



## Eastern Synod

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20<sup>th</sup> March 2009

To Members of Synod

Dear Friend

### **Subject: Synod Minutes**

Enclosed please find the minutes of our meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2009. You have only received a paper copy if the Synod Office has no recorded e-mail address for you. If any amendments should be required, you are requested to let me have them within the next month please.

The October 2009 Synod will be on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October. The venue is still not confirmed. We are hoping to include workshops at this Synod and thus will need sufficient smaller rooms to facilitate this arrangement.

It is hoped that the Agenda for October will include the themes of 'Prayer' in anticipation of the Vision4Life focus in 2010 and 'Fresh Expressions of Church'. I apologise that we are still delayed in formally introducing consensus decision making at the Synod meetings.

The Synod Web site ([www.urc-eastern.org.uk](http://www.urc-eastern.org.uk)) is increasingly our main communication channel to the local churches. ***Please encourage your church members to visit it regularly and where appropriate share information within your church family.***

If you, or anyone who it is planned will be replacing you, will need crèche facilities at the Synod on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2009, it will be appreciated if this could be advised before 31<sup>st</sup> August 2009 please.

Yours sincerely



Mick Barnes



## ***THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH***

### ***EASTERN SYNOD***

#### **MINUTES of the meeting of Synod held at Christ Church LEP, Braintree on Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2009.**

##### **09/01 Constitution of Synod**

The meeting of Synod was duly constituted by the Moderator, the Revd Paul Whittle, at 10.30 am.

##### **09/02 Opening Worship**

Revd Nigel Warner led worship, including in Memoriam. The following had died since the last Synod and were remembered in prayer: Revd Elizabeth Brown, Revd Jim Gill and Michael Knock.

The worship included an item on the vision, life and work of the host church of Christ Church, Braintree, focused on Isaiah 58 v 12.

The Moderator welcomed the Methodist Chelmsford Circuit Superintendent, Revd Viv Gasteen.

##### **09/03 Attendance and Apologies for Absence**

Attendance was recorded by **145** people, as follows:

	<b>Lay Representatives</b>	<b>Ministers</b>	<b>Total</b>
Local Church Representatives	62	38	100
Retired Ministers		6	6
Moderator, Co-opted, FURY and Ecumenical Members	9	6	15
Students	2		2
Speakers and Other Visitors	22		22
	<b>95</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>145</b>

26 apologies were received.

##### **09/04 Ministerial Movements and Welcome to New Members**

The Moderator welcomed the following new members of Synod:

The Revd Kathryn Taylor inducted to the pastorate of Harlow David Livingstone, Trinity and Ware Leaside Churches within HAEBEA, the Revd

David Vincent inducted to the pastorate of Dunmow, Thaxted, Finchingfield and Felsted, and the Revd Peter Gibson (Baptist) inducted to the Southgate LEP in Bury St Edmunds.

**Resolution 1 - the Revd Peter Gibson was approved as a member of Synod.**

The Moderator also greeted the Revd Jason Askew inducted to Ongar in addition to Epping. The Moderator mentioned the death of Revd Jim Gill who had only recently been inducted to Hatfield Heath URC.

**09/05 Apologies for Absence and other Notices**

The Synod Clerk (Mick Barnes) had received some apologies for absence already and reminded Synod members to complete their record of attendance slips, and to collect their voting cards.

The Synod Clerk thanked the Members at Christ Church, Braintree and in particular Vivian Salter for her help in organising Synod.

The Synod Clerk gave details of the arrangements for lunch and drew attention to the plans of the church building.

**09/06 Appointment of Tellers**

Mr Simon Mynott was appointed as co-ordinator, and Arthur Thomas, Ken Woods and Peter West were appointed as Tellers for the meeting.

**09/07 Minutes of Meeting of Synod on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2008** were passed with some amendments including alterations to Minute 08/32 relating to Ministry and Mission on page 3.

**09/08 Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**09/09 Appointments (see paper A)**

The Synod Clerk presented Paper A containing details of new Synod appointments. He said that he was able to bring three further names to serve as Section 'O' Panel members: Revd Dr Janet Tollington, Revd Geoff Wright and Revd Kathryn Taylor.

**Resolution 2 – Synod approved the appointments as shown in Paper A with the addition of the three names listed above.**

**Resolution 3 – Synod confirmed its acceptance of the Trust Company Director Appointments for 2009/2010 as shown in Paper A.** (This Resolution was amended to show Rev Prof David Thompson's correct title).

**09/10 Closure of Quay URC, Woodbridge (Paper B)**

Revd Andrew Kleissner presented Paper B.

**Resolution: Synod gave thanks to God for the past work at Woodbridge URC, concurs with the resolution of Woodbridge URC to close, and instructs the Clerk to report this to the General Assembly.**

**09/11 Youth and Children's Work (Paper C)**

Revd John Proctor introduced this report. He pointed out that this work is part of the core work of the Church and of the Synod. He introduced Mr Henry Playle as Children's and Youth Development Officer, Mrs Kate Hackett, Youth and Children's Work Secretary, Miss Victoria Paulding, FURY Representative and Mrs Sylvia Paine, Pilots Officer. Sylvia spoke about her work with Pilots, a youth organisation sponsored by the URC and the Congregational Federation. There are 9 Pilots groups in the Eastern Synod at present. A short video of the recent Pilots' visit to Longleat was shown. Four FURY members, Victoria, Becky, Jo and Lisa spoke about this organisation for young people aged 14 – 25 associated with the United Reformed Church. They spoke about its mission statement, structure and activities. A short video was shown of FURY's Assembly 2008. Lisa spoke about the recent Synod youth weekend held at St Mark's College, the first held for many years, and a short video was shown. Victoria explained that they are now in the process of setting up a Synod Youth Forum, the first of which will be held in April, and invited people to contact her for details. Becky presented a series of slides on the many gifts and talents of young people within the Synod which gave hope for the future life of the Church. Victoria spoke about the need to welcome young people wherever they are to be found within the life of the church. Henry spoke about a presentation by the Youth and Children's Work Committee made to General Assembly last year based on Worship, Talking about God, Growth (not just in terms of number), Telling our Stories, and Community. He suggested that we should continue to explore different ways of being church in order to get alongside young people and enable them to become the church of the future. John invited people to ask the team for advice on what to do in order to help churches with this work.

Revd Mike Shrubsole raised the issue of bridging the gap between elderly congregations and youth. Kate answered that we should remember one thing: it doesn't matter what age we are, we can all talk to children, even if we can't use the latest slang. We should remember that children don't bite, they like to talk, and to hear stories of faith. She said that we shouldn't expect them to come in to us, but that we should go out to them wherever they are. Henry told that he recently dealt with a Pilots company where three of the helpers were in their 70s but keen to be involved. John Hardaker said that he was impressed by Paper C because it gives sensible advice. He wondered whether any one of the five points might be the place to start. Henry answered that the advice shouldn't be seen as too prescriptive but that churches should consider the point from which they are starting. Sylvia said that the big events provided an opportunity for children

to come along and experience having fun with other people who are Christians. Revd Andrew Kleissner said that he thinks a lot of children's work is hidden because it happens on a weekday evening or out of service time and he asked how to encourage congregations to realise that it is their responsibility too. Revd Victor Ridgewell said that they should be encouraged to take part in these activities.

Revd Sam White asked Henry if there was anyone in the Synod who relates to other denominations which are dealing with youth and children's work. She also asked if he could offer any encouragement to churches at local level who feel they can't start a children's group themselves, but could link up with other organisations in an area to share this work. Henry said that he is concerned that in some areas this doesn't happen because churches are worried about which denomination will be seen as "owning" the children. He thinks that a way forward is to link with other churches in the community to share resources. Churches Together can help with this, e.g. in Sudbury, where the local URC doesn't feel able to do the work itself, but does provide financial help and prayer in support of the local youth group. Henry said that helpers are available, but that coordinators are more difficult to find. He cannot necessarily find co-ordinators, but he will help out while a project is getting off the ground. Revd Mary Dow asked about the Belonging to the World Church programme and it was explained that its aim is to link people to Christian brothers and sisters throughout the world. Becky urged us to encourage elderly people to listen to young people so that they learn their views. Henry said the good thing about the URC is that its organisation and structures enable this kind of conversation. Revd Leonard Phelps said that he challenged FURY to produce a programme of mission to take back to their local churches, which would encourage congregations to come alongside. He also suggested that FURY could encourage young people to be sponsored to work in something such as Time For Church in their local churches. Victoria reported that this does go on, but it is not yet very visible because of the small numbers involved so far. John thanked the four young people for their input both at Synod and also throughout the rest of the year and blessed them in encouraging us to do what we need to do to encourage young people to be involved in the Church.

Kate and John promoted the youth leader events on 14<sup>th</sup> March at Halstead URC and on 25<sup>th</sup> April at Diss URC which would enable further discussion of the issues raised today. They encouraged anyone interested in working with youth and children, whether actively involved in their local church or not, to come along.

## **09/12 Church in Society – Justice Matters**

Mr Chris Wright explained that there are matters pertaining to justice issues going on around us all the time, and that Church in Society focuses on these issues and engages with them. He promoted the Justice Matters day to be held on 13<sup>th</sup> June at Stowmarket URC where we can learn more about the way in which we can become more involved in doing something to make a difference. He pointed out that little by little, people can make a difference.

Mrs Linda Mead then reminded Synod about the Commitment for Life programme. She pointed out that it is about much more than asking for money (although last year's £550,000 was the largest amount raised so far); it is also about standing alongside the poor and marginalised. Members of Synod then took part in the FairTrade record breaking banana eating event.

### **09/13 Notices:**

Paul Ellis advertised the production of Jesus Christ Superstar which will be performed at Witham URC on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> May.

Mrs Moira Kleissner promoted the work of the URC Musicians' Guild which she explained is changing to reflect the wide variety of music within the URC.

Mick Barnes explained that Executive Committee tries to give a proper amount of time to Church in Society matters at Synod but that this is sometimes difficult in a packed agenda. However he applauds the work of Church in Society and encourages people to attend the Justice Matters day on 13<sup>th</sup> June.

### **09/14 Vision4Life -**

Revd Peter Ball promoted the Vision4Life Pastoral Care Course resources which are available from the Synod Office. He gave a brief resume of various training events during the coming year, all of which could be found on the Synod website. He also advertised the forthcoming Enquirers' Conference at which anyone hearing a call to be of use within the church, would be welcome.

Revd Dr Susan Durber led a fascinating Bible Study session on "the woman who anointed Jesus" based around our memory of Bible stories.

Peter thanked Susan for her valuable work in leading this and other explorations of the Bible.

### **09/15 Executive Committee Report (Paper D)**

Mr Mick Barnes presented the report. He explained that Revd Kathryn Taylor has joined Executive Committee on behalf of HAEBEA, which now brings it up to full strength. Mick invited anyone interested in serving on the Section 'O' panel to contact him, because although some further members had been appointed, there is no restriction on the Panel's size and more members would be welcome.

### **Resolutions from General Assembly 2008**

The following resolution was considered: **Resolution 49 – Amendments to Structure: Membership of Assembly**

General Assembly Resolves to amend the Structure of the United Reformed Church paragraph 2(5)(f) to read "A staff representative and a student representative being members of the URC, from each of such theological colleges as the General Assembly has designated as resource centres for learning, and a staff representative and a student representative being members of the URC, and from such other colleges or centres as shall from

time to time be designated by the Education and Learning Committee as engaged in significant training for the United Reformed Church.”

And to add a new paragraph 2(5)(o) to read “The Chair of the United Reformed Church Trust.”

**This was approved.**

In response to a question relating to Synod’s representatives to General Assembly, Mick answered that the Executive Committee already follows General Assembly guidance on maintaining a balance between lay and ordained members and that they also try to maintain a balance of gender and ethnicity.

### **09/16 Resources Committee Report including 2008 Accounts (Paper E)**

Mr Ron Wade presented this report. He explained that the Synod Administration Fund (E3) has ended the year with a satisfactory outcome. The Church Life and Mission Fund (E4) has made a donation to the Retired Ministers’ Housing Fund of approx £79,000 and thanks had duly been received. Ron thanked Andrew Perkins for producing these accounts in a tight time scale. He drew attention to the balance sheet on page 12 showing a significant drop in the Synod’s investment values of 29%. This was similar to that experienced throughout the national church. There were no questions.

**Resolution 1: Synod received the Trustees’ Report and adopted the Annual Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008.**

**Resolution 2: Synod approved the reappointment of Messrs Bloomer Heaven as auditor for the United Reformed Church, Eastern Synod, their remuneration to be agreed by the Resources Committee.**

Ron reported that the Ministry and Mission Fund work was continuing under the guidance of Faith Paulding.

Ron explained that as a consequence of the current economic situation, it is estimated that the income of the Church Life and Mission Fund during 2009 will be £84,000 less than anticipated. Resources Committee has decided in the light of this that it will be necessary to restrict the level of property and Project Facelift grants for the time being. He urged churches, therefore, to prepare any grant applications properly with the requisite number of quotes, etc.

Synod Pioneer Fund: Ron reported that there is currently no money in the Pioneer Fund as anticipated property sales were still ongoing and that the Resources Committee cannot thus approve grants. A process is being developed as to how to manage applications. Ron said that in considering this, he had become aware of a fundamental issue which needs to be addressed in the near future: What is church, and what is its role?

Ron reminded the six churches who had not yet returned their Memorandum of Choice and Appointment of New Trustee to return them before the end of this month as otherwise separate Trust Company accounts would have to be prepared, and further audit fees incurred. There were no questions.

### **09/17 Pastoral Committee Report (Paper F)**

Revd John Proctor presented the report. He explained the extensive work that is carried out by the Pastoral Committee. John said that the new Synod structures had necessitated a deal of work, and he commended the work of the local Area Pastoral Advocates and said that it is obvious that the right people had been appointed to these posts; they have undertaken their tasks with a good deal of commitment, wisdom and consistency. John had been pleasantly surprised that there had not been the need to address as many crises as he had thought. He said that the Committee was also looking forward and seeking to develop ways of supporting and sustaining the Church in the carrying out its mission. It was also seeking to address the situation which would arise as a result of the falling numbers of ordained ministers from 2010 to 2020. The Committee would be encouraging churches to consider team ministry. John said that although he doesn't think ATOM is perfect or right up to date, it is still a very useful resource and he thinks it should be used and refreshed as necessary in coming years. David Vincent asked how he can obtain ATOM. Peter Ball said that it is still available on the Synod website and he has a few hard copies too.

After an amendment was proposed the following resolution was agreed -

**Resolution 1: Synod authorised the persons listed on its website as at 7<sup>th</sup> March 2009 to preside at sacramental services in the churches indicated, when no minister is available, for a further period of a year, up to the spring Synod of 2010.**

Revd Victor Ridgewell asked what would happen if this resolution was transgressed. The Moderator said that he didn't feel there was a need for any sanctions because as it was about Christians adhering to the wishes of their church, he didn't think there would be transgressions. Revd Prof David Thompson said that in any case provision for this eventuality had already been made at national level.

John reported that Mary Playford and Andrew Royal are both training for Non-Stipendiary Ministry and that they have each recently been accepted for service by a local pastorate. Accordingly he brought the following Resolutions:

**Resolution 2: Synod resolved to ordain Andrew Royal to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments on 5<sup>th</sup> July, to serve as a non-stipendiary minister in the congregations of Framlingham and Saxmundham subject to the successful completion of his ministerial training.**

**Resolution 3: Synod resolved to ordain Mary Playford to the Ministry of Word and Sacraments on 5<sup>th</sup> September, to serve as a non-stipendiary minister in the congregations of the West Suffolk Area Partnership subject to the successful completion of her ministerial training.**

**09/18 Mission Committee Report (Paper G)**

Revd John Hardaker presented the report. He said that he finds the work of the Mission Committee very valuable and exciting because it is not bound by the need to observe processes. He said that there are resources available from Synod which are wasted if local churches do not request them for local outreach, training, etc. Revd Peter Ball then introduced Linda Mead as a core member of the national Mission Committee. Peter thinks of Linda and himself as go-betweens between the local church and the national committee and thus the national church. He appealed for churches to approach him or Linda on mission matters. Peter promoted Vision2020, so called because it will fit in with the working of Vision4Life over the next few years. It is a consultation with every local church, giving opportunity for everybody to have a say in the mission strategy of the URC. He urged us to keep an eye out for it.

John commended the work of Church in Society. He related how, during the sexuality debate several years ago, he became quite disillusioned with the URC. However, while preparing an alpha course session one day, he came across the question: how would you feel if people spoke about your bride in the same way as you do? This had been a turning point for him. It made him think about the church as a bride of Christ and he realised that his church was precious to him. Therefore, he said now, God loves this Church as his bride and we should love and respect it accordingly.

There were no questions.

**09/19 Closing Worship**

Closing Worship including Communion was led by the Revd Paul Whittle, Moderator.

**09/20 Next Meeting**

Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2009. The venue has yet to be agreed.