doing this would be too great and the lack of exact details was to allow the Executive and Resources Committees to make decisions as the development progressed, whilst applying careful stewardship of the Synod's resources. Synod were asked if they were willing to take both parts of the resolution together: this was agreed with two votes against.

Resolution:

- Synod resolves to provide sufficient additional funding within reason to ensure completion of the project subject to the church's continued fund-raising efforts
- Synod further resolves that the determination of the structure of this additional funding (i.e. whether grant, loan or other mechanism) shall be delegated to the Synod Executive

The resolutions were agreed with five abstentions.

17. Update on March Synod Questionnaire

Convener of Discipleship Committee, Revd Jane Weedon

Jane spoke to a report 'Questions raised at March Synod 2018' which had been compiled from responses to a questionnaire on the tables at the previous March Synod. The report had been circulated in the synod mailing. The report included specific answers to some questions. There were other matters that would need more thought e.g. making applications to the Resources Committee. The appropriate groups will be looking at the various issues and bringing reports/suggested actions to future Synods.

18. Synod's Ecumenical Commitments

Moderator

The Moderator introduced sheets detailing the synod's financial ecumenical commitments (chaplancies, etc.) He called for comments and reflections on these in writing to assist an review as a matter of urgency.

19. News from the churches:

19.1 Hampstead Garden Suburb Church (HGS) has transferred from the Central Local Area Group (CLAG) to the North London Local Area Group (NLLAG), as the church felt it has a closer working relationship with the churches in this LAG. Synod acknowledged the transfer.

19.2 Amalgamation of Woodford Ray Lodge URC with Woodford Green URC

Revd June Colley

On Sunday 29 July, a large congregation of some 70 people gathered at Ray Lodge URC for their final service before amalgamation with Woodford Green URC. The congregation included previous Ministers, others who had preached at Ray Lodge over the years, and representatives of churches in the area and from the Seventh Day Adventist Church who will continue to meet at Ray Lodge for their Sabbath services.

The current building was the third to be used for worship. The first was a little chapel in Ray Lodge Road, before the big congregational church was built at the end of the 19th century on the corner of Snakes Lane. That church in turn was superseded by the current smaller church attached to the church hall.

The building will remain in use for mission and outreach. A new congregation originating from Zimbabwe will worship there on a Sunday morning.

The Resolution: Synod approves the amalgamation of Woodford Lodge URC with Woodford Green URC as of 1st August 2018. Carried unanimously.

19.3 Amalgamation of St Andrew's URC, Borehamwood and Chesterfield Road URC, Barnet

Revd David Aplin

The two churches have enjoyed close fellowship for a number of years and have agreed to amalgamate. St Andrew's building will probably be sold. The church's Pilots Company will continue in a Borehamwood Baptist Church, which has offered to host it free of charge.

St Andrew's will host its final services at Christmas and seeks Synod's agreement to amalgamate with Chesterfield Road URC from 1 January 2019. The new church will be known as St Andrew's Chesterfield Road (Barnet). The resolution was carried unanimously.

20. Home Office Policy of revoking visas for Time for God workers *Revd Francis Ackroyd*

The letter outlining the situation was in the July edition of the Synod's News Roundup. 110 volunteers were due to take up placements in September but all who were not EU citizens had their visas stopped.

The General Secretary, Revd John Proctor, will be seeking supporting evidence for TforG volunteers. Meanwhile, groups and individuals are advised not to take action at present, as it could be counter-productive.

21. Any other business (previously notified to the clerk) — no other business.

22. Closing Worship

Revd Jane Weedon

The Moderator led Synod in prayer and declared the meeting closed.

Date of next Meeting of the Thames North Synod:

Saturday 16th March 2019 at

Chingford United Reformed Church, 2b Buxton Road, London E4 7DP