

United Reformed Church

Wessex Synod

World Church Group

**Minutes of the meeting held at The Church on the Heath, The Key,
Elvetham Heath, Fleet, GU51 1HA on Saturday, 25th September 2010 at
10.30 am**

Present: Martin Waldron, Helen Everard, Peter Pay and Derek Lindfield.

Apologies: David Webb, Ian Simpson and Rob Weston.

In Memoriam Stephen Rider Smith

The Group was very saddened at the death of Stephen. His presence and contribution to the World Church Group was much appreciated and will be sorely missed. In a time of thinking about Stephen Derek read the following obituary which will appear next year in the URC book of obituaries.

CWM missionary; headmaster of Caterham School 1974-95; church secretary and elder

An England rugby international, a CWM missionary in India, and head of Caterham School: they were three of the significant achievements in the life of Stephen Smith.

The son of LMS missionary parents, Stephen was born at Jammalamadugu, in India, on 21 October 1934 and only came to England when he was eleven, to become a boarder at Eltham College, a school for sons of missionaries. He retained a lifelong interest in his old school and remained a governor until his death. He was responsible for publication of a fascinating book containing the reminiscences of sons of missionaries.

After studying geography at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he also captained the university rugby team, Stephen taught for five years at Harrow School. It was while there, that he played scrum half for England, for two seasons, at the end of the 1950s.

Stephen was married to Helen for fifty years. They were an impressive partnership; first as CWM missionaries just outside Calcutta, and then at Caterham School – the school established in 1811 for the sons of Congregational ministers – where Stephen was headmaster for more than twenty years. He steered the school through its difficult years when it ceased to be direct grant, did much to consolidate links with the United Reformed Church, and was particularly energetic in enabling sons, and later daughters, of URC ministers, to benefit from the education Caterham offered.

He became a passionate advocate of co-education, first making it possible for girls to study in the Sixth Form, and then steering the amalgamation between Caterham and Eothen, a local independent school for girls. He wisely decided that the job of consolidating this union was best left to a younger headmaster, and retired to Sussex.

There he was soon appointed church secretary at Lewes, and was the architect of a scheme to make the church joint Methodist/URC. He also played a leading role in forging links between Southern Synod and the Rayalaseema Diocese of the Church of South India.

Stephen's health was a problem, so he and Helen decided to move to Marlow, Buckinghamshire, so they could be nearer their family. It was not long before he became an elder at Marlow URC and a member of Wessex Synod's World Church group, with responsibility for highlighting the profile of CWM. Even though he was by then suffering from cancer - a particularly virulent form of myeloma - he arranged for Marlow to hold a sale of Zimbabwean sculptures, raising more than £20,000 for a group of impoverished sculptors known as 'Art Peace'

Stephen Smith was rooted and grounded in the Christian faith, and that faith informed everything he did. He died on 9 August 2010 and is survived by Helen, and children, Elizabeth, Alison and David.

WC 10.12 Minutes of the meeting held at London Street URC, Basingstoke on Monday, 19th July 2010 were approved.

Matters arising

WC 08.04 Register of Churches in Wessex with links to churches overseas. Derek reported that there had been no additions to the list. He stated that he was still waiting for the Methodist guidelines that David had promised.

Action: Derek to remind David about the Methodist guidelines.

WC 08.08 Council for World Mission. Derek reported that, in spite of repeated requests to Kenwyn Pierce for information regarding an information pack for Wessex churches, he had heard nothing. It was agreed that he should continue trying to get this information.

It was also agreed that Martin should seek a replacement for Stephen to liaise with CWM. He will place an advertisement in the Synod e-newsletter for a volunteer with knowledge of CWM and who has had experience of living overseas.

Action: Martin to place an advertisement in the e-newsletter.

WC 08.07 2012 Olympics. Derek reported that a workshop had taken place on the 4th September during which there had been a tour of the Olympic site followed by briefings from David Hawkins, The Bishop of Barking; Duncan Green of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games; Ashley Evans of Newham URC; David Willson, executive coordinator of the response of the Church of England to the Olympic and Paralympic Games; Paul Brickell of Leaside Regeneration; and Paul Winyard of the Methodist Church. Kirsty Thorpe, Moderator of the General Assembly of the URC chaired proceedings. It was noted that the final session was called 'Where do we go from here?' and Derek was asked to follow this up and contact Gill Nichol, the URC Press and Media Officer, with a view to ascertaining what could be asked of churches in the Wessex Synod. It was noted that Roger Lovell represented the Wessex Synod and Peter was asked to give Derek his contact details so that he might be questioned about the event.

Helen reported that she is intending to attend a session on the 14th October being run by the Methodist Church on the Olympics in Windsor (entitled 'Is your Church in the running?') and will report back on it in January to the Group.

Action: Derek to contact Gill Nichol.
Peter to let Derek have Roger Lovell's contact details.
Derek to contact Roger Lovell.
Helen to attend the Methodist Church meeting in Windsor and report back at the next WCG meeting.

WC.08.02 Links with the Eglise Reformee de France (Nord Normandie) and Le Weekend. Helen reported that she has been invited to attend the Synod meeting near Caen on the 20th and 21st November. She will suggest then that the theme of Le Weekend in Salisbury from the 29th April to the 1st May will be 'Sharing our Stories' with an emphasis on evangelism.. The meeting felt that Helene needed some support with the job of linking with French church and so it was agreed that Martin will place an advertisement for someone in the Wessex e-newsletter.

Helen agreed to produce a draft flyer for Le Weekend.

Action: Helen to attend the Normandy Synod meeting.
Helen to produce a draft flyer for Le Weekend.
Martin to place an advertisement for someone who speaks French to assist Helen in the Wessex e-newsletter.

WC 08.03 Links with the Lusaka Presbytery of the United Church of Zambia. The Group warmly welcomed the appointment of Ian Simpson as the Zambian Link person in succession to Rob Weston.

Martin reported that the visit to Zambia had been a great success and had been a life changing experience for those who went. Phil Ray is hoping that

members of the group will be invited to speak about their experiences in churches.

WC 08.06 Website. Martin expressed his pleasure that the website is now working well although there are items of an historical nature which possibly need to be removed. Peter agreed to look into this.

Action: Peter to discuss this issue with the webmaster.

WC08.11 Zimbabwe. Derek reported that Johnston Simpson continues his splendid work with ArtPeace, the sculptors at Silveira House.

WC09.05 Display Boards. Derek has identified the boards that should be purchased and has asked the Synod Office to purchase them. In spite of requests he still does not know whether or not they have been purchased. He will continue to pursue this.

Action: Derek to either ascertain if the boards have been purchased. If necessary he will purchase them himself and claim the money back from the Synod.

WC09.08 Co-operation with Southern Synod. Derek reported that Barrie Scopes, the convener of the Southern Synod WCG, had written agreeing to a joint approach to Jane Rowell but had declined the offer of sharing our relationship with the French Church. He has agreed that his committee is happy to publicise Le Weekend but does not wish to be involved in organising it. The question of organising a special day of celebration for the Southern and Wessex and Normandy Synods was not supported.

Action: Derek to contact Jane Rowell and ask for some possible dates and then seek to find a day when Wessex and Southern WCG people could meet her.

WC10.13 Budget. The following budget was agreed.

Meetings £700;

Resources £700;

Youth Exchange with the UCZ £3000

Links the ERF £1000

Visit of new Moderator to Zambia £1500 Total: £6900

Action: Martin to present this budget.

WC10.14 Future events. Martin agreed to explore the possibility of an overseas group for the Synod Day in 2011.

Action: Martin to speak to, among others, Phil Ray, and generally explore who might be available.

WC10.15 Job Descriptions. It was agreed that members of the group should write brief job descriptions for presentation at the next meeting.

Action: Each member of the group to write a job description.

Date of future meetings

Monday, 17th January at London Street URC at 2.00 pm

Monday, 16th May at London Street URC at 2.00 pm

Saturday, 24th September at the Church on the Heath, Elvetham Heath at 10.00 am

Close of the meeting

The meeting closed with the members present saying the Grace with and to each other.