

**United Reformed Church – Wessex Synod**  
**Minutes of a Meeting of the Church and Society Group**  
**held on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2011**  
**At Chandlers Ford URC.**

	<i>Actions</i>
<p><b>11/25 Present:</b> David Hoadley, David Wrighton, Christine Hardwick  Brian Wilkins, Clare Downing, Julie Maclaren.</p> <p><b>Apologies:</b> Virginia Lawson</p>	
<p><b>11/26 Opening devotions</b> were led by the convenor..</p>	
<p><b>11/27 Minutes of the meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2011</b>  These were agreed as a true record.</p>	
<p><b>11/28 Matters Arising</b>  Frank Kantor has confirmed his intention to attend our January meeting. We are communicating to see if there is anything we can do with or for Frank to make the meeting more worthwhile.  We need to make this meeting a priority and will emphasise this to all members.</p>	<i>DH/DW</i>
<p><b>11/29 Notification of other business</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wessex Synod Office meeting on Ethical Investment</li> <li>• Christian Concern for One World (CCOW)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>11/30 Future Synods</b>  <b>1. 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012 at Woking.</b>  Linda Mead, the Programme Co-ordinator for Commitment for Life, will be the main speaker.</p>	
<p><b>11/31 Reports on Specialisms:</b>  <b>Commitment for Life</b>  It is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Commitment for Life next year. About 40% of churches in the Synod are signed up to C for L, which is seen as quite high. The total is affected by the number of joint churches the URC has with the Methodists, who work on a different basis. We will make sure appropriate display material is available for the Synod, and check whether any material needs to be sent out in the Synod papers given the major input at the next Synod. We should also invite people to the next Synod whose churches are C for L members or not in order to be encouraged to take C for L seriously.</p>	<i>All</i>
<p>It is anticipated that Linda will talk about her Bangladesh trip, and consider the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Julie will also contact Linda about a date for a meeting of Commitment for Life Synod advocates within the Synod.</p>	<i>JM</i>
<p>There was some discussion about the importance of Social media, which might facilitate communication with younger age groups. Commitment for Life is on Facebook, and we need to encourage young people to latch on to this. The Convenor would check with the Youth executive about this.</p>	<i>DH</i>

It was also suggested we should be identifying named people for each Pastoral Area as Synod contacts for C for L. This might be done better unofficially through this committee rather than through something more formal like the Nominations Committee. Unofficial contacts could perhaps be introduced to the Synod at the March Synod.

*DH*

There was a national advocates meeting at Church House in October. This dealt mainly with the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary plans, but also with Christian Aid on Israel Palestine, and the new C for L youth intern Charis Unsworth was introduced. It was noted that resources on the C for L website are really very good.

### **Climate Change**

The previous afternoon the convenor had attended a WDM meeting with Chris Huhne at his constituency office. Nobody from his constituency was there, so they couldn't go in, but he encouragingly came out! It was a photo opportunity to highlight that rich countries ought to be giving grants for climate adaptation/mitigation through the UN, while the US and UK want to encourage loans through the World Bank. Chris Huhne himself argued that the World Bank has done good things, but this is a matter of some dispute.

Government is slashing the subsidies for solar panels. There is a lot of pressure to try and convince the Government to review this.

### **Racial justice**

No report. Virginia had been to the multicultural event at Carrs Lane URC, which had clashed with one of our meetings. Virginia is active, but just has not been able to attend our meetings.

### **Rural matters**

The Moderator asked if rural issues come under this group. They do not, and should come in to Mission and Outreach Committee. But it was also noted that rural issues are enormously important, have a great overlap with much of what we do in terms of poverty, employment matters and the like. Wessex as a synod is also hugely rural, but most of the Churches are largely urban.

### **ECCR**

The Convenor attended the AGM of ECCR, which was on trafficking, pornography and related areas, particularly in the light of the upcoming Olympics. The speaker panel included Object, the police, and the Church Investors Group. There was an intervention from the English Collection of prostitutes, who maintained that they should be consulted on this. They also stressed that most prostitution is caused by poverty.

ECCR are trying to get hotels to observe a code of practice about prostitution in the lead up to the Olympics. They are in touch with Premier Inns and Whitbread, who have confirmed they are not actively doing anything about this at the moment.

Brian had been to a meeting at the Synod Office with CCLA which manages most of our Synod's ethical investments. Helen Wildsmith from CCLA had reported that Ethical Investment is becoming increasingly recognised as a sensible approach. Fairtrade look a

long time to get off the ground, and ethical investment is going along the same way. It seems that many Christians divorce their investment decisions from their Christian Faith. It was also commented that people are loathe to move away from what they know, that some people just will not think to make the connection and that this could be perhaps tackled in a Lent Course. It was noted that there has historically been study material on this and related areas through CTHI and through our Group when participating in a national project about “values”.

**11.32 – Items to/from Committees, etc.**

**IBEX** – David Wrighton reported that the SEEFF sub-regional conference he is involved in organising is likely to be postponed. There has been a decent amount of interest, but not the required mix across the sectors that we hoped to have involved. It was suggested that the words “Big Society” in the title may now be counter-productive and more likely to dissuade people from attending. It had therefore been decided that it is better to postpone and rearrange than to host something less than effective. It was also noted that other conferences on similar matters recently have allied this agenda to the idea of CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility – for the private Sector.

DW

DW

It was noted that the Bishop of Southampton, during his Mission Week in that city, had expressed a particular interest in finding out about poverty in Southampton.

It was also noted that there is increasing interest in **Chaplaincy** currently. The Southampton Methodist District currently has the services of a connexional (national) Lay Chaplaincy development worker, who is employed to stimulate interest in the area. There are the possibilities of new developments in Newbury, Chandlers Ford (ASDA) and Fareham at the moment, and there are other bodies locally and further afield with whom it may be sensible to co-operate on such matters in terms of training, mentoring and ongoing support.

DW

It was noted that, despite all effort, we still have no links with FURY. Perhaps this would be encouraged through Social Media. Particular efforts are being made, however, to attract youth to the Joint Meeting in September at Elvetham Heath.

**11/33 Any Other Business**

We donated £50 this year to CCOW. Their new website should be up and running very soon and there is a new leaflet out to encourage people to think about Climate Change. More copies of the leaflet should be available through the website or direct contact.

**11/34 Dates of Future Meetings**

- January 14<sup>th</sup> at Chandlers Ford – with Frank Kantor.
- May 26<sup>th</sup> at Chandlers Ford.
- September 22<sup>nd</sup> at Elvetham Heath – Joint Meeting.
- November 17<sup>th</sup> at Chandlers Ford

**11/xx Thanks** were due to David and Christine for coffee and opening up.

The meeting closed with **the Grace**.