

**Report for GURC on Synod Together
Meeting 8 October 2022
watched on YouTube**

On Saturday 8 October I watched the Synod Together meeting held at Reigate Park URC on You Tube. The Synod Clerk, the Reverend Russell Furley-Smith, opened the meeting welcoming those who were attending in-person, as well as those who were watching proceedings on YouTube. Fifty apologies had been received from delegates who could not attend.

We were welcomed to the formal meeting by the Moderator, The Reverend Bridget Banks, who delivered a short address posing two questions:

How can local churches be authentic, and
how can we (Synod) help the local community?

Synod is here to help and support local churches.

It should continue bringing hope and opportunities to local churches.

Her address was followed by the opening worship and several short talks on Good News stories. It was pointed out that although only two of the twelve apostles are named in the Book of Acts many other non-disciples are mentioned as helping set up the early church. We should therefore remember that, as God is always equipping us to minister more members should consider becoming lay preachers. In passing it was noted that children and youth are doing great things. The programme URC Children was launched at General Assembly for children under 12 years of age, which together with URC Youth looks after the needs of all children and youth up to the age of 18. It was reported that the Lundie Award had recently been made to 4 year old Cleo Ward for services to Gillingham church. Children should be encouraged to play a part in church life. Under the Good News heading the Rev Nadene Snyman encouraged the delegates to consider entering for the Eco awards and commissioning a green audit for their churches to see whether they could make environmental improvements. Synod was willing to pay for a pilot study of 10 to 12 churches. Manse were being considered separately. Requests for manse improvements should come through the pastorate. Next various matters were dealt with briefly including the remembrance of ministers who had died since the previous meeting in March 2022. The delegates' attention was also drawn to the URC Protocol on vacancies and it was noted that the Protocol covering Ministers leaving was under discussion. Thanks were extended to all those who had been involved in Synod Together over the last 50 years and the Moderator urged all of us to "boldly go where no-one had been before." Turning to finance the Treasurer said that both the General Purpose and the Manse Funds are working well, but churches did need to make applications for loans. He noted that there is a system for inter-church resource sharing, but did not go into detail. There was also extra support for the Ministers' Pension Fund in the Budget for 2023 in that £1.5 million is being paid into the Fund earlier than scheduled. Furthermore £50,000 is being set aside for eco improvement surveys. The Treasurer reminded us that Ministry and Mission includes a share of the expenses of Church House. In the Youth Report churches were urged to encourage more young people to go to General Assembly. Synod could also assist in providing appropriate mental health first-aid training. Next the Moderator congratulated a number of Jubilee Ministers and one EM-3 minister (i.e. a minister who had completed stage three of the Education for Ministry programme). Various ideas were then put forward for making local churches more relevant to their areas. These ideas will be circulated to local churches as they were difficult to pick up on line. After prosecco and cake for those personally present in the meeting, thanks to those attending and a final the meeting closed at 4.00 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for 11 March 2023.

Giles Wilson

