

United Reformed Church – Wessex Synod
Minutes of a Meeting of the Church and Society Group
held on Saturday 24th September, 2011
At Elvetham Heath.

| | <i>Actions</i> |
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| <p>11/15 Present: David Hoadley, David Wrighton, Christine Hardwick Julie McLaren, Brian Wilkins, Apologies: Virginia Lawson</p> | |
| <p>11/16 Opening devotions were made at the opening plenary session.</p> | |
| <p>11/17 Minutes of the meeting of 15th January 2011 These were agreed as a true record.</p> | |
| <p>11/18 Matters Arising It was asked whether the Mission team had sought to identify where each Church can take some sort of action. It was confirmed that this had happened.</p> | |
| <p>New Display Board Material Material about the Millennium Goals was prepared ready for the Synod Day in June, but the allotted space for display was not available so this did not happen. There was material produced about the Big Society agenda as well, but this wasn't used either.</p> | |
| <p>There is some frustration as to what to do with the display boards now. There has still not been a very good take-up. Feedback still is that they are too wordy. It is still hoped, however, that they would be used alongside a meeting on an appropriate subject. Perhaps this could be done around Area Consultations. These seem to have been mainly for elders as they seem to assume a certain amount of prior knowledge on the topics covered. The next round of area consultations should be before the next (March) Synod.</p> | <i>DH</i> |
| <p>It is still possible there are groups out there who are interested but just haven't done anything about it. We still need to wait and see if there are any suggestions for future use.</p> | <i>All</i> |
| <p>It was noted we should invite Frank Kantor to a future meeting – January or May.</p> | <i>DW</i> |
| <p>Website Update Update of the website is now complete with all our names, minutes of meetings and other appropriate information. It is not known how many people visit the site.</p> | |
| <p>Green Apostles The person in Oxford who was identified as a potential green apostle is not available. It was noted that there are issues sometimes around Fairtrade issues: Flowers from Kenya give rise to concerns over the appropriate use of water, for example.</p> | |
| <p>11/19 Notification of other business</p> | |

There was none.

11/20 Future Synods

1. 5th November at Camberley

This is the workshop Synod – three topics: Building Spirituality and Prayer, Establishing Church Identity, and Planning for Church Growth.

2. 10th March 2012 at Woking.

Linda Mead, the Programme Co-ordinator for Commitment for Life, will be the main speaker.

11/21 Reports on Specialisms: Commitment for Life

There is not currently a great deal to report:

- A young person has been appointed to work with Christian Aid.
- We are waiting to hear what is planned for next year.
- The most recent Christian Aid materials are very good.
- There is an Advocates meeting in London on 5 October.

There is still activity about the Jubilee Debt campaign and so on. WDM is working on Food Speculation. It seems, however, to become increasingly difficult even to persuade known Christian Aid supporters to do anything. Are we retreating from involvement in society mode to survival, or is this just a continuation of what has been going on for the last 50 years.

It was noted that **Christian Concern for One World** has a website which is being updated and should be complete soon. Miranda, the co-ordinator is producing weekly notes for prayers and links for resources which are very good. It would be good for a link to appear in the e-newsletter about this.

Cliff Bembridge is taking up the IBEX SCM post in Portsmouth; should he have a relationship with our Group? There was also some discussion about the nature of local management or support groups. It is still possibly a subject of negotiation as to where he “plugs in to” the Synod.

ECCR – national investment week starts on 16th October. The AGM is on 17th November and the subject will be trafficking and vulnerable workers, particularly with regard to what effect the Olympics will have on this.

The affiliation rate to ECCR is increasing significantly. Up to now it has cost £50 per year, but now it will cost £125 because it is worked out according to the assets of the organisation. It was decided that we should bite the bullet and pay this. This year we are paying £75, next year £100 and then the full £125.

ECCR is very much about trying to encourage Churches to use their investments wisely, and it was considered that this is an important matter. There is actually a clash of meetings on 17th November about investment – the ECCR AGM but also a meeting at Avenue St Andrews of the URC Wessex Trust trustees to which the Convenor has been invited. Brian Wilkins may be available to go to the Southampton meeting in his place.

DW

DH/BW

Economic Life

Life is difficult at the moment. There are concerns that there are missed opportunities around the possible reform of the Banking System. There is enormous pressure in the Public Sector and also because of funding cuts and reductions in donations life is difficult in the Voluntary Sector. There is obvious concern that it is the most vulnerable in society who will suffer most in all this.

All this is happening against a background where the Government is changing Economic Structures. Regional bodies are disappearing to be replaced by more local organisations – Local Enterprise partnerships. These are business led and business oriented, but there is concern that these will not be well informed or serious on the inclusion agenda and around poverty and similar issues.

SEEFF Conference - David Wrighton is involved in the organisation of a SEEFF sub-regional conference entitled “The Big Society – Faith Communities Leading the Way?” This is being run in conjunction with the University of Winchester’s Department of Religions for Peace and Reconciliation. It will take place on November 30th, starting at lunchtime, and will involve four different sectors – Faith, Public, Private and Voluntary Sectors – in considering what we need to have in place in order to make the concept of the Big Society work.

DW

The aim is that this is not a “talking shop”, but will seek to come up with very real ideas on how to progress the whole concept.

It was noted that **FURY** is represented on hardly any of the Synod committees.

11/22 The Budget

It was noted that we had not spent much of our allowance. We know that our ECCR subscription will be going up but, other than that, there are no great financial plans. It was confirmed that if we don’t spend it, it just stays in general funds and there is no pressure to use it. Our next year’s budget was agreed to be Meeting expenses £500, Affiliations £150, Resources and Equipment £100, Roadshow expenses £150, and Website upgrading £50 (total £950).

11/23 Dates of future meetings

- November 19th at 10 am at Chandlers Ford, then in 2012:
- January 14th at Chandlers Ford.
- May 26th at Chandlers Ford.
- September 22nd at Elvetham Heath – Joint Meeting.
- November 17th at Chandlers Ford

11/24 Thanks were due to the Church at Elvetham Heath for their hospitality.

The meeting closed with **the Grace**.