

THE METHODIST CHURCH IN WALES – THE WALES SYNOD

Fifteenth Meeting of the Representative Session of the Synod held on Saturday 18 September 2021 by Zoom

Present: Rev Dr Stephen Wigley (Chair)
Rev Rosemarie Clarke (Synod Secretary)
125 members as recorded elsewhere

Apologies/Dispensations: as recorded by the Secretary

Opening devotions were led by the Wrexham Circuit.

1. WELCOME

The Chair, Rev Dr Stephen Wigley, welcomed everyone, expressing particular thanks to the staff of the Learning Network for the virtual hosting of Synod.

2. ADMINISTRATION

The Secretary was directed to send greetings to: Revds Phil Osborne, Howard Long, Joe Rooney, and Deacon Ivy Forkin

3. MEMBERSHIP OF SYNOD

The Synod agreed the membership of the Synod as those names set out in the Synod Directory, with amendments as detailed on 'Addendum, to the Handbook' which had been circulated, and also agreed the membership of Synod committees as documented in the directory.

4. SYNOD REPRESENTATIVES TO CONFERENCE 2022

Synod agreed that the following should represent the Synod at Conference 2022: Revds Rosemarie Clarke, Jacquie Evans and Nick Sissons, Deacon Linda Brown, and Emily Barry, John Birch, Trish Earlam and Brian Halsall.

5. METHODIST CONFERENCE 2021

Synod watched a video presentation of highlights of the Conference.

The Secretary presented information about the business of the Conference highlighting three reports: *God in love unites us*, *Oversight and Trusteeship* and *Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity: working towards a fully inclusive church* and some of their implications for churches and circuits. Members of Synod were encouraged to read the reports for themselves.

6. METHODIST YOUTH PRESIDENT

Daud Irfan addressed Synod expressing thanks for their support over the years. Sharing his vision for his year of office he spoke of the isolation which many young people are feeling as we come out of lockdown, and the need for space to interact together and intergenerationally. Encouraging churches to send their young people to 3 Generate Daud talked about the theme for this year (Tune in). He reminded Synod that the manifesto which had been produced at 3 Generate by the young people, for a number of years, was intended for action not just displaying, and was to be replaced this year with a covenant to encourage that.

7. MOMENTWM

Revd Flis Randall reminded the Synod of the help available from the Synod to support work with young people, including assistance to attend 3 Generate, and of the Synod's 'Big Day In' for young people on 25th September.

8. REPORTS FROM SYNOD POLICY COMMITTEE

The Synod received the report (previously circulated) and gave its approval for the following churches to cease worship and dispose of the building: Emaus, Flint (Buckley and Deeside), Llawr y Glyn (Welshpool & Bro Hafren), Newbridge (Gwent Hills and Vales), Tonypandy (Mid Glamorgan Mission), Victoria Road, Llanelli (South West Wales), and Nicholas St, Pontypool (Gwent Hills and Vales) who as a society were continuing as a 'church without walls'.

9. REPORT FROM Y CYNGOR

Synod received a report from Y Cyngor (previously circulated).

10. DETAILED PROPOSAL FOLLOWING CONVERSATIONS WITH SYNOD CYMRU

Following the outline proposals which were approved by Synod in April 2021 the Chair presented a paper with detailed proposals (previously circulated) as follows:

Outline proposal

That Synod Cymru ceases to be and the Cymru circuit becomes a Welsh language circuit of a new Wales Synod Cymru from September 2022. This will be a new Synod because it incorporates for the first time both Welsh and English language circuits and a commitment to working in both languages across the Synod; but initially it will use

the structure of the existing Wales Synod and its pattern of meetings, budgeting, and officers. (This was approved by both Synods in March/April 2021.)

Detailed proposals

The next 5 sections set out more detailed proposals in accordance with the 5 principles accompanying the Outline proposal (which were also approved by both Synods), in terms of the new Wales Synod Cymru, the Cymru circuit, the other circuits currently in the Wales Synod, the missional strategy for the new Synod and the financial arrangements for the new Synod.

1) the new Wales Synod Cymru

The new Synod will fulfil the responsibilities of a Methodist District as set out in Part 4 of the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church (CPD) and comprise:

- The current 15 circuits in the Wales Synod and the Cymru circuit*
- 2 Chairs funded connexionally, one of whom will lead on Welsh language matters, the other of whom will lead on stationing matters; both of whom will share equally in connexional and district responsibilities and will take the pastoral lead for those circuits in the areas closest to them*
- 2 part-time Assistant Chairs funded by the Synod who will assist with the provision of Supervision and in other pastoral and ecumenical matters.*
- A Synod Leadership Team which will include both Chairs, Assistant Chairs and Synod Secretaries, the Co-ordinator and Welsh-speaking team member of the Learning Network, the Treasurer, and officers with responsibility for grants, property, and stationing*
- A Synod Policy Committee which will comprise members of the Synod Leadership Team plus representatives from the 16 circuits (with representation varying according to size)*
- A Synod Office and Administrator in south Wales, supported in the provision of Welsh language material by the Cymru Circuit Officers.*
- A Synod website with material and information available in both languages*

The new Synod will have the following meetings:

- An annual Representative Synod (in September)*
- An annual Presbyteral Synod (in Spring)*
- 6 meetings of the Synod Leadership Team per annum, (one as an overnight meeting with Superintendents)*
- 3 meetings of the Synod Policy Committee per annum*
- Committees to ensure proper oversight of Safeguarding, Schemes & Grants, Property, Manses, and Youth work, as well as the necessary Candidates and Probationers Committees*
- a new consultative body which will meet bi-lingually, together with Connexional Team staff, to consider matters of ecumenism, mission, and training across Wales*

but noting that further work will need to be undertaken about meetings, particularly as regards:

- Number and makeup of the committees*
- Frequency and location of meetings*
- The use of modern technology to reduce travel and ensure that time is used most effectively*

In terms of language, the new Synod will encourage worship in the Welsh language both in the Cymru circuit and new mission projects in other circuits. It will ensure the use of Welsh, supported by simultaneous translation, in both Representative and Presbyteral sessions of Synod, and in the new consultative body (referred to in the bullet point above.) Those Synod Committees engaging with ministry matters (eg. Candidates and Probationers) will reflect the language of those involved. However, most other business meetings of the Synod, including the Synod Policy Committee, will be undertaken though the medium of English.

2) the Cymru Circuit

The Cymru Circuit will continue as a Welsh language circuit within the new Synod, functioning like all other circuits in the connexion according to Part 5 of CPD. It will take its place alongside the other member (English-language) circuits and contribute to the life of the Synod in the same way as the other circuits. The new Synod will look to sustain the Welsh-language worship and witness of the Cymru Circuit, but it will also look to the Cymru Circuit to show support and share wisdom for the development of new mission initiatives through the medium of Welsh in other circuits of the Synod.

The Cymru Circuit will continue to work, with the support of the Synod, towards a sustainable future in terms of ministry, membership (churches) and mission. While recognising the Cymru Circuit's right to organise itself into Areas, as in Section 49 of CPD, the new Synod will encourage the development of mission planning (and the possible exploration of mission 'hubs') and will support the Cymru Circuit in any ways it may reorder for the future.

The Circuit staff will reduce to consist of a minimum of Superintendent minister, part-time deacon (in a joint appointment) and 3 part-time lay appointments, namely a Circuit Treasurer, Property Steward and Safeguarding Officer, along with other volunteer officers. The Superintendent minister will be appointed to that role only and will not additionally serve as a Chair of the new Synod.

However, one of the Synod Chairs will have a designated responsibility for oversight and support of Welsh language work, including the Cymru Circuit and relationships with other denominations through the medium of Welsh (eg. Community Ministries/Gweinidogaethau Bro). The right of the Cymru Circuit and its churches to conduct its whole life in the Welsh language will be respected and protected by the new Synod and all its member circuits.

3) the other Circuits currently in the Wales Synod

The other 15 circuits in the current Wales Synod will continue their ministry and mission and their contribution to the wider life of the Synod in much the same way as before. However, as part of the new Synod and in line with the mission planning being developed as part of the connexional 'God for All' strategy, they will also be encouraged to explore new missional opportunities for engagement in Welsh, bilingual and Welsh-learner settings, and to be open to possible future conversations with local churches and congregations which are currently part of the Cymru circuit.

4) the missional strategy for the new Synod

The new Synod will encourage missional planning in line with the connexional 'God for all' strategy in and through the circuits in both English and Welsh, or bilingually, as appropriate. At the same time, the new Synod will also continue to support existing mission projects, including such projects as the Trinity Centre, Ogof Adullam, Plasdwr and 'Yr Eglwys Heb Furliau/The Church Without Walls'.

Recognising the growth of the Welsh language and the opportunity for a Methodist missional response, the new Synod will look to establish 2 pilot Welsh language mission projects in new areas of Wales (in line with the connexional 'God for All' strategy and as part of the 'New Places for New People' (NPNP) initiative.) The intention will be for one to be located in North and the other in South Wales. Funding for these projects will come from the first tranche of the connexional 'God for All' budget accompanied by matched Synod funding. A second amount of funding from this scheme, again intended to support new NPNP or 'Church at the Margin' (CaM) projects, will also be available to the new Synod as it works out its mission policy in more detail over the coming year(s).

As part of this missional commitment, financial reserves brought into the new Synod from the former Synod Cymru will, as a principle, be used equally to sustain existing Welsh language ministry and to develop new Welsh language mission initiatives wherever this may be agreed by the Synod. In this way, the new Synod will not only respond to the request of the Methodist Council to make proposals for the continuance of the Welsh language work in Wales but will also work towards its furtherance and development.

5) the financial arrangements for the new Synod

The financial arrangements for the new Synod will be undertaken in the following stages.

i) The current Cymru circuit will prepare indicative budgets for the next 3 years to show how the circuit will be financially sustainable using a mixture of local giving and historic reserves for income, and clarifying which expenses will belong to the circuit and which will relate to the Synod.

ii) Based on these budgets, there will be an agreed apportionment of reserves currently held by the Cymru circuit and Synod, to ensure that there are sufficient reserves available to enable the circuit to meet its commitments but also that appropriate reserves will be transferred to the new Synod.

This is to meet the commitment made that historic reserves should be used equally to support the existing mission and ministry of the Cymru circuit, and to support new mission initiatives in the Welsh language in other circuits and settings across the new Synod.

iii) Based on these indicative budgets and the agreed apportionment of reserves between circuit and Synod, there will be a draft budget prepared for the new Synod for the year 2022/23, and which will assume that the new Cymru circuit will contribute to the new Synod on the same basis as the current 15 circuits in the Wales Synod.

iv) Finally, in addition to the indicative budgets and agreed apportionment of reserves, there will also need to be a settlement reached with the Connexion as regards the annual contribution of the existing Synod Cymru to the Methodist Church Fund, currently about £60Kpa.

Significant work has already been undertaken on sections i) and ii). Based on the forecasted expenditure over the next 3 years and the current capital balances available to the Cymru Circuit and Synod, it seems clear that by implementing the proposed changes in staffing levels the Cymru Circuit should have sufficient financial resources

available to manage its expenditure without recourse to the Synod Advance Fund from now on, particularly as it is anticipated that further sales of chapels and manses will add to the Circuit Advance Fund in future. This will enable monies in the Synod Advance and other Funds to go into the new Synod to support missional projects going forward and to cover any initial adjustments in terms of the Connexional assessment. It will also provide the basis for the agreed apportionment of reserves as proposed in ii) and enable the Synod Implementation Group (see below) to undertake the more detailed work of preparing a budget for the new Synod as proposed in iii).

6) Synod Implementation Group.

Finally, we recognise that should both Synods in September approve these more detailed plans and that these proposals be agreed also by the Methodist Council in October, there will be a need for more detailed work to confirm appointments, arrangements, financial and other matters from September 2021 onwards, in time for the new Synod to come into being in September 2022.

In order for this work to be carried out effectively, we recommend that a Synod Implementation Group be established to undertake this role, comprising:

- An independent Chair **
- The current 2 Synod Chairs (and proposed 2 Chairs of the new Synod)*
- Members of the existing conversations*
- Key officers proposed for the new Synod*

The Synod agreed to the detailed proposals for a new Wales Synod Cymru to come into being as detailed in sections 1-5 of the report. (Voting For: 109 Against: 2) [Resolution 1]

The Synod agreed to the establishment of a Synod Implementation Group to enable the new Synod to come into existence from 1 September 2022 as set out in section 6 of the report. (Voting For: 113 Against: 2)[Resolution 2]

The Chair reported that Synod Cymru had voted in their Synod on an amended proposal which removed the last sentence of section 1, namely 'However, most other business meetings of the Synod, including the Synod Policy Committee, will be undertaken through the medium of English.' He presented a paper on behalf of the Synod's representatives in the conversations (The Chair, Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Synod) indicating the implications of this for the new Synod. Synod engaged in discussion of the issue and following a short adjournment of the Synod to enable the drafting of a resolution which adequately expressed the Wales Synod's response to Synod Cymru the following resolution was agreed:

'Wales Synod respects, values and affirms both the Welsh and English languages but regrets that it cannot accept the amendments proposed by Synod Cymru. However, it is willing to have further conversations to explore how to encourage the use of the Welsh language in the new Synod, in ways that are practical and sustainable.' (Voting For: 102 Against: 7). [Resolution 3]

11. CHAIR'S INVITATION

The Secretary gave notice to the Synod that the Chair had indicated that he would not be seeking a re-invitation in 2023 when his current invitation was complete, and that work would begin to find a successor in the new year.

12. LEARNING NETWORK

The Learning Network addressed Synod offering bespoke mission planning to churches and circuits, noting that a mission plan was a necessary precursor to grant applications under the God for all strategy.

13. CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing devotions were led by the Newport and Lower Wye Circuit.

14. THE NEXT MEETING of the representative session of the Synod will take place on 9th April 2022, in Newtown, Powys.