



The **Methodist Church**
Plymouth & Exeter District

Minutes of the Spring Synod 2017

Held at Ringway Methodist Church, Plympton on Saturday, 6th May 2017

Synod opened at 10.00am with worship, led by the Chair of District, Revd. Graham Thompson on the theme, "Be faithful to God in a comfortable world" reflecting the Synod Agenda theme of 'Engaging with the World Church'.

Welcome by Superintendent of the Plymouth and Devonport Circuit

Revd. Simon Leigh welcomed the Synod to Ridgeway and the Circuit. He spoke of the history of Methodism in the Circuit and the current work.

Dispensations and Letters of Greeting

Dispensations have been granted:

Revd. Denys Bament - on holiday
Revd. Paul Booth - sabbatical
Revd. Christopher Brown - sabbatical
Revd. Nigel Coke-Woods – sabbatical
Revd. Martin Earl
Revd. Stephen Hill
Deacon Becky Lovatt - sabbatical
Revd. Sue Macbeth
Revd. Beth McDowell - Phil to hospital
Revd. Dr. Brenda Mosedale
Revd. Dr. Stephen Mosedale
Revd. Robert Manning - on holiday
Revd. Dave Martin - leading a church weekend
Revd. Alison Richardson - son's wedding
Revd. Doug Rix - daughter's wedding
Revd. Graham Shaw
Deacon Hilary Smith
Revd. Jane Sperring
Revd. Neal Street - sabbatical
Deacon Geoff Tamblin - on holiday
Revd. Ann Varker
Revd. Yangsun Yi - unwell

Synod agreed to send letters of Greeting to: Rev Jonathan Todd and family on the death Mrs Barbara Todd, widow of the Rev Geoffrey Todd; Mrs Susan Lowe on the death of Rev Roger Lowe and Mrs Jane Starling on the death of her father Rev Allan Bowers. A letter of greeting was sent to Hannah and Simon De Bourcier on the birth of their son Set Eric.

The District Chair sent special greetings to the Rix and Richardson families as Hannah Rix is marrying Lawrie Richardson at Millbrook Methodist Church on the day of Synod.

Apologies:

Apologies were received from Tim Stokes; Kathryn Trotman; Janet Bell; Rev Jane Sperring; Deacon Geoff Tamblin; Marjorie Ashley; Rev Dr Hazel Porter; Bob Francis; Bob Hamblin

Initial Business

Appointment of Scrutineers

The Synod approved the appointment of Frank Watson; Stuart Innalls; Margaret Cole and Jane Allin as Scrutineers

South Moulton and Ringsash Circuit Memorial to Conference

Synod noted the Memorial sent to Conference by the South Moulton and Ringsash Circuit

Report from District Policy Committee [DPC]

Dr John Prebble, Secretary to District Policy Committee drew attention to the following matters in the written report to Synod.

DPC had approved the formation of two **Working Groups** to address the topics of 'Lay Ministry' and 'Making New Disciples'.

Following consideration of a reports commissioned by the DPC on the work of the **Simply Project** the DPC had decided with great sadness and reluctance to withdraw funding from the Project.

Mary-Ann Martin had been appointed as **District Support Officer** an appointment which had proved very successful.

DPC had approved the **closure** of the Chapel at Flexbury [Bude and Holsworthy Circuit] and the Chapel in Axminster [Exeter Coast and Country Circuit]. The Society in Axminster were now meeting in community facilities in the town.

DPC had heard reports of the work of the **Rural Support Officer** which would be further considered by Synod later in the Agenda.

The District Treasurer, Rachel Mitchell, presented the **2016 District Financial Statements; The Budget 2017/18** and the published **Circuit Assessments 2017/18**. She invited Synod to approve the following resolutions:-

- i. That the Synod receive and confirm the approval, by the DPC, of the 2016 District Financial Statements
- ii. That the Synod approve the budget for 2017/18 as published on the District website

- iii. That the Synod approve the Circuit Assessments as published for 2017/18

All three resolutions were approved.

The District Treasurer noted the substantial work of the Circuit Treasurers in adapting to changes in accounting procedures required by the Charity Commission and thanked them for their work. She also thanked the District Finance Officer Ruth Sorenson for her work and support. She reported that the District Manse had been revalued at a market rate and that there had been a review of the restricted and unrestricted funds.

The District Chair thanked Rachel, Ruth and Circuit Treasurers for all their work.

The DPC Secretary asked Synod to approve the arrangements for the **re-organisation of the South Devon Circuit**. It is proposed that Buckfast; Buckfastleigh; Scoriton; South Brent and Totnes move to the Teignbridge Circuit from 1st September 2017. **Synod approved the changes**

The DPC Secretary reported that the Rev Neal Street is stepping down as one of the two Deputy District Chairs. He proposed that the **Rev Stuart Inalls be appointed Deputy District Chair**. Synod approved.

Electronic communications

Ron Jordan, on behalf of the DPC, presented the paper **A proposal for the Administration of Synod to be handled electronically** and the associated recommendations.

1. That calling papers, agenda and request for letters of greeting are placed on the District website.
2. That the Synod Secretary informs Circuit Administrators by e-mail when the papers have been posted on the website and requests them to forward the e-mail to the members of Synod in their Circuit. In due course, we aim to begin the process by first asking each Administrator for any changes to the membership of Synod before each mailing and move towards direct communication by creating a separate data set of all members of Synod.
3. That Circuit Administrators are requested to inform churches of this arrangement. It is hoped that churches will include reference in church notices or other forms of communication.
4. That Circuit Administrators print the material for those members who they know do not have access to the internet and forward to them. Such an arrangement might already be in place for the administration of the Circuit Meeting.

Ron argued that a spinoff of these proposals would be to make District information more available through the District web-site to Circuits and Churches and encourage engagement between the District and Circuits and Churches.

The Rev Verity Philips spoke against the first proposal. She was concerned that insufficient attention was being given to 'another world where folk don't do computers' and that the proposal would bring additional costs to Circuits whilst saving District costs.

Anne Browse sought to bring together Ron's aspiration and Verity's concerns by asking that we do not exclude young people whose culture was significantly on line but instead employed their skills to help those not familiar with electronic communication to make the transition.

Andy Gerrard, Rural Support Officer underlined the impact of Government determination to do everything electronically when broad band coverage was still unreliable and not all small farmers were computer literate.

Synod considered each recommendation and agreed each by a substantial margin.

Ecumenical Matters

Glenys Allison, Ecumenical Officer Somerset, spoke to the model constitution for Pawlett Chapel, Taunton Deane and South Sedgemoor Circuit. Synod unanimously approved.

Kit Harbottle, Ecumenical Officer Devon, spoke to the updated constitution for Fairplace Chapel, West Devon Circuit. Synod unanimously approved.

District Web-Site

The District Chair launched the new District Web-site to general approval. He thanked Steve Jones for his work in establishing the new format.

Covenant Champions

Dave Watson spoke about his role as a newly appointed 'Covenant Champion' for the Methodist Anglican Covenant. His appointment is part of a joint Anglican Methodist initiative to promote a better and fuller exchange of worship, ministry and resources through the Covenant. The Faith and Order Groups of both denominations are planning for an initiative to develop a fuller exchange in 2018. The role is particularly to celebrate what has been initiated and achieved at a local level. Dave is the only Champion in the SW at present but there is a fresh round of appointments to be advertised on 2nd June. The District Chair congratulated Dave on his appointment and the importance of his role.

A Return Visit to Germany

Anne Browse, currently President Methodist Women in Britain, spoke of her return visit to Germany which gave the opportunity to engage again with the work with Syrian and other refugees. Anne stressed the demonstration of the Methodist communities she visited to do the practical things which make a difference for refugees and the importance of responding quickly. She shared a video about the response of the Methodists in the area of Germany she visited. Anne spoke of how those who she met stressed the benefit they had received as individuals and as church communities from their sharing with the refugees they had sought to serve. Anne asked what was happening in our District. She extended the commitment to 'sitting with those who you don't know' to our behaviour in Synod inviting us to seek out the folk in Synod we don't know. She concluded by referencing the Platinum Rule "Do unto others as **they** would have you do unto them".

Deacon Debbie Marsh, confirmed that in Bude where two large houses had been given for families the Methodist Community was committed and involved in the support of the families.

Partnership with the Cuttack Diocese of the Church of North India

Rev Deborah Kirk, on behalf of the District World Church Committee, presented a detailed and well-illustrated introduction to the Diocese of Cuttack which she and Rev Alison Richardson have visited on three occasions. **A copy of the presentation can be found on the Synod page of the District Web-Site.**

The District Chair spoke of the recent visit of Bishop Nanda and referenced the proposals in the paper which had been sent to Synod members.

[After the presentation by Dr Mukarji Synod returned to this item]

the Synod agreed unanimously to:-

- a 5 year partnership with the Cuttack until August 2022. To be reviewed in the Spring of 2021 with a possibility of extending beyond 2022.
- agree that the partnership is based upon learning, mutual support and prayer.
- designate the Sunday before Lent as 'Cuttack Sunday' in the District
- establish a Cuttack Fund

The Proposal for the Partnership detailed: -

- ways local Churches and Circuits might be involved in Prayer Partnerships;
- that the five Methodist schools in the District might be partnered with 5 schools in Cuttack;
- a designated District Cuttack Sunday;
- how the Fund might be used to enable travel between the partners
- encouraging buddying between churches
- that the partnership takes care not to foster reliance of one partner on the other by scrutinising any plans for financial support to projects.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE WORLD CHURCH – ONE MISSION

The Synod was addressed by Dr Daleep Mukarji OBE, a Vice President of Conference; Former Director of Christian Aid and currently Trustee of Action for Children.

[The detailed PowerPoint presentation which Daleep used is posted on the District Synod web-site]

Daleep spelt out the history and Conference decisions which led to the establishing of the **One Mission Forum** [CPD SO 1001] and the nature of **Relations with Other Churches** [CPD SO 1002]

Our current commitment derives from 2004 Conference:

- Supporting community development and action for justice especially amongst the most deprived and poor in Britain and worldwide
- Developing confidence in evangelism
- Encouraging fresh ways to be Church
- Nurturing a culture that is people centred and flexible

The One Mission Forum enables the Church to set priorities; both what we will do and what we will give less attention. It seeks to encourage all members of the church to be actively engaged in mission.

Daleep then addressed **Global Relations in Mission** for the 21st Century. He highlighted the changing understanding of Partnership from the perspective of the Church in Britain and in the World. This relationship needs to be founded upon mutuality. Mutual respect; mutual dependence; mutual relationships. In particular, the need to see relationships as central and not money. As we find ourselves part of a world-wide Methodist Church partnerships need to be flexible and sustainable. Characterised by:-

- Being mutually beneficial: listening and learning together
- Being mutually accountable and sensitive to power differentials
- Easy to run; with good leadership
- Encouraging friendship
- Transformational for both partners – are we prepared to be transformed?

Daleep then illustrated some of the difficulties from past work and partnerships asking ‘Are we ready to listen and learn?’ Partnerships are risky, but then so is being a Christian. He spoke about India today and some of the difficulties both socially and politically in the current State of India.

Daleep concluded by asking us to give attention to One Mission in our District. To be prepared to learn from each other and to share with the Connexion. Dr Jill Barber, immediate past Vice President is newly appointed to the Chair of One Mission. He stressed the intention in a global context to increase face to face exchange and to explore international mission. In all churches the intention is to foster good leadership, fellowship and solidarity; to listen and engage in mission in expectation of transformational change.

Daleep was asked about the place of electronic communication and he encouraged this particularly in links between schools and young people. He was asked about the use of consumer power as a political tool. He replied that he was a great believer in using political, economic power and the power of the Holy Spirit “Don’t buy clothes from Companies who do not give good wages and working conditions.” It is important to continue supporting the Dalit Solidarity Network; to be concerned about the status of women and the toleration of poverty in India at a time when other nations were demonstrating that Poverty can be tackled. He was also asked about the threat to the 0.7% of GDP aid commitment of the UK. He said that the Prime Minister had confirmed her commitment to this but also stressed we need to argue the national self interest in this investment.

Daleep was also asked to comment upon a question asked in relation to the Cuttack Partnership enquiring about the Indian Government’s blocking of funding from some Christian organisations. He confirmed that the Indian Government had deselected many Christian organisations making grants under ‘Foreign Contributions’ legislation. This had not applied to All We Can or Christian Aid.

LUNCH

Prayers, Act of Remembrance for Local Preachers

The District Chair led Synod in an act of worship during which those Local Preachers who had died in the last year were named and remembered.

24/01 Plymouth and Devonport	Roy Smith Margaret Jarvis
24/02 Plymouth Mission	-
24/03 Exeter Coast and Country	Bill Pick Herbert Palfrey
24/07 Tavistock	Graham Boot- Handford Dennis Jeffery Hazel Pethick
24/08 Torbay	Sheila Denham Amy Bartipp Audrey Ball
24/10 South Devon	Ron Harvey
24/11 Bude and Holsworthy	John Littlejohn
24/15 Taunton Deane and South Sedgemoor	Rita Caley
24/16 Tiverton and Wellington	Lesley White
24/18 South Petherton and Crewkerne	Eric Watton
24/20 Ilfracombe and Barnstaple	Phyllis Harris
24/22 South Moulton and Ringsash	-
24/23 Torrridge	-
24/24 West Devon	Rosemary Brown
24/25 West Somerset	Lesley Wells
24/27 Rings Ash	Brian Glover
24/28 Teinbridge	-

Methodists for World Mission

Rev Audrey Standhaft gave details of World Mission events and presented the One Mission report prepared by Howard Franklin. Howard noted the appointment of Dr Jill Barber to the Chair of One Mission and the work she had initiated to identify ways forward.

Greetings from Israel / Palestine

Rev Jean Hughes told Synod of the links between the Temple Church at Budleigh Salterton and the school of the Evangelical Lutheran Church at Beit Sahour. Temple Church sponsors individual students in the school enabling them to have an education. In this way they seek to support the dwindling Christian community in the Occupied Territories. 15 students are now supported in this way. Jean is the link person between the school and the church.

A detailed account of the partnership can be accessed at

<http://www.budleightemplemethodist.org.uk/Those-we-support/beit-sahour>

Just Living

David Clitheroe gave the Synod details of the Just Living Conference at Temple Methodist Church Taunton on Saturday 3rd June 2017.

Receiving Written Reports

There were no notices of a wish to raise matters on the written reports circulated to Synod members before the Synod. The District Chair moved **the acceptance of the reports** and this was passed unanimously.

Livestock Market Chaplaincy/ Rural Support Worker

Andy Gerrard, Rural Support Worker for the District spoke about his work in the Livestock Markets and among the farming communities in the District. He shared a number of stories about work done in communities where isolation and stress were always present. Andy stressed the way the church is integrated and trusted in the rural communities and illustrated the use of networks to identify points of need. Making disciples is achieved by example and a readiness to help. He suggested the church needed to be more knowledgeable and ready to speak up about Bovine Tuberculosis and its impact on farming families.

Rev Philip Wagstaff paid tribute to Andy's work over many years and stressed the importance of recognising fact the that our District is dominated by rural communities. It is important for PEMD to be an articulate advocate for the contribution and significance of rural congregations.

The District Chair thanked both for their commitment and work on rural matters and the work of the church in the countryside.

Outstanding Business

Dates for future Synods

Autumn Synod 2017 Sat September 9th Hatherleigh Community Centre, Hatherleigh, West Devon Circuit

Spring Synod 2018 Sat April 21st Seaton Methodist Church, Seaton, Exeter Coast and Country Circuit

Autumn Synod 2018 Sat September 8th Plymouth Central Hall, Plymouth

Spring Synod 2019 Sat April 6th Queens College, Taunton, Taunton Deane and South Sedgemoor Circuit

Autumn Synod 2019 Sat September 7th Central Church, Torquay, Torbay Circuit

Farewells and Thanks

The District Chair Thanked Margaret Cole for her work as Advocate for Action for Children and made a presentation to her on behalf of the District.

He also thanked Kit Harbottle for her work as Ecumenical Officer for Devon where her knowledge and attention to detail had been very important. He made a presentation to Kit on behalf of the District.

He also thanked Rev Neale Street for his work as Deputy District Chair. Neal is currently on Sabbatical.

Those leaving the District

The District Chair noted the following moves and thanked a ch person for their work in the District.

24/15 Taunton Deane & South Sedgemoor

Rob Blackhall who is moving to Torridge as Superintendent

24/16 Tiverton & Wellington Frieder Kreschnak Retirement - Wales

John Leach Retirement from Chaplaincy

24/23 Torridge Sue Macbeth Retirement - Barnstaple

24/24 West Devon Nigel-Coke Woods South West Worcestershire

Iris Bray Saltash

The District Chair gave Good Wishes to Rev Donna Leigh [Plymouth and Devonport] as she prepares for ordination at this years Conference.

Rev Stephen Santry thanked the folk at Ridgeway for their hospitality and behind the scenes work which had made the day such a success.

Rev Simon Leigh closed the Synod with prayer.

Signed by the Chair of District Rev Canon Graham Thompson:

DAC/09/!7