

# Minutes of 97<sup>th</sup> Meeting of East Midlands Synod Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2020

This meeting was held virtually due to Covid 19 restrictions

## **Attendance**

Moderator – Revd Geoffrey Clarke; Clerk - Mrs Helen Lidgett; Synod Administrator - Mrs Chris Willis

The following attended virtually:

84 attendees morning session

81 attendees afternoon session (3 attendees recorded apologies for the afternoon session)

## **Apologies**

12 Apologies were recorded.

The Moderator, Revd Geoffrey Clarke, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## **1. Meeting Constituted**

Helen Lidgett advised those gathered that the East Midlands Synod follows General Assembly Standing Orders. The Standing Orders circulated prior to the meeting in the book of reports for use by Synods holding virtual/partially virtual meetings are adapted from those approved by Mission Council on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2020. She advised that these need to be approved for the meeting to proceed. Mission Council had also approved the Rules of Procedure for Virtual Meetings which Synod will follow. These cannot be adapted and can be found on the United Reformed Church website. The Clerk drew attention to the following:

Firstly – For the avoidance of doubt, the United Reformed Church declares that all Designated Bodies (which includes Synods and Elders and Church Meetings) may in principle hold virtual meetings.

Secondly – No failure of technology, however caused shall invalidate the meeting or any decision taken at that meeting.

Those gathered were then asked to vote on the following resolution:

### **Resolution 1**

***Synod Adopts the Standing Orders of virtual meetings***

This resolution was agreed and was duly passed.

## **2. Opening Worship**

The opening worship was led by the Convenor of Children and Youth Revd Sarah Gower and the young people.

## **3. Personalia**

Please refer to Paper A circulated prior to the meeting

Revd Geoffrey Clarke Moderator presented this paper advising those gathered that we have seen 34 people come and go since our last meeting. A warm welcome was given to Revd Dr Langley Mackrell-Hey, Revd Martin Ferris, Revd Vicki Atkinson and to all new members of Synod.

The meeting then paused as we remembered nine ministers who have given their lives to serve God, their joint ministries covering 449 years. Prayers of thanksgiving were then said for the lives of these ministers and for consolation for their families.

## **Ordination Jubilee**

Revd Dr Peter Jupp was presented with his certificate for 50 years of service and the Moderator thanked him for the work he continues to do.

### **Closed Church**

Members were referred to report B in the book of reports previously circulated. It was noted that due to Covid 19 the planned closing service at Langley Community Church due to be held 4 April 2020 had not taken place.

Members were then asked to agree the following Resolution:

#### **Resolution 2**

***We thank God for the life and ministry of Langley Community Church across the years.***

This resolution was agreed and was duly passed.

### **4. Revd Dr John Bradbury – General Secretary of the United Reformed Church**

The Moderator welcomed Revd Dr John Bradbury to the meeting.

Dr Bradbury presented his talk based on 2 passages from the Bible where he talked about Jeremiah and the 70 year exile and John's account of the Resurrection. Covid 19 has made us all stop and in many cases feel exiled from our normal situation. Through this we need to look at where we are and how things have changed. What are our resources? Going forward we may need to leave behind that of the past.

Members of Synod were asked for questions. These included: a request for an update on the church's finances, the balance of lay and ordained ministry in the current challenges, how the URC is responding to Black Lives Matter and what areas of the URC's life need to die for the body to grow. John commented on all these matters.

The Moderator thanked John for his presentation and responding to questions.

### **5. Report back from Mission Council and the Assembly Book of Reports (July 2020)**

For full details please refer to Paper C in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

Helen Lidgett, Synod Clerk, presented this report. She advised that the Mission Council minutes and reports can be found on the URC website. She noted the Youth Assembly challenge to the church about the climate emergency and drew attention to the Resolution promoting the Synod Environmental Policy to be discussed later in the meeting. She also advised that Synod has started the recruitment process for a new Synod Safeguarding Officer, the Synod Personnel Officer is updating Terms of Settlement to include wording about pastoral supervision and the Synod Training and Development Officer will be promoting material for local churches on the Legacies of Slavery.

### **6. Clerk's Report**

For full details please refer to Paper D in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

Helen Lidgett thanked all the staff and colleagues for their dedication and commitment to the work of the Synod over the past few months.

She reminded Synod that representatives will shortly be sought to attend the 2021 General Assembly.

#### **Nominations**

For full details please refer to Paper E in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

Helen Lidgett presented the paper and advised that Paper I which had been circulated is listed in her report as Paper F. The nominations listed in paper F were prepared for the March meeting and due to the cancellation of this meeting were approved by Synod Council in April. On Paper F there are 2 minor changes: Revd Gillian Poucher should read Revd Dr Gillian Poucher (under Mission Fund panel and Ordained Churches and Ministers group); whilst for consistency Mr Mark Goodwill-Hodgson should read Mr Mark Hodgson (under Synod District Council, Co-options to Synod and Synod Listed Buildings Advisory Group). Since this meeting there have been some changes and additions to the names in Paper F which are listed on Papers E (New Nominations) and T (Thanks to those standing down). The following nominations were added verbally to those named in Paper E:

Revd David Featonby as Convenor of Lay Ministry is to be appointed as a member of Synod Council.

Mr Robert White as Synod Personnel Officer

Revd Philip Tiplady as Lay Member and Trustee to serve on the Chaplaincy Council of the Chaplaincy to the University of Leicester

With these amendments the Nominations paper was presented. Members were asked to vote on the following resolutions:

### **Resolution 3**

***i. Synod appoints the Revd Camilla Veitch to serve as Synod Clerk from 1 January 2021 to March 2024.***

This Resolution was approved by 56 members and was duly passed.

***ii. Synod appoints the representatives to Mission Council as listed in Paper E.***

***iii. Synod confirms the appointments made by Synod Council executive action 28<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and listed in Paper F.***

***iv. Synod appoints the group members and representatives listed in Paper E.***

These Resolutions were agreed and were duly passed.

The Moderator invited Revd Camilla Veitch as the Synod Clerk-elect to say a few words. She advised that she was looking forward to the new challenge and is happy that through the first few months she will have Helen to guide and support her in this important role.

## **7. Nominations to Synod Trust**

For full details please refer to Paper G in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

The Trust Chair, Mr Ron Kenyon, presented the paper. There being no questions members were asked to vote for Resolution 4

### **Resolution 4**

***Synod approves the nominations to the Synod Trust.***

This resolution was agreed and was duly passed.

## **8a. Minutes of October 2019 meeting for approval**

For full details please refer to Paper H in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

The Moderator presented the Minutes There being no questions members were asked to vote on the following resolution:

**Resolution 5**

***Synod approves the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2019***

This resolution was agreed and was duly passed.

**8b. Confirmation of decisions taken by Synod Council following the cancellation of March Synod.**

For full details please refer to Paper I in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

The Moderator referred the membership to Paper I. There being no questions, Resolution 6 was brought for a vote.

**Resolution 6**

***Synod confirms the decisions taken by Synod Council.***

This Resolution was agreed and was duly passed.

**Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**The Synod meeting adjourned for lunch**

**9. Revd Stuart Turner – Chaplaincy to the Armed Forces**

The Moderator welcomed Revd Stuart Turner, a United Reformed Minister in the Synod who serves as an Army Chaplain. Stuart gave those gathered an insight into the work he does and how it varies from a “normal” church community. As a forces chaplain Stuart advised that you are expected to go where ever your regiment is so services can be held in buildings or they can be held in the open air. One of the main roles is to minister to everyone, those who have a faith and also to those who have none. At all times you have to be available to offer pastoral care.

He responded to several questions. He noted that there are many vacancies for chaplaincy roles and that it is possible to be a part time chaplain alongside a minister’s normal role within the church. If anyone wishes to “shadow” a current chaplain he will be happy to help.

The Moderator thanked Stuart for his presentation and engagement with questions.

**10. Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation Group Report and Environmental Policy (JPIC)**

For full details please refer to Paper J in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

Charles Jolly presented the report and Resolution. He thanked all those who have submitted comments on the Environmental Policy first presented at the Synod meeting in October 2019 and advised that these were considered by the Group and appropriate changes have been made to the policy. Charles reminded those gathered that we are currently using more than our share of the world’s resources and we need to change our thinking and take care of those resources. It was noted

that this work isn't going to be easy. There being no questions Charles recommended the policy and members were asked to vote on the following Resolutions which would be taken *en bloc*:

### **Resolution 7**

***7.1 Synod acknowledges with thanks the work of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Group, and of all those who commented on the draft, in developing the Synod Environmental Policy.***

***7.2 Synod approves and adopts the Synod Environmental Policy and encourages local churches to study and implement the Policy.***

***7.3 Synod approves and commends the commentary on the Environmental Policy to churches for advice and as a basis for study and asks the JPIC Group to keep this under review and to work to keep this up to date in line with best practice.***

These resolutions were accepted by majority with 1 against and were duly passed.

The Moderator thanked Charles for all the work he has done within the East Midlands Synod over the years and asked that we send our blessings with Charles as he and Alison move to the Northern Synod later this year.

Going forward the Moderator drew attention to the final paragraph of the report that this is a "living document" and any proposed updates should be notified to Graham Ghaleb or the Synod Office.

## **11. Group Reports**

### **Ordained Ministry and Churches**

For full details please refer to Paper K in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

Revd Geoff Townsend presented the report advising that in the final paragraph of his report the first sentence should read "We are implementing the recent decision of Mission Council regarding pastoral supervision for all Ministers and arranging for this to be written into all existing Ministerial Terms of Settlement".

There were no questions to the report.

### **Training and Development**

For full details please refer to Paper L in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

Pippa Hodgson presented the report advising that this is for information. She drew the attention of those gathered to the Safeguarding section and reminded churches that if training is not up to date then they should contact the training department in the Synod office so that training can be organised.

There were no questions to the report.

### **Lay Ministry**

For full details please refer to Paper M in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

Revd David Featonby presented the report advising that we are open to ideas about how the Group should move forward. He asked that if any members would like to become part of the Group they should contact him.

A member asked whether the rule is still for Lay Preachers to retire when they are 70 years of age. David advised he would check the latest details.

There were no further questions to the report

### **Children and Youth**

For full details please refer to Paper N in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

Revd Sarah Gower presented the report. In response to a question she commented on the Child Friendly Certificate. She explained that churches do not need to have children currently in their churches but they need to show how welcoming they are. If a church would like to look at how they go about obtaining this award they should contact Sarah.

Responding to another question she advised Synod that since Jane Henderson left at the end of August the East Midlands Synod currently does not have a Children's and Youth Development Officer. Should anyone need support in this area the work is currently being covered by Alison Hadley, Ella Lemon and Sarah Gower and anyone seeking help should contact Sarah Gower via the Synod Office.

There were no further questions to the report

### **Mission**

For full details please refer to Paper O in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

Revd Robert Bushby presented the report.

There were no questions to the report.

### **Ecumenical**

For full details please refer to Paper P in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

Revd Judith Tatton-Schiff presented the report. She advised that since this report was circulated an update has been received on the Lubbesthorpe project. A new Pioneer Community Minister is developing relationships with the land owners and developers, the local council and members of the Lubbesthorpe community. The major development has been the formation of the Charitable Trust which bases its work on the Christian ethos. It was also noted that the Lubbesthorpe project is being held as an example of good practice when new communities are being developed.

A report regarding developments in Spalding was available and would be shared with the Convenor outside the meeting by Revd Dr Peter Stevenson.

There were no further questions.

### **Finance**

For full details please refer to Paper Q in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

David Greatorex presented the report advising that he is aware that many churches are having cash flow problems but there are no specific Government grants to help with this. If a church is struggling they need to inform the Synod Office and contact Church House directly who will allow for Ministry and Mission payments to be deferred. It was noted that the Synod Trust is making a £30,000 payment to the M&M fund to ensure that the East Midlands Synod fulfil their pledge to the fund.

It was noted that there has been a serious decrease in the fund valuations which we hold but these are being monitored over the coming months and some are starting to recover.

Several questions were raised related to the impact of the Covid 19 lockdowns on church finances, locally and at Synod and Assembly levels. The convenor Vaughan Griffiths advised he would contact the members direct on outstanding issues.

### **Property**

For full details please refer to Paper R in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

The following were highlighted:

Geoff Milnes presented his report by firstly thanking Robert White for his 16 years of work for the churches around the East Midlands Synod before his retirement in March of this year. His dedication and knowledge of all those churches he has worked with are proving to be a difficult act to follow, though he has shared much of his knowledge with him. He wished him a long and happy retirement.

### **Covid 19**

Geoff advised the churches that it is the responsibility of the Elders to determine whether a church reopens or not. They are the “venue managers” and must prepare a risk assessment that is signed off as being compliant. The churches should then advise Synod and their insurers that they plan to reopen. The local church is the one that is responsible for the day to day running of the church and the safety and wellbeing of all who enter the building.

### **Synod Building Fund**

Churches were reminded that the Synod Building Fund is there to help with the repair and maintenance of churches and can provide up to 50% of the cost of work up to a maximum of £10,000. Applicants need to include details of the work including plans and specifications together with 2 quotes. It was noted that applications for the grant are welcomed but it doesn't mean that money is automatically guaranteed.

### **Retired Ministers Housing Fund**

Retired ministers were reminded that there is still the Synod Retired Ministers Housing Fund which is available to help with small improvements to their accommodation.

Geoff concluded his report thanking the Moderator and Synod office staff for their warm welcome and support.

There were no questions on the report.

### **Belonging to the World Church**

For full details please refer to Paper S in the book of reports circulated prior to the meeting.

Judith North presented the report and advised that due to the current pandemic communication is online. She advised that she had been able to join in the celebration of Botswana Day on 29<sup>th</sup> September.

There were no questions on the report.

The Moderator thanked the various convenors for their reports and presented the following resolution:

**Resolution 8**

***Synod receives the group reports***

This resolution was agreed and was duly passed.

**12. Closing worship and Inductions**

The Moderator introduced the closing worship. He asked members to refer to Paper T which had previously been circulated in the book of reports listing all those who had concluded their service for the Synod. Subsequent to the meeting an apology was given to Mrs Jane Henderson who had not resigned, as stated, but concluded her service for the Synod. For the information of Synod members, the Statement on the conclusion of Mrs Henderson's service as CYDO and Synod Safeguarding Officer is attached to the Minutes.

The Moderator offered a prayer thanking all those who had completed service for the Synod.

Thanks were extended to Katie Lester, Adam Lester and AJ Mills for their work and skills which had enabled the meeting to take place virtually.

He presented Resolution 9

**Resolution 9**

***Synod thanks all those who have served the Synod in various ways and wishes them well.***

This resolution was agreed and was duly passed.

The Moderator then led worship during which he inducted Mr Derek Graham (Synod Training and Development Officer); Mr Geoff Milnes (Synod Property Officer) and Revd Louise Gee (Pastoral Consultant for Nottinghamshire) into their various roles.

The meeting closed at 2.55pm