

Report for GURC on Synod Together

Meeting 12 March 2022 - YouTube

On Saturday 12 March I watched the Synod Together meeting held at Christchurch Petts Wood.

The Synod Clerk, the Reverend Russell Furley-Smith, opened the meeting welcoming those who were attending the first in-person meeting of Synod Together since October 2019, as well as those who were watching proceedings on YouTube.

We were welcomed to the formal meeting by the Moderator, The Reverend Bridget Banks, who introduced the Reverend Lesley Charlton, who led the opening worship.

Under matters arising from the minutes of the meeting on 9 October 2021 it was noted that the resolution to fund the deficit in the Ministers' Pension fund had been agreed by Synod and that the resolution to create a fund to provide a minimum pension to Ministers under the new defined benefit rules scheme was being looked at. The first payment of £2mn towards the pension fund deficit had been made.

The delegates supported an emergency resolution that Synod Together with the support of Synod Trust and Council make a donation of £10,000 to DEC for relief in Ukraine. DEC had been chosen because of a promise by Government to match donations. the General Assembly Moderator will make a visit to Southern Synod, visiting Banstead URC on 11 and 12 March 2023.

The Reverend Janet Hopewell will continue as Southern Synod Chaplain and Advocate for the elderly for a second term.

The major discussion before lunch concerned the deployment strategy of the Southern Synod, i.e. how to ensure that there was an adequate coverage of ministers within the Synod area. In a short introduction to the topic the Reverend Andy Twilley pointed out that Ephesians 4: 11-13 defined ministry as embracing all members of the church.

Consequently we should all be working as a team to further ministry. We need to look at new ways of people being church, which in Andy's view is the plural of disciple. We have to plan forward for changes in the number of stipendiary ministers this year, next year and the year after. This should be a rolling review and all members should be involved.

Before lunch we watched a short video presentation on the programme of events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the URC leading up to the actual anniversary on 1 October. Each church has been sent a resource pack with details of the programme of events. After lunch Tom Lewis described his work as Housing Missioner on the new housing estate of Chilmington near Ashford, Kent, since September 2020.

As most of the residents are new to the area he acts as contact point for them to find out about the local area and how to obtain help on any number of matters including providing details of refuse collections and recently after storm Eunice had blown tiles off most roofs who to contact. [e.g. GURC might benefit from appointing such a person to look after the residents in the new houses on the former Inland Revenue site, when they are built.]

The meeting closed at 3.30pm

Next meeting will be held on 8 October.

Giles Wilson