

# **THE METHODIST CHURCH IN WALES – THE WALES SYNOD**

**Thirteenth Meeting of the Synod held on Saturday 30 March 2019**

**at Newtown Methodist Church, Newtown, Powys**

Present: Rev Dr Stephen Wigley (Chair) Rev Rosemarie Clarke (Synod Secretary)  
82 members and 2 visitors as recorded elsewhere  
Apologies/Dispensations: as recorded by the Secretary

Opening devotions were led by Rev Rosemarie Clarke.

## **1. WELCOME**

Rev Bob Thomas, Superintendent of the Welshpool and Bro Hafren Circuit welcomed Synod to Newtown. The Chair, Rev Dr Stephen Wigley, offered a special welcome to the Rev Canon Gareth Powell, Secretary of the Conference, and newly appointed PA to the Synod Chair, Mrs Wendy Barwise.

## **2. ADMINISTRATION**

The Synod Secretary announced notices of a general and administrative nature.

- (a) Supernumerary Expense Sheets
- (b) Members were requested to collect the Circuit bags before Holy Communion
- (c) Explanation about the papers distributed on the seats

The Secretary was directed to send greetings to: Revs Lorette Hinson and Bernard Nixon.

## **3. APPOINTMENTS TO SYNOD**

The Synod agreed the membership of the Synod as those names set out in the Synod Directory and September Synod amendments sheet noting further amendments as follows: the addition of Keith Harvey (Newport and Lower Wye), Martha Botros (Layworker, Conwy and Prestatyn), Tony Farmer (Vale of Glamorgan) and representatives to Conference 2018; Martin Rees, Emily Roe, Dr Jean Ware, and the removal of Linda Bailey (GHV) and Gwyn Aubrey (Neath Port Talbot).

Revs Roy Watson, Catherine Lewis, Gareth Edwards and Stephen Boxall were appointed as Scrutineers.

Synod appointed Miss Linda Davies as a representative to Conference 2019 in place of Ms Michele Jones

## **4. OBITUARY**

An obituary for Rev Graham Leaman was presented to the Synod and after a time of silence the Chair led Synod in prayer.

## **5. EXTENSION OF THE APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR**

The Synod nomination committee recommended that the Synod Chair be invited for a further three years from September 2020; this recommendation had been unanimously endorsed by the Synod Policy Committee. The Synod confirmed they did not wish to enter into discussion on the matter and moved directly to a ballot vote. The Synod further endorsed the recommendation of the nomination committee, exceeding the required 75% of those present and voting. (For 74 Against 3).

## **6. REPORT FROM THE STEERING GROUP RE CONVERSATIONS WITH SYNOD CYMRU**

Mr Graham Illingworth, Assistant Synod Secretary, presented the report (appended to these minutes) which was agreed by Synod, noting that although much work had been done nothing had yet been agreed by the two Synods, and that there was a continuing willingness to engage in conversation at the appropriate time.

## **7. OUR CALLING**

The Secretary of Conference addressed the Synod and offered a variety of questions to help Synod consider appropriate responses to the different aspects of our calling.

## **8. CALL TO PRAYER**

Rev Paul Donnison spoke about this initiative which is running across Wales between March 2019 and May 2020 in the circuits of the Methodist Church in Wales; seeking some specific prayer for renewal, mission and evangelism on every day during that period. Synod was urged to start praying early and continue rather than concentrate only on the month for which their circuit was particularly responsible, and encouraged to employ creativity and imagination in their endeavours.



## 9. GOOD NEWS FROM THE CIRCUITS

### Neath Port Talbot

Rev Rosemary Davies brought news of the provision of a homeless night shelter over a number of weeks which the churches at Sandfields and Skewen had contributed to. Daring to step out in faith had had a lasting effect on the volunteers involved as well as benefitting those who normally sleep on our streets.

### South West Wales

Mrs Anne Samuel spoke about Holiday Hunger, and the way in which Hall St, Llanelli had provided a two course meal once a week for 40 people throughout the summer holidays, reaching out to families who struggle to feed their children appropriately when out of school and therefore not receiving free school meals. Using teams for kitchen, hospitality and activities duties, the project had also benefitted the volunteers many of whom were over 80 and live alone.

## 10. MEMORIAL

Rev John Howard proposed a memorial to Conference relating to the situation in Israel/Palestine which was seconded by Rev Roger Hides:

'Following the commitment in "Our Calling" to challenge injustice, the Wales Synod expresses its deep concern at the deteriorating situation for Palestinians - Muslim and Christian - in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza.

We note:

1. UN Security Council Resolution 2334, for which the UK Government voted in 2016, relating to the Occupation of Palestinian land by Israel in contravention of International Law
2. the continual building of settlements on Palestinian land has rendered the prospect of a 'two-state' solution almost impossible
3. the present Israeli Government's open hostility to the creation of any form of Palestinian State – in opposition to the preferred international resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict
4. the continuing blockade of Gaza
5. the distress and injuries caused by rockets fired from Gaza and the disregard for the human rights of residents of Gaza by Hamas, the elected administration of Gaza, especially in regard to women's rights
6. with sadness that during April-May 2018 128 mostly unarmed Palestinians were killed in Gaza by Israeli fire; (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OCHA);
7. with sadness, both the number of Palestinian fatalities in the 11 years from 2008 to 2019 has been 5,426, and the number of Israelis fatalities has been 229 (OCHA)

The above illustrates the extreme imbalance of power which exists in Israel/Palestine, and which enables the State of Israel to display almost complete disregard for the human rights of the Palestinian people living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. We acknowledge the shameful history of anti-Semitism and Britain's part in all that has led to the current state of affairs and affirm that Methodists long for a peaceful and secure future for Palestinians and Israelis, based on human rights and respect for International Law.

We therefore call upon Conference:

- a) to encourage Connexional staff to make clear our opposition to all human rights abuses in Palestine/Israel, and our commitment to working for a just peace in the land of Jesus' birth.
- b) to ensure that the Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment (JACEI) works with the Central Finance Board (CFB) to revise its 2016 Policy Statement on Israel/Palestine to reflect better the current situation, taking into consideration the new ecumenical Sabeel-Kairos guide *Investing for Peace*, and the recently-declared investment policy of Quakers in Britain.
- c) to urge the CFB to divest immediately from any company which profits from the Occupation and is unwilling to change its practices.

We call upon the Methodist People, individually and in churches to:

- pray for peace-with-justice in Israel/Palestine and for those working there, including in the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel
- seek a greater understanding of the situation in Israel Palestine
- avoid purchasing goods produced in Israeli settlements, as resolved by Conference in 2010. Such goods should be identifiable through the EU labelling guidelines of 2015.'

Synod voted as follows: For 66, Against 1 (Abstentions 13)

## 11. THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Synod concluded with the sharing of the Lord's Supper when the Secretary of Conference presided, and the preacher was the Chair

**21. THE NEXT MEETING** of the representative session of the Synod will take place on 14th September 2019, at Theatr Hafren, Newtown, Powys.



### **Report of the Steering Group on the proposals for one new Synod in Wales (February 2019)**

(A report to go to meetings of both Synod Cymru and the Wales Synod on March 30<sup>th</sup> 2019)

This report seeks to update both Synods on the progress of conversations following the consultation that took place from Sept to Nov 2018 about the proposal to create one new Synod of the Methodist Church in Wales. It also asks both Synods to agree the recommendation at the end of the report.

#### **Background**

Following prayerful consideration of the outcome of the Cymru Synod/Circuit review of 2016-17, the Synod Cymru Policy Committee meeting in Nov 2017 invited the Wales Synod to enter conversations to explore the possibility of creating one new Synod of the Methodist Church in Wales. The Wales Synod Policy Committee meeting in Feb 2018 responded positively to this approach and a Steering Group comprising both District Chairs, both Synod Secretaries and both District Policy Committee Secretaries and the Connexional Secretary was set up to progress these discussions.

#### **Development of the proposals**

Over a series of meetings, the Steering Group shaped an outline proposal and possible timetable. The proposal was that the two districts of The Methodist Church in Wales (Synod Cymru and the Wales Synod) work towards coming together to form one new district to be known as the Cymru Wales Synod, with the intention of providing greater coherence to the work of Methodism in Wales and the ability to respond more creatively to mission opportunities in both languages. The new Synod would comprise amongst other things the current 16 circuits in the 2 Synods, 2 Co-Chairs funded by the Methodist Church Fund and a Cymru circuit which would have its own Superintendent minister. The time-table envisaged a process involving further consultation with ardals and circuits which would lead to the bringing of more detailed proposals to a March 2019 meeting of both Synods with a view to the proposals coming before the Conference of July 2019.

The Methodist Council was informed of these developments and set up its own Scrutiny group to monitor them, and the DPC's of both Synods and also Y Cyngor were kept informed of the process.

These outline proposals went before the Representative meeting of Synod Cymru in April 2018, at which no objection was raised, and then before the Representative meeting of the Wales Synod in September, at which there was strong support to proceed with the consultation process contained in the proposals. This took the form of a series of 5 questions, modelled on similar processes undertaken elsewhere in the Connexion, which were circulated to all circuits and ardals across the 2 Synods with the request that all responses be returned by the end of November 2018.

#### **Response to the proposals**

Responses came in from 10 ardals in Synod Cymru and 15 circuits in the Wales Synod together with some responses from individuals and churches. A summary of this feedback has already been shared with ardals and circuits; taken as a whole they evidence some broad support for the proposals in principle, together with concerns over the details and requests for more information. This did not come as a surprise to the Steering Group, as the proposals themselves identified areas where further detailed work needed to be done, particularly in terms of the structure of officers and committees, the venue and frequency of meetings, the need for a Welsh language policy, and for more detailed financial information to show that the proposals would not lead to any significant increase in costs.

Since then, the Steering Group has met 3 times to reflect on the feedback received and to undertake further detailed work on the specific areas identified. It recognises the range of views expressed about the proposed name (which parallels other similar conversations elsewhere in the Connexion) but considers it has made some significant progress in terms of agreeing a structure and pattern of meetings, on the membership of the various groups and committees and on a language policy for the new Synod. However, there is one key area where it has proved difficult to find agreement on how to proceed, and this relates to finance.

In sharing financial information and discussing how best to proceed towards a joint budget, it has become clear to the Steering Group that the two Synods start from very different bases. This is especially true in terms of assessment and the funding of ministry. In very simple terms, the current position is that the Cymru circuit raises an assessment of £84 per member pa towards the funding of ministry, while circuits in the Wales Synod average an amount of c.£450 per member pa (although they use different methods of assessment.) This in turn means that though the 2 Synods have similar capital reserves at the moment, in order to balance its budget and pay for ministry the Cymru circuit needs to draw down on both Circuit and Synod reserves in the amount of c.£390,000 pa, which means that over the next 5 years most of its current Circuit and Synod reserves would be used up.

The Steering Group recognises that the conversations that have led to these outline proposals have not been driven by money. However, it also recognises that assumptions prior to these more recent and detailed conversations were that both Synods had similar levels of reserves, wanted to ensure the new proposals were cost-neutral in revenue terms, and there would be capital funds available to the new Synod to support new mission initiatives in both languages. This no longer appears to be the case and given this new information it does not seem possible to agree a budget for a new Synod based on a similar and sustainable approach to funding the cost of ministry at the current time.

### Recommendation

In light of this, the Steering Group considers that it would be unwise to proceed with the significant time and energy involved in changing the current structures to become one new Synod in Wales until such time as there is agreement on a more sustainable longer-term basis for the funding of ministry in the Cymru circuit. In stating this, the Steering Group also recognises that this remains a matter primarily for Synod Cymru to explore (although it may be that officers from the Wales Synod and the wider Connexion could contribute to such discussions if asked) and likewise that it is for Synod Cymru to determine the time-frame in which these matters are to be addressed.

Accordingly, the Steering Group:

- Recognises the support in principle for and the progress made in a number of areas towards the creation of one new Synod in Wales;
- Recommends that for the financial reasons outlined above it is not possible to move towards the creation of one new Synod in Wales within the proposed time-table, and that for the time being the present conversations should be put 'on-hold'; but also
- Affirms its willingness to re-convene for further conversations as and when Synod Cymru has agreed a more sustainable long-term basis for the funding of ministry in the Cymru circuit

and asks the two Synods to agree this report.

### **The Steering Group members are:**

Revd Dr Jennie Hurd, Chair of Synod Cymru  
Revd Dr Stephen Wigley, Chair of the Wales Synod  
Revd Rosemarie Clarke, Secretary of the Wales Synod  
Mr Graham Illingworth, Assistant Secretary of the Wales Synod  
Mrs Maryl Rees, Secretary of the Synod Cymru Policy Committee  
Mr Arfon Williams, Secretary of the Synod Cymru  
Mr Doug Swanney, Connexional Secretary