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**A Hybrid Synod Meeting held at Upper Clapton URC**

**22 October 2022**

**Recorded Synod Attendance:** In person Voting 31 Non-Voting 20. By Zoom Voting 47 Non-Voting 12

1. **Welcome** *Moderator*

The Moderator the Revd George Watt welcomed us to the meeting both those in the church and those attending via “Zoom”

1. **Instruction about virtual meeting** Dan Morrell

Dan briefly ran through the etiquette of Zoom attendance and its voting mechanism.

1. **Opening Worship** Revd John Macaulay

A member of the congregation of Upper Clapton URC read Matthew Chapter 9 vv 35-38 and the Revd John Macaulay reflected on their meaning and the Mission, Compassion and Vision of Jesus Christ. Opening worship concluded with the Upper Clapton URC choir singing *Goodness of God.*

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1. **Induction of Revd Dr Julian Templeton as Training Development Officer** *Moderator*

The Moderator inducted Julian to be the Synod’s Training Development Officer

**Induction of Nneoma Chima as Synod Clerk** *Moderator*

The Moderator inducted Nneoma as Synod Clerk.

1. **Apologies** *Moderator*

Apologies for absence received from 19 voting and 6 non-voting members.

1. **Minutes of the Synod Meeting of 26 March 2022** *Moderator*

These had been circulated and were agreed without dissent as a correct record of the meeting without need for amendment.

1. **Matters arising not dealt with elsewhere** *Moderator*

The Moderator drew attention to Paper D - Synod Environmental Update which had been circulated at the March 2022 Synod and would be addressed again in March 2023. The Synod have made a donation of £1,000 to A Rocha which runs the Eco Church scheme and provides a lot of resources. The Moderator asked churches and members to consider making donations to A Rocha UK (CC register no 1089276) since they have experienced a fall in income recently.

1. **Personalia** *Revd James Fields*

**News of Ministers – Paper A**

**Moves into Synod**

Revd JunSoo Park – has been called to Trinity Knebworth, Ashwell and Walkern & Sandon URCs. A date for his induction has yet to be set.

Revd Brian Buschkill was inducted on 18 September 2022 to Chadwell Heath, Nelmes

Hornchurch and Trinity Upminster

Revd Naison Hove will be inducted in November 2022 as minister of Tottenham High Cross URC and Lay Preaching Support minister.

Revd Paul Stein will be inducted on 12 November 2022 as minister of Adeyfield Free Church and St George’s URC Hemel Hempstead.

Revd Leslie Noon (Methodist) was welcomed to Howard Memorial Church, Cardington, Bedford in August 2022.

Revd Paul Weary (Methodist) was welcomed on 1 September 2022 as the Enfield Circuit Superintendent with oversight of Trinity (Methodist/URC) Enfield. Paul had hoped to be present at the meeting but is unwell and was welcomed on Zoom.

Revd David Jebb (Methodist) was welcomed on 2 September 2022 as St Albans and Welwyn Circuit Superintendent with oversight of Radlett UFC.

Margaret Chipandambira (Methodist) was welcomed on 3 September 2022 as deacon to Colnbrook and Poyle United Church

**Moves out of Synod**

Revd Dan Haylett (Methodist) left Trinity Enfield in August 2022 to take up a ministry in Devon.

Revd Andrew Hollins (Methodist) left Howard Memorial, Cardington in August 2022 to take up a ministry in Lincolnshire.

Revd Claude Halm (Baptist) left Seven Kings UFC, Ilford to become Pastor of Aldersbrook Baptist Church.

Revd Andrew Prout (Methodist) left Radlett UFC in July 2022.

**Retirements and resignations**

Revd Francis Ackroyd has retired from the East London LAG

Revd Margaret Dudley (Methodist) retired from Colnbrook and Poyle United Church in August 2022

Revd Andrew McCluskey had retired from the roll of ministers of the United Reformed Church

**Deaths**

Revd Chris Vivian (Copley) – former minister of Bushey URC (closed)

Miss Barbara Leighton – Lay Preacher and a Convener of the Mission Initiatives Group.

The Moderator led prayer for all the above and their service to the Synod.

**Appointments Advisory Committee – Paper B** *The Moderator*

The following appointments have been brought to this Synod meeting for approval

Executive Committee – Appointment - Mrs Hilda Darkwah and the re-appointment for a second term – Revd John Macaulay

Discipleship Steering Group – Revd Josh Kane

Pastoral Committee – Revd Tony Ruffell as representative of the North Herts LAG

Appointments Advisory Committee – Revd Bridget Powell

Synod Appointment – Line Manager for the Children’s Youth and Development Officer – Revd Bridget Powell

**News of Churches (**Paper C was not distributed) *The Moderator*

The Moderator reported that Homewood Road and Trinity URCs in St Albans continue their discussions as to how they can be one church on two sites.

**Sacha** **McArdle** has been appointed to the post of Assistant Property Officer. At present she is on day release on Thursdays as she studies for an HND in surveying.

**Partners in Mission Reports – Papers E and F** *The Moderator*

Paper E concerns the ministry of the Revds Mark Meacher and Melanie Smith as Partners in Mission with the Council for World Mission (CWM) based at the Pacific Theological College, Suva, Fiji. They hope that individuals and churches might be encouraged to financially support the work of the college to provide administrative support for their work and scholarships for students.

Paper F concerns the ministry of the Revd Yufen Chen whose ministry is sponsored by the URC, CWM and the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan. Revd Yufen Chen spoke to her paper and was available to answer questions about her work with Taiwanese students in London. She is based in the former Lumen URC.

1. **Children’s and Youth Work Development Officer** *Lorraine Downer*

Lorraine introduced Aaliyah Stewart who is our Youth Representative. Aaliyah had prepared a short video presentation explaining her background and the hopes she has for representing and working with young people in the Thames North Synod.

Lorraine then introduced a video recording of David Aisa Miller from the American International Church who received the Lundie Award in July 2022 for his work in moving the church forward in their approach to inclusion.

1. **Discipleship Enabler** *Revd Eddie Boon*

Eddie was delighted to address a Synod meeting in person for the first time since he was appointed. He spoke about the partnership with Steve Rouse of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity for a Learning Hub which they hope will start in 2023. Ideally, they would initially like 10 churches to be involved in helping people to grow more deeply in Whole Life Discipleship. They would be expected to engage with the programme over two years with quarterly gathered sessions to learn and reflect. A “Taster” Session would be held (by Zoom because of the scheduled train strike) on Saturday 5th November to explain more fully what would be involved. A video produced by Revd Steve Rouse was shown. Churches were encouraged to join the meeting to find out a bit more.

1. **Safeguarding Officer** *Belinda Herbert (nee Nielsen)*

Belinda was not able to be present in person at the meeting but spoke via Zoom reminding members that Zoomed training sessions have been set up in November and December and that an E Learning programme is being prepared for the Foundation level training for Safeguarding. Congratulations were expressed to Belinda following her recent marriage and noting her married name.

1. **Committee Reports**

**Pastoral Committee – Paper G was not available** *Revd James Fields*

James prefaced his report by saying that Deployment was a little like the moves made to complete a puzzle picture where there would always be a gap to be filled. The members of Synod both in person and on Zoom were invited to give their thoughts on the Consultations that Pastoral Committee are having with the Local Area Groups about their frustrations in the finding and appointing of ministerial oversight/provision. What should be our strategy for encouraging people into ministry? Recognising that Elders are exercising ministry? Finding Local Church Leaders? Recognising potential leaders in our congregations and personally encouraging them to consider formal training for ministry? Reminding people that the church is the people not a particular building?

**Discipleship Steering Group – Paper H** *The Moderator*

In the absence of a Convener, George presented the paper which reported that grants were made to Palmers Green for a part time Children’s and Youth Worker and to Grassroots at Luton to enable them to deliver a workshop at the recent meeting of the World Council of Churches showcasing their work as well as supporting their ongoing ministry with a five-year grant. The group supports the work of University and Airport chaplaincies in our Synod as well as receiving reports and attending meetings of the County Ecumenical Leaders. The Group has oversight of a “Walking the Way” Fund and would welcome applications from churches needing funds to enable their activities.

**Resources Committee – Paper I** *Revd David Skipp in the absence of Dr John Wise*

David spoke to the paper reminding members of Synod that the Synod had set up Emergency Energy Costs Grants which churches should apply for especially as we are being encouraged to provide “warm hubs” for our members and the general public over the winter months. He flagged up the Treasurers and Administrators’ Conference which will be held at Lumen on 18 February 2023. He encouraged churches to take part in the URC Buildings Forum meeting on 15 November 2022– details will be circulated. The committee is very pleased that Sacha McArdle has joined the Synod as Assistant Property Officer.

**Synod Executive – Paper J** *The Moderator*

George spoke to the report describing its work as the Trustees of the Synod’s resources and their responsibilities as such in regard to Finance, the Risk Register, Human Resources, Safeguarding and Lumen. The initiative to offer Emergency Energy Costs grants to churches came from Synod Executive. Synod Executive spent a lot of time preparing for the discussion at this Synod of what our Vision and Values ought to be.

1. **Finance – Papers K 1,2 & 3** *Assistant Treasurer*

In the absence of the Treasurer, Martyn Macphee presented the statutory accounts (Paper K1) for the year ended 31 December 2021 which had been agreed by the Synod Executive and which had been reported on by the Synod’s Auditors Haysmacintyre. The net surplus for the year was £448,000 (£88,000 regular income and £360,000 discretionary income). Regular income was depressed by unforeseen property repairs of £211,000. Discretionary Income was affected by unrealised gains of £2m for investment properties and £1.7m for CCLA investments, countered by the requirement to include the whole of the four-year commitment to the Ministers’ Pension Fund deficit of £3m.

Paper K2 is the Forecast for the outcome for 2022 of £7,661k compared to the original budgeted loss of £1,909k. The difference is mostly explained by the inclusion of gains from the sale of closed churches of £8,793k and the removal of the reserve for ministers’ pensions which was fully charged in the 2021 accounts.

Paper K3 is the Budget for 2023 which forecasts a surplus on regular activities of £220k and a deficit on Discretionary activities of £1,952k. £1m of the deficit from Discretionary activities is a reserve for Eco Church grants but there will have to a lot more discussion as to how this is awarded since it must be used for practical sustainable projects. While the Synod’s Discretionary Fund benefitted from the sale of churches in 2022, it is hoped this will not be the case in 2023.

Questions were asked about the continuing deficits forecast for the operation of the former Lumen URC. Part of this is explained by the amount of time it is used for Synod’s own activities and also at present, without a caretaker on site it is not available for outside hire in the evenings and weekends.

Martyn concluded by thanking the Treasurer Tony Obi and the Synod Accountant Lawrence Sinderson for their hard work in looking after the Synod’s finances and preparing the papers which he has spoken to.

1. **Re-visioning – The Next Steps – Paper L** *The Moderator*

The committee structure of the Synod was changed in 2015 and the then Moderator Revd Dr Andrew Prasad convened a group to review the achievements of the process so far and to identify those changes which would further empower Local Area Groups (LAG) and resource the Synod Committees to better serve local churches over the next few years.

Synod was being asked to consider and endorse this overall approach as the basis for more detailed work. The Synod Executive defined these questions as

1. Is the overall thrust of this strategy still correct? Identify any areas which might need re-thinking.
2. Do you agree with the core values highlighted by the Executive?
3. Do you agree with the hopes and dreams for the Synod? Identify which ones are the most important.
4. Are LAGS, as they are currently constituted, well placed to play their part in fulfilling the vision?(Currently there are 14 LAGs ranging from 2 churches to 15 churches.)

Members present at Synod and on Zoom broke into small groups to specifically consider their response to question 3. These will be summarised elsewhere. The Moderator thanked everyone for their responses which will be considered by Executive.

1. **General Assembly Feedback – Paper M** *The Moderator*

The Moderator drew our attention to the matters for consideration arising from resolutions passed at General Assembly this year.

1. Local Churches – 2,4,8,15,16,17,18,19,20,25 and 52
2. Synods – 2,4,8,15,16,17,18,19,20,24,25 and 55
3. Ministers – 8,9,11-13,29-36 and 40-45

All these can be found in the Record of Assembly 2022 https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Record-of-Assembly-2022-web.pdf

In addition, churches are asked to consider how they can address the **Legacies of Slavery Confession** below

* *humbly acknowledges our share in and benefit from our nation’s participation, and that of some of our own antecedent bodies, in transatlantic slavery.*
* *recognises our failure to honour the efforts of our abolitionist forebears by permitting the legacies of transatlantic slavery to continue shaping our world*
* *offers our apology to God and to our sisters and brothers in Africa, the Caribbean, and their descendants, for all that has created and still perpetuates such deep hurt, which originated from the horror of slavery.*
* *repents of the hurt we have caused, our reluctance to face up to the sins of the past and our silence in the face of racism and injustice today.*
* *admits that these sins are part of our continuing failure to see and hear God in all our neighbours, whoever they may be.*
* *commits, in a true spirit of repentance:*
* *to find constructive ways by which we can move from saying ‘I’m sorry’ into concrete actions of*

*‘repairing justice’ and so contribute to the prophetic work of God’s coming kingdom*

* *to continue working to promote racial justice as part of our Christian commitment to justice for all*
* *to encourage the whole United Reformed Church to be engaged in this journey.*

**It is hoped that worship materials will be produced to help local churches use the confession Anyone interested in being part of the Synod response to the Legacies of Slavery should contact Sandra Ackroyd.**

1. **Church and Society – Paper N** *Sandra Ackroyd*

Sandra drew attention to the Church & Society Autumn Update 2022 from Church House which had been distributed with the Synod papers. It includes a request to church members to write to their MPs about the issue of deportation of refugees to Rwanda. She went on to describe the very full programme attendees at the recent Synod Church and Society gathering on 24 September were able to take part in with speakers on our churches’ involvement with Food Banks and Youth Leadership programmes. A report on the event will be circulated to local churches.

1. **Being an anti-racist church**

Due to time constraints, this was held over until the next meeting of Synod.

1. **Any Other Business** *The Moderator*

None had been notified so George reminded members that nominations were needed for Moderator of General Assembly to serve 2024-2025 – one Minister of Word and Sacrament and one Elder can be nominated by each Synod either from Churches or individuals. Names should be sent to the Moderator in advance of the next Synod Meeting in March 2023, but the persons named should not be informed of the nomination.

There being no other business we concluded with a reading from Philippians 4:4-9, prayer, singing verses from one of the hymns especially written for the Jubilee of the United Reformed Church and by saying The Grace to each other.

Synod will reconvene on 18 March 2023 at Lumen.