



The North Western Synod
of the **United Reformed Church**



Book of Reports for Synod Meeting on

Saturday 16 March 2019, 10.30am

**The United Reformed Church
of St Andrew & St George**

St George's Road

Bolton

BL1 2BX

Important Information

Apologies

If you cannot attend Synod please send apologies to the Synod Office, in advance of the meeting, as they will not be taken from the floor.

E-mail: admin@nwsynod.org.uk

Tel: 0161 789 5583

If you are unable to attend please ensure that someone from your church or a neighbouring church collects the synod envelope for you.

Attendance
Expenses
Voting Card

When you register you will receive: **name badge, expenses form and voting card** (where applicable).

Disabled
Parking

There is limited disabled parking available but please let the office know by **14 March** if you require a space.

Stewards

There will be stewards both inside and outside the church. Please do not hesitate to ask one of them if you require assistance.

Refreshments

Tea and coffee will be served on arrival, at lunch time and at the end of the day. There will be bacon barmcakes on sale in the morning.

Dear friends

I look forward to meeting you at the United Reformed Church of St Andrew & St George in Bolton town centre for our March 2019 Synod Meeting.

We are grateful to Mark Bates, the elders of the church, and those from other churches in Bolton who will provide for us on this occasion.

The main speaker at this Synod Meeting will be Rev David Salsbury, the newly appointed Programme Manager for **Stepwise**.

As we will hear from David, *Stepwise* can help us explore and enrich our faith, see where God is at work in our life, develop our discipleship and contribute to church and community transformation. *Stepwise* is for everyone, whatever our age or background!

As usual our agenda will include reports and proposals from those who serve us as members of our Synod committees; their reports can be found within this booklet. There will also be good opportunity for us share in worship, to hear some Good News stories from around the Synod, and to meet socially before the meeting begins, at lunch-time and afterwards.

Because at present the position of North Western Synod Moderator is in vacancy the Synod Executive Committee has asked Rev John Piper to chair this Synod Meeting. Our thanks go to John for being willing to serve us in this way.

Please reflect prayerfully on these papers and come to our Synod Meeting well prepared and open to the leading of God's Spirit, that we may together discern the mind of Christ for this Synod of the United Reformed Church.

Brian Jolly
Synod Clerk

Agenda

9.30 Arrival and refreshments

10.30 Constitution of the Synod Meeting

Opening worship

Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

Reports, resolutions and Good News stories 1

Stepwise

This session, led by Rev David Salsbury, will include an introduction to Stepwise, an opportunity for questions and comments, an opportunity to experience how a Stepwise group might operate, and a time of worship

News and notices

Lunch

The Keld Centre

An introduction by Rev Dr David Peel

Reports, resolutions and Good News stories 2

Closing worship

Close

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Secretary: Brian Jolly, Clerk

1 The members of the Executive Committee are the conveners, or sometimes other representatives, of the various synod committees, together with the Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer and the synod representative serving on the Assembly Mission Committee. The committee has met on six occasions since the last synod meeting.

Process for the appointment of a new Synod Moderator

2 The committee has worked on behalf of the Synod Meeting in liaising with the General Secretary of the United Reformed Church [Rev John Proctor] and the convenor of the Nominating Group [Mrs Val Morrison] over the process for the appointment of a new Synod Moderator.

3 The General Secretary agreed with the committee the arrangements to be put in place during the vacancy period for the provision of cover for the duties normally undertaken by the Synod Moderator.

4 The work of the committee has included consulting with the members of the Synod Meeting and local churches over the kind of person who should be sought for this role; and, in the light of the consultation process, drafting the text for the advertisement for the position, the job description and person specification, and the Synod Profile. Access to these documents is most easily gained via the Jobs page on the United Reformed Church website. We extend our thanks to those who participated in the consultation process.

5 On behalf of the Synod Meeting the committee asked Rev Sarah Moore [Special Category Minister in Cumbria], Mr Mike Hart [Synod Treasurer] and Mrs Eula Mesquita [Church Secretary in Wythenshawe] to serve with the Synod Clerk as the four Synod members of the Nominating Group. The Nominations Committee of the General Assembly has acted on behalf of the General Assembly in appointing the four General Assembly members of the Nominating Group.

6 The advertisement for this post sought nominations by 1 March. The deadline for applications is 12 April. Interviews will be held on 22 May, with a view to a new Synod Moderator taking up post sometime between September 2019 and January 2020.

Mission Council representation

7 On behalf of the Synod Meeting the committee has appointed Mrs Marilyn Piper and Rev Dr Marion Tugwood to serve alongside the Clerk as members of Mission Council.

Staffing - Synod Finance Officer

8 In November 2019 Mr David Wyke began work as Synod Finance Officer. We welcome David as a member of the synod staff team.

Synod Mission Project: Macedonia, Failsworth

9 Further to the report on this Synod Mission Project made to the October 2019 Synod Meeting, the committee has, on behalf of the Synod Meeting, finalised the membership of the Management Group: Rev John Piper [chair], Rev Sheila Coop, Mrs Wendy Smith, Miss Judith Haughton, Mrs Iris Sutcliffe* and Mr Wallace Jackson* [*local representatives]; Rev Darren Holland [Mission & Discipleship Mentor in Central Area] to attend and advise, as appropriate, at the invitation of the chair.

Presbyterian Church of Taiwan [PCT]

10 The committee has been supportive of a new initiative proposed by Rev Dr Michael Jagessar [Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries at Church House] to further develop the relationship between this synod and the PCT: for a central Manchester church to host and develop a missional relationship with a mandarin-speaking PCT congregation; and for conversations about this to begin with Chapel Street & Hope United Reformed Church. Please pray for these conversations, the outcome of which we await with hope and expectation.

Oversight of the work of Synod Committees

11 At its regular ordinary business meetings, the committee continues to receive and review, on behalf of the Synod Meeting, reports from each of the synod committees.

Membership of Synod Committees

12 The Clerk will seek the permission of the Synod Meeting on 16th March 2019 to bring a resolution [Resolution 1] which will deal with requests from some synod committees for adjustments to their membership.

RESOURCES COMMITTEE AND TRUST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Convener of Resources Committee and Chair of Trust Management
Committee: Jean Mullineux
Company Secretary Brian Jolly

Membership and Responsibilities of Committees

- 1 The Resources Committee continues to act on behalf of the Synod on matters of property and finance.
- 2 The Trust Company is the Trustee of each of the buildings of local churches in the Synod including the Church, Church buildings and Manses. The Elders Meeting of the local Church acts under delegated authority of the Trust.
- 3 The Elders Meeting of each local church is the Trustees of the funds and assets of the local Church but not its buildings.
- 4 The Trust Company is the Trustee for all the Synod's assets.
- 5 The Trust Management Committee acts on behalf of the Trust Company.
- 6 The membership of the Synod Resources Committee and the Trust Management Committee is the same and their meetings are held concurrently.

Listed Buildings Advisory Committee

7 John Rea after many years of hard work and dedication has retired as secretary of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee. The Synod and many individual local churches have received much help and support from John and we offer our grateful thanks and wish him well.
For all matters related to Listed Buildings please contact the Synod Office and the matters will be dealt with by Mike Aspinall Property Consultant or Adelle Hartwell Legal Trust and Property Officer

Implementation of the Synod Manse Scheme

8 At its meeting in March 2018, the Synod agreed a set of resolutions to enable the implementation of a comprehensive manse scheme providing all housing for stipendiary ministers and CRCWs serving in the NW synod area, and to use resources freed by this process to provide grants to local churches based on the value of any Manse they transferred to the scheme.

9 All churches with a locally owned Manse passed the necessary resolutions to transfer their property to the scheme. Six churches with Manse Funds also passed resolutions to transfer a proportion of that fund to the Synod Manse Scheme. This support from local churches will enable Synod to make comprehensive provision of suitable homes for Ministers and their families in the future.

10 A final decision on the affordability of the scheme and its implementation was delegated by Synod Meeting resolutions to the Trust Management Committee. The Trust Management Committee considered these issues at its meeting on the 24th January and resolved that the scheme could be implemented and authorised officers to make the necessary arrangements for the transfer and management of properties from the 1st April 2019, and consistent with the Synod Meeting resolutions for the agreed grants to be available to eligible churches once sufficient monies from the sale of surplus properties has been received. The implementation of the scheme will enable grants of about £4.5m to be made to 70 local churches, with 13 churches likely to receive grants of over £100,000. This will provide significant opportunities for churches to develop their ministry and mission in the future.

11 Work is now underway to ensure the smooth transfer of responsibilities for over 50 Manses to the Synod from the 1st April. The necessary information has been requested from relevant churches and officers are grateful for the support of colleagues in local churches in this process. A handbook is being prepared for Ministers and CRCW's which sets out the arrangements for the management of the property by Synod. This has been developed in partnership with those living in our Manses. In the next few weeks' letters will be sent to all churches eligible to receive grants setting out the amount for their church and the arrangements to draw down these grants once they are available later in the year.

Resolution 2: Synod expresses its thanks to local churches for their support for the Synod Manse Scheme and to Synod Staff for their diligence in the development and implementation of the scheme.

Finance

12 The Trust Management Committee monitors the finance work undertaken by the Synod Treasurer and Synod staff. As Charity Trustees, the members of the Trust Management Committee carry the legal responsibility for the Synod's finances. However, the primary responsibility of the Trust and of the Committee is to carry out the policies of the Synod as approved at meetings of Synod. The following information is provided as a way of keeping members of the Synod Meeting informed and as a way of being accountable to them.

Staffing

13 In November we welcomed David Wyke as the Synod's new Finance Officer. David is based in the Synod Office and can be contacted on the Synod Office number, or by email financeofficer@nwsynod.org.uk. We are grateful to the support given to us by Helen Hogg, the Finance Officer of Northern Synod during the period following Tony Rutherford's retirement; and to Northern Synod for their willingness to help in this way.

Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2018

14 The table on pages 12 and 13 provides the Management Accounts for the 2018 financial year. Whilst there are some variations in individual lines, the overall position at the end of the year, whilst showing an operating deficit of £509,000 is a small improvement on the budget plan. Similarly, once exceptional items and one-off costs, for example costs and proceeds from the closure of churches and the agreed contributions to address the pension fund deficits, the position shows a small improvement compared to the budget. Overall, at the end of the year, the balance of Synod funds amounted to £7.05m, just over £0.55m less than at the end of 2017.

15 The audited accounts will be presented as usual to the October Synod.

16 As I said in my report to the last Synod Meeting, the current budget strategy of drawing on the accumulated reserves remains viable in the short term, but work will be required in the next couple of years to develop a more sustainable balance of income and expenditure for the future.

Resolution 3: Synod notes the Management Accounts for the year to 31st December 2018

Management Accounts for the 12 Months to 31st December 2018

Summary of Operating Income & Expenditure

	Actual	Budget	Variance	
	£	£	£	%
Income:				
Investment income/interest	120,842	99,000	21,842	22.1%
Loan interest	889	889	0	0.0%
Rental income	18,217	12,300	5,917	48.1%
Donations & legacies	512	300	212	70.7%
Grants received		12,000	(12,000)	(100.0%)
Synod stakes	98,460	98,000	460	0.5%
Sundry income	534	1,700	(1,166)	(68.6%)
Total Income	239,454	224,189	15,265	6.8%
Expenditure:				
Administration:				
Salaries	141,186	190,487	(49,301)	(25.9%)
Synod Office	54,188	46,465	7,723	16.6%
Area Support	7,722	5,700	2,022	35.5%
Travel and subsistence expenses	26,584	16,435	10,149	61.8%
Professional Charges:				
Audit	8,016	7,200	816	11.3%
Legal	12,345	7,030	5,315	75.6%
Investment management fees	8,414	7,996	418	5.2%
Other	16,253		16,253	0.0%
Miscellaneous	4,475	2,500	1,975	79.0%
Insurances	3,438	4,690	(1,252)	(26.7%)
Total Administration:	282,621	288,503	(5,882)	(2.0%)
External Grants:				
University chaplaincy	25,000	25,000	0	0.0%
Ecumenical Subscriptions	7,753	6,500	1,253	19.3%
Welfare	5,875	2,500	3,375	135.0%
Other	3,800	1,250	2,550	204.0%

Training:

General	29	1,020	(991)	(97.2%)
Ministers & CRCW	36,265	38,582	(2,317)	(6.0%)
Elders & Members	902	3,500	(2,598)	(74.2%)
Children & Young People	60,013	62,632	(2,619)	(4.2%)

Special Category Ministers:

Cumbria	22,172	22,431	(259)	(1.2%)
Chorlton	9,310	9,056	254	2.8%
Salford	4,799	4,546	253	5.6%
Oldham	9,493	7,749	1,744	22.5%

Property:

Buildings	15,468	5,555	9,913	178.5%
Graveyards	13,249	8,500	4,749	55.9%
Manse fund	48,629	41,287	7,342	17.8%
Mission	202,906	210,929	(8,023)	(3.8%)

Total Operating Expenditure	748,284	739,540	8,744	1.2%
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Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit):	(508,830)	(515,351)	6,521	(1.3%)
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	Actual	Budget	Variance	
	£	£	£	%
Net Operating Surplus/(Deficit):	(508,830)	(515,351)	6,521	(1.3%)
Receipts from closed churches	9,398		9,398	0.0%
Cash/investments transferred to manse fund	252,668	248,871	3,797	1.5%
Less: Costs incurred for closed churches	(14,836)	(59,000)	44,164	(74.9%)
Less: Property grants to churches		(57,500)	57,500	(100.0%)
Less: Mission grants to churches	(26,100)	(50,000)	23,900	(47.8%)
Less: Contribution to M&M fund	(90,000)	(110,000)	20,000	(18.2%)
Less: Contribution to URC Ministers Pension fund	(29,437)		(29,437)	0.0%
Less: Contribution to Lay Pension Fund	(60,180)	(60,200)	20	(0.0%)
Net Income/(Expenditure):	(467,317)	(603,180)	135,863	(22.5%)
Gains & Losses on Investments:				
Investments - unrealised	(377,071)		(377,071)	
Disposal of fixed assets - realised	294,373	270,000	24,373	
Property revaluation - unrealised		(270,000)	270,000	
Total Gains & Losses on Investments	(82,698)	0	(82,698)	
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Funds	(550,015)	(603,180)	53,165	
Balance at 31st December 2017	7,597,906	7,597,906		
Balance at 31st December 2018	7,047,891	6,994,726	53,165	

Plan for Partnership Costs and Missional Partnerships

17 At the last Synod Meeting I reported on the initial discussions that had taken place around how best to administer and fund Plan for Partnership costs (Minister's Expenses, Housing Costs etc.), which are currently paid directly by local churches or pastorates, when Missional Partnerships are formed. On average these costs amount to approximately £7,500 per annum per full time minister. It is important to recognise that these are not new costs for churches and all are currently borne by individual churches and pastorates.

18 Further consultation has now taken place with Ministers about the arrangements and a consultation with local churches is planned to take place shortly. From the consultation to date a clear consensus has emerged about two principles that, subject to the views of the Synod Meeting and local churches, should guide the approach:

- That for practical reasons, the administration and payment of these expenses should be undertaken by the Synod Office
- That as the costs form part of the costs of ministry these should be shared by all churches using the same principles as those used for the Mission and Ministry fund, (i.e. based on the number of church members and regular worshippers)

19 Using these principles and based on the number of ministers currently serving local churches and pastorates in the Synod, the cost to local churches is estimated at less than £30 per member, so for a church with 50 members, the contribution would be approximately £1,500 per year.

20 Because of the pattern of local ministry at the moment the starting point for individual churches ranges from those who are meeting these costs in full, to those who have not had to meet any of these costs for a number of years and for whom this could represent a significant increase in costs. Therefore, alongside the principles, an important part of the consultation with churches will be around the transitional arrangements to ensure that the changes are manageable at a local church level.

Resolution 4: Synod notes the proposed principles for the management of Plan for Partnership costs and the consultation to be undertaken with local churches

Mission and Ministry Fund 2019

21 The Synod's commitment to the Mission and Ministry fund for 2019 was agreed at £1.775m consistent with the assessments for local churches. This is considerably less than the sum offered for 2018 but is consistent with the agreed Synod policy and reflects the significant decline in membership of local churches. I am grateful for the support and contribution of our Area Finance Officers in managing appeals from local churches about their assessment. I'm pleased to report that most of the appeals have now been successfully resolved.

Synod Property Consultant

Self –Assessment Questionnaires

22 Thank you to churches who have submitted the SAQ's for 2019, so far, however there are many outstanding. Please could you urge Church Secretaries to return as soon as possible. These are to help the churches and elders fulfil their obligations as management trustees of their church.

Quinquennial surveys

23 The oversight of church buildings is important to ensure the fabric of the building is maintained. We have 37 churches requiring Quinquennial Surveys this year outstanding.

24 On receipt of the report please ensure you look carefully at the recommendation and action accordingly. If you feel you don't know how to respond please don't hesitate to get in touch with me.

25 For those who have not yet organised their survey (if due) please do so without further delay. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

The Synod Policy Document

26 Every Church Secretary should have a copy of this document. It is available online at <http://www.nwsynod.org.uk/resources/policy-documents>
It contains much useful information to assist churches.

LBAC

27 The SPAB John Betjeman Award is presented annually to celebrate the excellence in the repair of places of worship of all denominations and faiths in England and Wales.

28 This year, Fairhaven URC (The White Church) have submitted details of the completed work to the roof and first floor rooms, following the determination of water ingress in 2014. Investigations couldn't initially find the source of the problems and took 3 years of investigations to fully determine the problem and plan the necessary works, which included re-roofing the majority areas, installation of new rainwater goods and refurbishment of plaster work, timber and wall finishes in rooms affected. We wish them well in their submission. (SPAB = Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. See <https://www.spab.org.uk/about-us> for further details.)

General

29 There are currently 5 churches across the Synod, who are in process of planning or undertaking development, in order to ensure their buildings meet their current needs and support their mission to their communities. If you feel you would like to consider such work, please don't hesitate to contact me.

30 If you have any queries on matters relating to church properties, grounds and graveyards, please do not hesitate to contact me. I may not have all the answers immediately but I will endeavour to find an answer whatever the query.

SAFEGUARDING REFERENCE GROUP

Synod Safeguarding Advisor: Julie Rafferty

Remit of the committee

1 The committee meets on a quarterly basis and provides reassurance to Mersey and North Western Synods that safeguarding matters are dealt with in accordance with URC Safeguarding Policy. The committee acts as a confidential reference and supportive body to the safeguarding teams for the two Synods. The committee make recommendations in relation to safeguarding policies & procedure and training

Membership

2 Jacky Embrey (Mersey Synod Moderator), Brian Jolly (North Western Synod Clerk), Lorna Griffiths (Mersey Synod), Julie Rafferty (Synod Safeguarding Advisor), Leo Roberts (North Western Synod CYDO), Steven Mitchell (CYDO Mersey), Rev Tim Presswood (Baptist representative) Ros Ellison (minute taker)

Safeguarding Update

3 Following on from the October 2018 Synod Meeting, the next 12 months is dedicated to supporting churches to ensure that Safeguarding is imbedded in church life, that the culture is accepting and welcomes positive change. The Annual Safeguarding Return Form for 2019 has been sent out to all churches in the synod and the response to date has been encouraging and with the hope that the return rate will far exceed the 52% for 2018. The information contained within the return is naturally shared with Church House but helps the Synod Safeguarding Advisor to shape the need for Safeguarding activities within the synod, in particular:

Training:

a Intermediate Safeguarding Training dates have been advertised for the forthcoming months for Missional Partnership. These training sessions are for Church Safeguarding Coordinators, Ministers and Nationally Accredited/ Synod recognised lay preachers and can be booked via the synod office or the Synod Safeguarding Advisor.

The Synod is still seeking suitably qualified people who can deliver the Basic Awareness safeguarding training on a voluntary basis; the training is for

volunteers and church workers with little or no safeguarding responsibility, but who are regularly involved in church activities involving children or adults

Communication:

b The way in which safeguarding information is shared with churches is going to vary with the hope of capturing a wider audience and will include regular and different forms of communication. In addition to newsletters and emails, its hoped that a more interactive website will be developed, using social media effectively, with webinars and “bite size” pieces of advice. This will help to raise the profile and promote safeguarding more effectively across the synod.

Safer Recruitment:

c The Synod Safeguarding Advisor will be working with churches more closely to ensure that safer recruitment processes are imbedded when recruiting new volunteers and paid workers, to include not only a DBS check, but job descriptions, references, interviews, induction process and probationary period monitoring.

Policies & procedures:

d Churches are going to be supported to produce an annual Safeguarding policy which is robust and easy to understand so it can be embedded in all church activities, enabling church members to understand the content and how it affects them and others in the church.

The Synod accepts that churches are generally recognising their responsibilities to safeguarding in respect of children and adults, but appreciate they need greater support to ensure that their churches are fully compliant.

4 Churches are welcome to contact Julie Rafferty with safeguarding queries and concerns at safeguarding@nwsynod.org.uk or 07964-981262

KELD CONFERENCE CENTRE

keld.org.uk or go to facebook.com/keldresourcecentre

NW Synod representative: Lis Mullen

1 There is a small URC chapel in Keld (a tiny village in beautiful Swaledale on the Pennine Way and Coast to Coast Path) that is served by Northern Synod. Services are held there once each month.

2 Next to it is a well-appointed manse that is available for holiday accommodation or you could stay for free if you serve as Minister-in Residence during some holidays! (For details contact Rev Stephen Collinson revscollinson@outlook.com)

3 Next to the chapel is an old school that has been renovated to a high standard and its 'upper room' provides well equipped and comfortable small conference facilities. The ground floor is open to all visitors and is full of information and resources about the area and its history.

4 The project is supported by Northern and Yorkshire Synods and some others from the local churches and the dale. I serve on the Board of Trustees representing NW Synod and hope that folk from the NW will begin to make use of its facilities for retreats, small courses or centre for some good walking. It really isn't that far away - even though it is in Yorkshire! The local hotels can provide great accommodation nearby.

5 If you would like to consider a holiday, retreat or small gathering there, please contact me.

MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

Convenor: Martyn Coe

1 The committee has met once since the last meeting of synod.

The committee has received reports on those who are receiving training for ministry.

2 Across the synod, many acts of worship are led each week by lay leaders and our lay leaders deserve our thanks. Words of thanks alone are not enough, and we are seeking to find good ways to support all those who offer for recognised lay leadership.

3 In our last report, we encouraged Nationally Accredited Lay Preachers to find ways of utilising the £200 per year which is available from the National Church towards learning and development. This year we are pleased to be able to offer the same funding and with the same criteria to synod recognised lay preachers. This information was circulated to preachers in January. Members of Synod might wish to encourage preachers they know to take advantage of this funding which is available each year.

4 The work of the Mission and Discipleship Enablers is encouraging growing vision in our churches, and we hope and pray that this will allow the movement of the spirit to strengthen more people for service. Looking ahead, we believe that lay leadership needs more support and intend to find a way of offering it. Those who lead worship in our churches offer a wide variety of services from the traditional pattern on a Sunday morning through mid-week prayer and study to messy church and Taize services. The support, learning and development needed are wide and varied. The committee believes that more needs to be done to encourage leadership vocations across our churches. We are aiming to work alongside the mission and discipleship committee to explore ways of supporting those who are lay leaders and lay preachers. If we are to introduce *Stepwise* well and ensure that it is accessible to everyone who would like to use this form of learning we need to put the right support in place. We do not have a lay preaching commissioner and believe that this role needs to be expanded and filled so that areas and Partnerships have the encouragement and support they need. We wish to be able to offer support, development and training and will bring proposals to the autumn meeting of the synod.

5 Mission Council agreed to the creation of a new form of NSM ministry. NSM4 will be a locally focused style of ministry. Is there someone (some people) in your membership who might hear a call to this new style of ministry? While it might be late autumn before the national church is ready to assess the possibility of a vocation to NSM4, we can be praying and reflecting on how we might see such work opening up in each congregation.

CANDIDATE REPORT

Candidates Secretary: Lesley Husselbee

- 1 Two candidates have been accepted by the November 2018 Assessment Conference for training for Non-Stipendiary Ministry (subject to medical and financial checks): Margaret Dexter Brown (Union URC, Stockport), and Walt Johnson (Wilbraham St Ninian's URC, Chorlton)
2. One candidate has been commended by NW Synod to the March 2019 Assessment Conference
3. Two other candidates are due to begin candidating in 2019.

SYNOD PASTORAL COMMITTEE

Convenor: Marion Tugwood

- 1 Committee members: Rev Dr Marion Tugwood (Convenor), Rev Sarah Moore (Cumbria Area), Rev Nigel Adkinson (Central Area), Rev Dr Kirsty Thorpe (South Area), Mr Michael Pickles (Lancashire Area), Rev Brain Jolly (Synod Clerk)
- 2 The Committee has continued to focus on the development of Missional Partnerships across the Synod, acknowledging that the process has not been as swift as we might have wished. However, Steering Groups are being formed and in some places beginning to work well, this has resulted in some New Opportunities for Ministry appearing on the Vacancy lists.
- 3 The Area Pastoral committees work closely with local churches, and are appoint of communication from the local to the Synod Pastoral committee. The Synod Pastoral committee has been a support in certain of the situations outlined in the Area reports, and is a place where both difficult situations and joyful ones can be shared. Thanks are due to everyone who serves on Pastoral committees within the Synod. We give thanks for the particular contribution of Rev Dr Don Firth to the committee until his resignation due to ill-health. We wish Don a good recovery.
- 4 Although time is expended on those places where there are challenges to be met, it is good to hear of many churches across the Synod undertaking new initiatives or consolidating good work already begun.
- 5 The committee has facilitated reviews of CRCW and SCM ministries across the Synod. We are blessed to have these creative ministries in our part of the URC. We are blessed too, in our Mission Mentors, encouraging us to think about where God is calling the congregations of the Synod next, and equipping us with the skills we will need to take that journey.

CUMBRIA AREA PASTORAL COMMITTEE

Pastoral Convenor: Sarah Moore

People

1 The Rev Pam Noonan will retire from her non-stipendiary role in the South Lakes Group with a particular focus on Kendal URC on 31st July 2019. Pam is thanked for her leadership at Kendal through a time of significant change and transition.

2 The Rev Richard Teal will complete his ministry as Chair of the Cumbria Methodist District in July 2019 and return to circuit ministry in east Yorkshire. Richard is thanked for his role and leadership in the development of ecumenical relations in Cumbria and in the implementation of God for All.

3 The Rt Rev Dr Emma Ineson was consecrated a Bishop of the Church of England on 27th February 2019, and will be installed as Bishop of Penrith on 17th March 2019.

4 The Rev James Tebutt will begin his ministry as Chair of the Cumbria Methodist District on 1st September 2019.

5 Both Emma and James have the prayers and best wishes of the United Reformed Church as they commence new ministries working closely with us.

Appointments to be made at March Synod

6 Rev Martyn Coe to serve as a member of Cumbria Area Pastoral Committee for three years until March Synod meeting in 2022.

7 Ratify the decision of Synod Executive that Rev Nick Mark to serve as Cumbria Area Finance Officer until March Synod meeting 2020.

Missional Partnership

8 Cumbria Area Pastoral Committee proposes that it will function as both APC and Missional Partnership Steering Group for the churches in Cumbria. It has redrafted the Terms of Reference prepared by Synod Pastoral Committee to suit the particular circumstances of the county. The last APC meeting was not well

attended which further strengthens the recommendation that the same group of people function as both APC and MP Steering Group in the Cumbria Area.

Churches

9 The Sedbergh URC building closed on 31st December 2018 following the withdrawal of the URC from the Cornerstone Community Church LEP with the Methodist Church. The elders meeting of the former Sedbergh URC have requested that the money that their congregation would have received had the church remained open and their manse placed into the manse scheme along with a portion of the proceeds of sale of their property, be made available to the Western Dales Mission Community as a grant towards the cost of employing a Pioneer Minister. Cumbria APC is supportive of this request. An application for a Mission Grant has been prepared for presentation at the March SRC/Trust meeting pending the final decision of Cumbria APC at its April meeting.

Future Ministry

10 The Area President is convening meetings with the three Archdeacons covering the Diocese of Carlisle and the Superintendent ministers of the Cumbria Methodist Circuits to discuss how ministry might be effectively shared within and between Mission Communities in the future. APC notes that there are three 'known' movements of ministers in the Missional Partnership in the short and medium term future with the retirements of Nick Mark in 2020 and of Dave Harkison and Jennet McLeod in 2021.

God for All

11 Kerry Roughton has been appointed to serve as God for All Programme Management Officer. This post is funded by the Church of England. A process is currently underway to identify priorities for the next stage of the implementation of God for All.

12 The Reach and Cumbria Christian Learning teams are merging to form a new team, the name of which has not been agreed at the time of writing this report, but should be known in time for the synod meeting.

13 Mission Communities across the county are urged to engage in a development programme entitled 'Moving Forward'. This aims to build on work already done to enable closer work to be planned and carried out particularly in the areas of outreach.

14 The God for All Big Event takes place on Friday 1st March which is an opportunity for Mission Communities to send representation to a presentation and discussion about what is needed in terms of the next steps of implementing the strategy. URC folk are encouraged to get places for this via their Mission Community.

15 A new booklet is being produced to encourage Mission Communities and congregations in holding the God for All vision. These will be circulated from the event at Rheged onwards.

16 The county leaders - James Newcome, Sarah Moore, Richard Teal, Roger Batt, Emma Ineson, Paul Swarbrick - are taking part in a Lent Walk around the county to encourage Mission Communities in their development and work. This builds on the successful 'Moving Mountains' mission event in 2018.

GDPR

17 Both workshops led by the Synod Treasurer had to be postponed due the inclement weather. These will now take place on Monday 4th March at 2pm at Carver Uniting Church, Windermere, and on Thursday 14th March at Penrith URC. Please contact the Synod Office office@nwsynod.org.uk to reserve a place.

Safeguarding

18 The Safeguarding Officer led an introductory event at the end of 2018 for elders of churches in the current South Lakes Group. A similar event open to all elders and anyone else who wishes or needs to update their knowledge about safeguarding will take place on Tuesday 9th April at Penrith URC. The time of this event will be confirmed in the synod newsletter.

Churches Together in Cumbria

19 The Cumbria Theological Society organised a very successful conference 'Caring for Our Common Home' raising awareness about climate change, creation care, and other environmental issues on 2nd February. It is hoped that a further event will take place next year.

20 Local churches are encouraged to continue to consider their environmental impact. The CTiC Environment Group are particularly promoting toilet twinning and use of the 'Who Gives a Crap' environmentally friendly toilet paper initiatives.

LANCASHIRE AREA PASTORAL COMMITTEE

Pastoral Convenor: Michael Pickles

Area Pastoral Committee

1 The Area Pastoral Committee currently comprises:

Dr Michael Pickles (Convenor), Miss Margery Pitcher (Secretary), Mr Gordon Bell (Finance Officer), Rev Liz Jewitt (Ecumenical Officer), Mr Ken Snaith (Pastoral Review Co-ordinator), Mr Danny Wilson (Lay Preaching Commissioner), Mrs Lynn Lonsdale (Co-opted Member), Rev Michele Jarmany (Co-opted Member), Synod Officers *ex officio*.

Ministerial and Pastoral

2 We give thanks for the life of ministry of Rev Peter Blezard, who was ordained and inducted to the North East Lancashire District 1977 and served in the Darwen Group until his retirement in 2011, after which he remained in active service; and of Rev Leslie Ivory, whose first pastorate was in Chorley (1951 - 54).

3 Rev Dr Catherine Lewis-Smith is leaving the Darwen pastorate at the end of March after 3 years in pastoral charge. We wish her and Dwfrig God's blessings with her immediate plans and for longer term future possibilities.

4 Mal Breeze's post as CRCW in Blackburn has been extended for a further 5 year period.

5 The arrangements for contacts between the APC and churches has been reviewed and re-organised within partnerships. As before, the committee member contacts the Church Secretary prior to an APC meeting, through which the churches may raise issues or share good news stories to be brought to the meeting.

6 We now hold a current list of Lay Preachers and Retired Ministers within the area, with contact details and preaching availability.

7 A gathering of Retired Ministers was held in mid-November, with lunch, at which Rev Ruth Watson was the speaker.

8 During the past six months there have been Pastoral Visits to Marton, Blackburn – Revidge Fold, Trinity Brownhill, Westbury Gardens – and Fleetwood.

9 Two recently installed ministers – Rev Jane Wild, Methodist minister at Christ Church Longridge and Rev Susan Seed, Vicar at St Luke’s Hest Bank – are actively interested in being part of the Synod’s discipleship and partnership initiatives.

Missional Discipleship

10 Daleen ten Cate has led a number of training opportunities and has responded to individual church requests for particular sessions. A programme of activities for 2019 is now in place, and which began with an Area Retreat in early February at Trinity, Lower Darwen. A number of churches continue to develop new mission activities, especially around dementia and eco issues, open church and café style worship.

Missional Partnerships

11 An Event was held in each Missional Partnership in the autumn at which each church was invited to give a presentation on mission activities and vision, and which also offered an opportunity some ‘getting to know you’ time.

12 The convenors for the four Steering Groups are now in place:

North: Rev Lis Mullen
East: Rev Brian Jolly
South: Rev Dr Marion Tugwood
West: Rev Darren Holland

13 Rev Jim Williams is organising a walking pilgrimage around the churches of the West Partnership during Easter week. This will cover 40 miles, walking 4 hours each day followed by prayer, soup and butties at each church visited.

14 Jim is also leading a 12 week discussion for the West Partnership churches On Women in the Bible.

Church Life

- 15 The foodbank at **St Anne's-on-the-Sea** is now open.
- 16 The proposal to register for same-sex marriages at **Halton** has been Agreed by both Elders and Church Meetings and the application now submitted. The church has also recently welcomed a transgender person to their fellowship.
- 17 **Halton** is working with Leo Roberts to set up a youth group for those in the local area.
- 18 The **Lighthouse Community Church** held their first Messy Church in mid-December with over 60 people attending, including 19 new families, some of whom also joined the church service on Sunday. A second messy Church was held in January. In early December some members went into the community offering small boxes of chocolates to anyone walking past, which has also brought new people into the church on Sunday and congregations are slowly growing.
- 19 **Fleetwood** held a café style Christingle service with the Scouts.
- 20 Little Stars Child Care is now based in **Darwen Bolton Road**.
- 21 At **Darwen Central**, a short term contract has been agreed with a local teaching assistant to give support to children with learning difficulties and behaviour challenges in the Sunday School. It is intended that this may lead to the recruiting of a children's worker.
- 22 **Great Harwood** is looking at creating a wildlife garden and becoming an Eco church.
- 23 The new Head teacher at **Barrow School** took up her post at the beginning of January. The school visited Clitheroe URC before Christmas and Rev Michele Jarmany took a Christingle service at the school. A worship group including children has been set up.

24 **Christ Church Morecambe** held their final service on the day after the October Synod. A caretaker is in place for the site and weekday activities are continuing to the end of their contracts.

Property matters

25 **Chorley** has submitted proposals for developing their present site as The Hollinshead Centre.

26 We are mindful of all those who give freely of their time and talents to lead and support the ministry and outreach of the fellowships across the Area. We pray also that we are guided well and supported fully as we meet the challenges and rewards of making discipleship and partnership a reality in the life of our churches and our communities.

CENTRAL AREA PASTORAL COMMITTEE

Committee Convenor: Nigel Adkinson

Committee Membership:

1 Revs: Nigel Adkinson (Convenor) Mike Aspinall (Property Officer) Richard Bradley, (Ecumenical Officer) Ruth Wollaston, Marion Tugwood (Convenor of Synod Pastoral Committee) Darren Holland (Mission Mentor) Brian Jolly (Synod Clerk) Neil Carter (Finance Officer) Alison Dalton, (CRCW) Jed Garside, Wendy Smith (Secretary & Lay Preaching Commissioner)

2 **Bolton & Salford Partnership** is meeting under the convenorship of Christopher Whitehead. A Partnership Profile is due for completion soon. Commissioning of the partnership has been discussed along with the guidelines on the call of ministry.

3 **Oldham and Tameside Partnership & Bury Rochdale and North Manchester Partnership** – are yet to meet formally. Initial meetings will be convened by Marion Tugwood and Brian Jolly to enable the process to move along.

4 All three partnerships held a Day of Prayer initiated and coordinated by Darren Holland. This enabled people from the partnership churches to reflect on their faith journey and consider how the formation of Missional Partnerships can be embraced through the sharing of gifts and ministry.

5 Further Event Planning

- “Let’s Talk About Jesus.” Workshops are continuing on 30th March at St Andrew & St George Bolton and 6th April at Hope Denton. These are designed to help equip people to share their faith stories with others. These were held in Bury as well during February.
- Sacrament Workshop to be held in Bolton – date yet to be identified
- The possibility of an Alpha Course is being explored.
- A day course on Whole Life Discipleship is to be arranged.

Please speak to Darren Holland regarding any of the above events.

People and Local Church Situations

6 Rev Stuart Nixon / Media City

Stuart will be leaving Oasis/Media City in June to take up an SCM post in Birchwood Warrington in Mersey Synod. Processes to review this SCM ministry and make plans for the future, has been communicated to our Oasis partners by the Synod Clerk.

7 We express our grateful thanks to Stuart for the ministry he has exercised and encouraged during his time at Media City. This has been a real blessing and we pray for its continuing development. We also offer our prayers for Stuart and his family as they move to take up ministry in Mersey Synod in the summer.

Evaluation of the Building Bridges Project at Tonge Moor

8 The evaluation of this project is being undertaken by Caroline Platt an Independent Consultant. Caroline is currently liaising with the Project Committee regarding taking this forward. Hopefully the evaluation will enable the church at Tonge Moor to consider what areas of work they may feel able to commit to taking forward at the conclusion of the project and Alison Dalton's CRCW ministry there. Please hold the community of Tonge Moor the Project Committee and Alison's ministry in your prayers at this time of evaluation and change.

Shaw and Heyside URC & St Paul's Methodist Church

9 Both churches are working towards the creation of an LEP. Just prior to Christmas, St Paul's building was deemed unsafe and they have moved their worship to the Shaw and Heyside building. Richard Bradley is working with the churches on "interim" arrangements that can be put in place, to manage this "crisis" situation, so neither church feels forced into an LEP more quickly than is right for them.

Trinity Cheetham Hill

10 A meeting is to be held with the Anglican Church to clarify their policy in respect of investing financially in buildings they do not own or part own. Clarification of this will hopefully enable us to make decisions regarding the building in light of the Quinquennial Survey recommendations, and inform the longer term missional opportunities available at Trinity and in the Cheetham Hill area. Richard Bradley and Darren Holland have offered input to the ecumenical and mission discussions alongside Ruth Wollaston.

This is a complex situation but one where mission opportunities continue to present themselves for ongoing exploration.

Macedonia

11 A Mission Project Management Group has been identified and is due to meet shortly. The membership is Sheila Coop, Judith Haughton, Wendy Smith, Darren Holland and John Piper. The Synod Clerk continues to oversee this on behalf of Synod. Towns Needham (Solicitors) have been instructed to complete the sale of the old church. A Final Practical Completion Certificate has not yet been received.

Stand URC

12 An offer has been made to purchase the building. This has been discussed by Synod Resources Committee who has recommended the church seriously consider this offer. A Church Meeting is to be held in early March. The Community Group who nominated the building as an Asset of Community Value are no longer proceeding with their bid.

Radcliffe & Stand URC

13 Both churches have passed resolutions to unite. Area representatives are meeting with both Elderships and may hold joint Eldership discussions, before bringing a recommendation to Synod Executive, hopefully at the end of May.

Wharton & Cleggs Lane

14 With the receipt of tenders coming in much higher than expected for this project, time has been spent reducing costs, whilst maintaining the integrity of intent to use the space for church and community use.

The church leaders have signed the building contract to enable the work to start and protect the grants. The Sharing Agreement is still in the process of being completed. The matter has now been fully discussed by Synod Resources Committee. It is hoped there are no further delays.

Thank You

15 My thanks as always to the hard work and commitment given by members of APC to the work of the committee and the additional help we receive from others, to enable our work to progress

SOUTH AREA PASTORAL COMMITTEE

Pastoral Convenor: Kirsty Thorpe

1 South Area Pastoral Committee meets six times a year, with a large agenda covering Missional Discipleship, Missional Partnerships, church buildings, their finances and ecumenical relationships. We stand midway between the concerns and activities of local churches and the work of Synod officers and structures. We see our main role as trying to link up conversations and sort out problems raised with us by Elders' meetings so that growth and new life can happen

2 People are often unclear where to go for advice on synod procedures or how to contact one another. SAPC is there to try and help. The better we communicate with one another, at all stages and levels of church life, the more likely it is that we will find a good outcome.

3 SAPC's next meetings for 2019 will be held at Gatley URC at 9.30am on Tuesday May 7th, Monday July 8th, Monday September 9th and Monday November 11th.

Membership

4 SAPC now says farewell and records its warm thanks for the service of Eddie Allman, Philip Jones and Brian Woodhall, whose respective work on Lay Preaching, as Secretary and covering Finance has been very valuable. Subject to Synod's agreement we welcome into membership Hilary Grierson (Sale), Gina Gibson (Gatley) and Mike Walsh (SCM minister) on his return from sick leave. We are glad that Paul Frampton, Alison Termie and Christopher Whitehead are willing and able to serve a second three-year term on SAPC. There is still room for more people with commitment and goodwill. Please contact me if you would like to find out about our work. None of us is an expert and we are all learning. The committee is very grateful for the support of the Synod office, especially Mike Hart and Mike Aspinall.

Missional Partnerships

5 Dave Fraser, Mission Mentor for South Area, continues the task of getting all three Missional Partnerships in South Area off the ground. Manchester South (eight churches) has been on the national vacancy list seeking two ministers since September 2018. East Cheshire and Derbyshire border (nine churches) are progressing towards setting up a Steering Group. Representatives of the 16 churches in Greater Manchester South and Cheshire are now meeting monthly. These churches are writing their profiles and identifying what they want from an ordained minister in anticipation of vacancies arising later this year.

Missional Discipleship

6 Dave Fraser is running a year-long programme of worship workshops, retreat and reflection days, action/reflection sessions for small groups and a Pentecost Day celebration on Saturday June 8th. He will also run a Jesus shaped people course in June. All of this is supplemented by monthly online resources to support those planning and leading worship.

7 Other news:

- Discussions are taking place with the Methodist Church and Church of England about the future involvement of the URC in Church of the Epiphany, due to the small URC presence.
- Consultation continues with Heaton Moor United Church about financial support to refurbish a church for a new Methodist congregation in their Circuit.
- Chorlton Central is addressing some building issues raised by its recent quinquennial.
- Altrincham is progressing with the sale of church halls and work to adapt its church and provide a new kitchen.
- Brian Acty retires soon from his ministry at Ashton on Mersey and Sale.
- Alan Poolton will retire from Bramhall and Cheadle Hulme this summer.

The Church is on the corner of St George's Rd and Knowsley St.

Suggested (FREE) Car Park NCP Topp Way **BL1 2DJ** (entrance is on Due St, accessed from the East by Topp Way and from the West by St George's Rd). Pedestrian exit is onto Bath St, cross St George's Rd and walk right to enter the church at the red doors. **Blue badge holders** can park outside the church but please contact the synod office by 14 March if you require a space.

By car

From the South & East Leave M60 at J15 and join A666 (St Peter's Way). After 3 miles turn left at the lights onto A673 (Topp Way). Cross the next junction and pedestrian crossing, and then take the slip road to NCP car park.

From the North & West Leave M61 at Junction 6 towards Bolton/Horwich. Turn right at roundabout onto A673 (Chorley New Road). After 3 miles turn right onto St George's Rd, move into the outside lane (inside lane, tight left will take you onto Topp Way). At the lights go straight onto St George's Rd and left at the next lights will take you to NCP car park.

By bus or train Exit onto Newport Street and walk straight, through Victoria Square in the town centre. You will pass the statue of Fred Dibnah. Continue straight along Knowsley St to a T junction and the church is on the corner on the left.