

## Working towards a new Synod of The Methodist Church in Wales

**Proposal:** 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 initiative for this process came from the Synod Cymru Policy Committee meeting of November 2017, following prayerful consideration of the outcome of the Cymru Synod/Circuit Review of 2016-17. The sharing of resources and skills as the Methodist people in Wales has a strong missional imperative. At present, there are regions where only Welsh language Methodism exists; regions where there is only English language work; regions where there is a strong degree of overlap and regions where there is no Methodist presence at all. Neither Synod is lacking in financial reserves. Nevertheless, the intention to work together for the sake of the gospel, particularly in those regions in need of encouragement or new initiatives, represents good stewardship. In both Synods, there is a proportion of members whose first language is other than the professed language of the Synod: a Synod ministering in both languages would have value for them. Similarly, Welsh learners are found in the ministry and membership of both Synods, and as the learner community grows, so will opportunities to serve and minister to this group. The witness of a single Synod of the Methodist Church in Wales has the potential to demonstrate the all-embracing, unifying love of God in Christ and to offer a message of hope to a society that is sometimes divided. To this end, we are invited to enter into a prayerful process of consultation and consideration.

The Steering Group has envisaged that the new district could comprise:

- The current 16 circuits in the two Synods
- A Cymru Circuit which would have its own Superintendent minister (who would not be a Synod Chair) and which would fully retain its Welsh speaking identity, mission and ministry
- 2 co-Chairs funded from the Methodist Church Fund
- At least one Chair who would be bilingual in Welsh and English, or committed to learning the Welsh language;
- One Chair residing in the north of Wales and one residing in the south of Wales and both sharing equally in connexional and district responsibilities and taking the pastoral lead for the circuits
- 1 Synod Secretary and 1 Assistant Synod Secretary
- A Synod Leadership Team which would include both co- Chairs and Synod Secretaries, the Synod Treasurer, and officers as defined
- A Synod Policy Committee which would comprise the Synod Leadership Team plus representation from each of the 16 circuits (with representation varied to reflect the life of the Synod)
- A Synod Office and Administrator in south Wales, supported in the provision of Welsh-language material by the Cymru Circuit Office and Administrator, located in the north.
- A Synod web-site with material and information available in Welsh and English.

The new district would have the following meetings:

- A Representative Synod which will meet at least annually
- A Presbyteral Synod which will meet at least annually

- X (tbc) meetings of the Synod Leadership Team per annum, (one as an overnight meeting with Superintendents)
- X (tbc) meetings of the Synod Policy Committee per annum
- Various committees (to reflect the life of the Synod)

Further work would need to be undertaken concerning meetings of the Synod, particularly as regards:

- Purpose, number and makeup of various committees, taking into account the current structures of the two Synods, the requirements of CPD and also hearing from other Districts who have merged to create new structures recently
- Frequency and location of meetings, with physical meetings being kept to a minimum and the time spent at them used most efficiently
- Recognising the increasingly bilingual context, the development of a Welsh language policy which would address matters such as the need for all decision-making bodies of the Synod (eg Synod and SPC) to work and communicate bilingually supported by simultaneous translation; for committees engaging in ministry (eg Candidates and Probationers) to reflect the language of those involved; and for committees engaging in specialist matters (eg Property and Safeguarding) to use primarily the language enabling that specialist contribution to be made most effectively.
- Money, which was not raised in the initial conversations and outline proposals because it was not a driving force behind the conversations. However, the Steering Group recognises that finance is an important issue, and so offers some initial thoughts now.

The starting principle is that any new Synod would inherit the funds currently held by the existing two synods and Y Cyngor. Both existing Synods have substantial capital reserves which would be available to the new Synod to support its mission and ministry (and it will be important that these funds be available to support the mission and ministry of the new Synod as a whole, rather than viewed as monies originating from the previous synods.) There has been some concern expressed about any additional costs which may be incurred in terms of providing for meetings and translation in the new Synod and it will be important to make sure that such facilities are properly funded to enable them to be done well. However, it should also be noted that there may be some savings involved in any such coming together, as the role of Y Cyngor will come to an end, and the new Synod will have access to such reserves which are currently held by Y Cyngor (including the historic balance held over from the former Wales Training Network.)

In light of this, initially, the intention is for the working of the new Synod to be cost neutral in terms of revenue expenditure and assessment from circuits with any increase in operational costs being met from the substantial and enlarged capital reserves held by the new Synod. However, it should be noted that work will need to be undertaken on the overall grants policy of the new Synod, working on the basis that the maintenance and development of mission and ministry in the Welsh language is one of the key drivers in the life of the new Synod. It will also be important, in the light of experience gained from the recent coming together of circuits, that the new Synod moves towards a common system for budgeting and allocation of circuit assessments as soon as is practically possible.

The proposed timeline has been sketched out as follows:

- Wales Synod Representative Session/ Cymru Synod Circuit Meeting – September 2018
  - Timeline, broad principles of the conversation, opportunity for questions and comments
- Consultation in the Circuits – September through November 2018
- Methodist Council – January 2019
  - Report on the scrutiny of the feedback from the Circuits
- Both Policy Committees – February 2019
  - the two Committees agreeing the detailed proposals for the Synods
- Representative Sessions of Synod – 30<sup>th</sup> March 2019
  - the Synods meet on the same day, at a time that enables the Council to receive the votes to inform its recommendation to the Conference
  - the Synods will vote on the formal proposals
- Methodist Council – 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> April 2019
  - will vote on the formal proposals, receiving the votes from the Synods
- Methodist Conference – June/July 2019
  - will receive the recommendation from the Council and will vote on it
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**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

Note – The Steering Group will continue to meet throughout this period to both reflect on the feedback arising from the consultation and to address the further work outlined in the paper in light of that.

August 2018