
Update from the Spring Synod



Introduction

Ministers & Representatives from our churches gathered in Altrincham URC on Saturday 12th March for a day of prayer, fellowship and business. Whilst this church is near the southern end of our Synod there was a bumper attendance of around 150 people present. The Synod were delighted to see the sensitive re-ordering of Altrincham URC which has created a flexible, tasteful and dignified contemporary space for worship and community use.

Worship

Opening worship was led by the Rev'd Brian Jolly, minister of Altrincham URC. Closing worship was led by Mrs Carol Sutcliffe, the Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner and focused on the complementary gifts that we each bring and use in the life of the Church.

Bible Study led by the Rev'd John Proctor

The URC's General Secretary, the Rev'd John Proctor, led an engaging Bible Study entitled: *The Church - Octopus or Bicycle?* Mr Proctor spoke about the Book of Ephesians and its cultural setting in a world where the Church was on the edge and where the Empire was all powerful. Against this background Paul sets the power and majesty of Christ. Mr Proctor noted: *This language is not a power play for a well-positioned church, but is a word of*

assurance for a fearful church, a fresh perspective for a people who might be intimidated by the system within which they live and in which they bear witness to a very different Lord.

Mr Proctor felt that we are called to make Christ known – not by massive programmes or huge marketing campaigns but by our lives and churches despite our size and despite all that is ranged against us. Mr Proctor looked at the Ephesians 4 and looked at the energy and unity that comes from the various gifts that Paul sees at work in the Church. Mr Proctor said we have in our churches adventurous apostles, perceptive prophets, expressive evangelists, patient pastors and talking teachers. These gifts are not narrowly concentrated but spread throughout the church, the URC has not always been good at expressing all these gifts yet none of these gifts can be overlooked or bypassed. The Church needs to nurture and express these different gifts.

Some people see the church as an Octopus with a leg representing each of these gifts with three left over for inertia! Sometimes this inertia is called stability – Mr Proctor thought lack of vision might be a better term. On the other hand a bicycle is only stable when it is moving – this is the model of the Church that we should be emulating.

The full text of the Bible Study, and a recording of it, is available on the resources page of our website – www.nwsynod.org.uk



Young People's Trip to Taiwan

A number of the young people who went, last year, to visit a Presbytery of the Taiwanese Presbyterian Church gave an informative presentation to Synod about their experiences there and looked forward to welcoming youngsters from Taiwan back here this summer.

Personnel Changes



Synod expressed its thanks to Finlay Galloway who completed 7 years' service as convenor of the Synod Resources Committee & Chair of Trust. In this role he has served as an officer of the Synod. We also expressed thanks to Gill, his wife, for the many ways she helps us – especially at Synod meetings. Gifts were given to them both. Mrs Jean Mullineux was elected to replace Finlay in this role.

Presentation on Deployment

The bulk of Synod was given over to a presentation from our Moderator, the Rev'd Andrew Mills, about issues around deployment of ministers of Word and Sacrament in the years leading to and beyond 2020. CRCW ministry isn't effected in the same way.

Mr Mills built on the Bible Study we had engaged with in the morning and reminded Synod that the ministry of the Church is shared between the whole of God's people. He noted that in the URC this ministry is shared between members, elders, youth leaders, lay preachers (Assembly Accredited, or locally recognised) Sunday school teachers, Ministers of Word & Sacrament (either stipendiary or not), worship leaders, Church Related Community Workers and local leaders.

Against this diversity of ministry we need to consider the declining numbers of Ministers of



Word and Sacrament due to the number retiring exceeding the number of those offering themselves for this type of service. By 2020 we will, most likely, have 25% less stipendiary ministers to deploy than we do now.

The Moderator held that we need to work in teams where we equip all of God's people to work more effectively together. A strategy needs to be

developed which focuses on prayer, mission strategy and deployment of stipendiary ministers. Over the Summer road shows will be offered to each area where the issues can be aired and feedback given to help develop a strategy – an expanded Synod Pastoral Committee is responsible, in the first instance, for developing this strategy. There will also be a consultation with ministers and, in September, with the various areas before, hopefully, bringing a strategy back to Synod in October.

Synod broke into small groups to answer some focused questions on the presentation – the results of these are attached to the minutes.

A recording of the Moderator's presentation, and a copy of his slides are on the website in the resources section. We have also uploaded the two together so churches, or Eldershops, can load up the Powerpoint file and listen to the presentation at the same time.

Thanks

Thanks to the Rev'd Brian Jolly for the photos and to the Rev'd Dave Coaker for putting the audio file and recording together for the Moderator's presentation.

Andy Braunston, Synod Clerk, April 2016