

1. Constitution of Synod and opening worship

The Rev'd Andrew Mills, synod moderator, welcomed members of the synod meeting, especially those attending for the first time. He constituted the meeting, and invited Rev'd Richard Bradley, minister of Bamford Chapel and Norden United Reformed Church, and Rev'd Dr Kirsty Thorpe to lead the synod meeting in worship.

Opening worship included song, prayer and biblical reflection, together with

- a welcome to Rev'd Dave Fraser and Rev'd Darren Holland, the synod's 2 new mission & discipleship mentors;
- details of the movement of ministers:
Rev'd Peter Sharp had been called and inducted to Hoole and Meols, Chester;
Rev'd Philip Brookes, minister at Christ Church, Little Lever, and Wharton and Cleggs Lane, Little Hulton, had been nominated to serve as the United Reformed Church's Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations - the moderator greeted Philip on behalf of the synod meeting;
- details of ministers who will retire before the next synod meeting in October: Rev'd Norman Vivian, Rev'd Danny Cheyne, Rev'd David Phillips, Rev'd Ann Hufton and Rev'd Andrew Lonsdale - Andrew was present and the moderator greeted him on behalf of the synod meeting;
- the presentation to Rev'd Nigel Adkinson of his EM2 certificate;
- the recognition of jubilee ministers:
Rev'd Brian Bailey and Rev'd Alan Coles celebrating the 60th anniversary of their ordination; Rev'd Geoff Tolley celebrating the 50th anniversary of his ordination - Geoff was present and the moderator greeted him on behalf of the synod meeting;
- remembrance of and thanksgiving for ministers residing in the synod who had died since the last synod meeting: Rev'd John Harold Fuller, Rev'd Eileen Mary Sambrooks, Rev'd David Robertson and Rev'd Graham John Knights.

2. Presentation of booklet *Missional Discipleship – what is it?*

Lawrence Moore introduced the booklet.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, Rev'd Brian Jolly, synod clerk, moved:

Resolution 1

Synod welcomes the booklet *Missional Discipleship - what is it?*, thanks Lawrence Moore for writing it, and commends it to local churches for discussion and feedback.

Resolution 1 was passed with one vote against.
(There were no abstentions.)

3. Presentation of the booklet *Missional Discipleship - a Synod Strategy*

The moderator explained that the meeting would be introduced to each of the 3 papers in the booklet *Missional Discipleship - a Synod Strategy*. After each introduction there would be opportunity for questions from the floor, which would be followed by small group discussion.

Paper 1 Missional discipleship: a Synod Strategy (pages 3-8 of the booklet)

Rev'd Sarah Moore introduced Paper 1 on behalf of the Executive Committee.

Following several questions, small group discussion followed.

Paper 2 Missional Partnerships: a new way for local churches, using all their gifts and ministries, to work together in God's mission (pages 9-12 of the booklet)

Sarah Moore introduced Paper 2 on behalf of the Executive Committee.

Charles Robinson asked if thought been given to how LEPs fit with missional partnerships. Sarah Moore responded, saying that initial thought had been given to this matter; it was important to note that all LEPs are different and will require individual consideration.

Barbara Redmond commented that it would have been good if young people were involved in these discussions. The moderator responded, noting that young people had been invited to this synod meeting but none had responded, and that further thought would need to be given to this by local churches and the Executive Committee.

Small group discussion followed.

Paper 3 Deployment: A policy concerning the deployment of stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacraments (pages 13-22 of the booklet)

Sarah Moore introduced Paper 3 on behalf of the Executive Committee.

Questions and comments included:

Martyn Coe noted that the Anglican Diocese of Carlisle was seeking a hundred new non-stipendiary ministers, and reflected that we may have something to learn from them.

Andy Guthrie asked if any role remained for the church meeting in calling ministers in missional partnerships. Sarah Moore responded, saying that the role of the church meeting in the call process would be retained.

Margaret Tait asked if it was envisaged that a Missional Partnership could be in vacancy, how many local churches would come together to form a missional partnership, and how LEPs would be affected. Sarah Moore said that Missional Partnerships would inevitably sometimes be in vacancy, that the number of churches coming together to form a Missional Partnership would be a matter of consultation between local churches, their Area Pastoral Committee and the Synod Pastoral Committee, as would how LEPs would be affected.

Bernie Stevens asked about the role of local leaders in Missional Partnerships. It was noted that Paper 3 is specifically about the deployment of stipendiary ministers, but that this is not to disregard other ministries, as the Missional Partnership strategy paper makes clear.

Small group discussion followed.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

These were agreed as a correct record.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

5. Celebration of the centenary of the Ordination of Constance Coltman

Kirsty Thorpe led the synod meeting in an introduction to the life of Constance Coltman, after which the film, *Constance*, was shown. It was noted that the film was available for use in local churches and provided good opportunity for discussion on many current issues.

6. Resolutions arising from the booklet: Missional Discipleship - a Synod Strategy

The moderator explained that the meeting would have opportunity to debate Paper 1 & Resolution 2, Paper 2 & Resolution 3, and Paper 3 & Resolution 4. Sarah Moore would introduce and move the resolutions on behalf of the Executive Committee and respond to questions and debate.

Paper 1 Missional discipleship: a Synod Strategy (pages 3-8 of the booklet)

Sarah Moore introduced and proposed:

Resolution 2

Synod welcomes the policy paper Missional discipleship: a Synod Strategy, and adopts it as the framework within which all future synod policy will be developed.

Questions and comments in the debate included:

Mal Breeze welcomed the paper but wondered if it would conflict with *Walking the Way* when it was introduced by the central church. Sarah Moore responded, saying that it was difficult to answer this question since no-one seemed to know very much about the content of *Walking the Way*; it was very much hoped that the Missional Discipleship strategy being proposed for this synod would complement it.

Simon Baker said he believed this was a great strategy with great ideas. It was clear to him that it would demand changes in every local church. He wondered how the 2 other policy papers would support the development of the lives of local churches. In response, Sarah Moore noted that part of the role of the new mission & discipleship mentors is to assist local churches in their development in these areas.

Kirsty Thorpe said that she had been a minister in Mersey Synod when Clusters were introduced. They became another layer of decision making which took away much energy from the local churches and the synod. She hoped that this strategy would not repeat this mistake, and that there would be real discussion in the churches. Sarah Moore responded, agreeing that it would be very important to avoid the difficulties faced in Mersey Synod, and provide proper opportunity for consultation.

Carole Marsden commented on some of the language used in the paper and asked for an acknowledgement that our churches have been largely faithful and that what has been tried without success should not be criticised as failure. Sarah Moore noted and agreed with these points.

Resolution 2 was passed with no votes against.

(There were 5 abstentions.)

Paper 2 Missional Partnerships: a new way for local churches, using all their gifts and ministries, to work together in God's mission (pages 9-12 of the booklet)

Sarah Moore introduced and proposed:

Resolution 3

Synod welcomes the policy paper Missional Partnerships: a new way for local churches, using all their gifts and ministries, to work together in God's mission, and approves the formation of Missional Partnerships to maximise our effectiveness as agents of God's mission.

Questions and comments in the debate included:

Mike Aspinall suggested that community demographics are missing from this paper, and that local churches in a Missional Partnership should not necessarily need to be geographically adjacent.

Ken Snaith noted that there was nothing in the paper concerning the training of lay people.

Stuart Nixon asked if a consequence of the synod meeting adopting resolution 3 would be ministers will be placed by the synod and may have to move within the synod under direction. The moderator stated that the synod has no ability to force ministers to move.

Alison Termie asked if other synods were dealing with these issues. The moderator confirmed that this was the case. He also noted that this synod is currently under deployed because of retirements whereas some others are slightly over deployed, but that this would even out over the next few years.

Steve Woods considered this resolution to be a step too far at the moment, and that further time should be devoted to the strategy adopted in resolution 2.

Sheila Coop was concerned that Missional Partnerships would become another layer of church hierarchy.

Mal Breeze moved an amendment to the resolution, to delete 'formation' and insert 'exploration'. This was seconded by Bernie Stevens. The clerk explained that Missional Partnership would be formed by the Synod Pastoral Committee only following consultation and agreement with local churches, ministers and area pastoral committees; Missional Partnerships would not be imposed, although they would be the means by which local churches received stipendiary (and other) ministry. Following the clerk's statement Mal Breeze requested the permission of the synod to withdraw the amendment, and this was agreed.

The moderator led the synod meeting in prayer.

Resolution 3 was passed with 5 votes against.

(There were 7 abstentions.)

Paper 3 Deployment: A policy concerning the deployment of stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacraments (pages 13-22 of the booklet)

Sarah Moore introduced and proposed:

Resolution 4

Synod welcomes the policy paper Deployment: A policy concerning the deployment of stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacraments, and adopts it as the basis for the deployment of stipendiary ministers.

Questions and comments in the debate included:

Kirsty Thorpe expressed concern about the role of the church meeting in the call process.

Mike Aspinall asked if there will be a role for interim moderators to assist Missional Partnerships in vacancy and, if so, whether training would be provided. Sarah Moore confirmed that such arrangements would stand.

In response to a question from Judith Haughton, the moderator confirmed that some figures in this paper were already out of date, following recent retirements.

Carol Sutcliffe spoke in favour of team ministry as envisaged in Missional Partnerships, and emphasised the importance of doing everything possible to free ministers from work which could easily be undertaken by others in order to use their specific gifts to greatest advantage.

The moderator responded to a specific question from Mark Bates concerning the declaration of vacancies and how ordinands in their final year will fit into the process as Missional Partnerships are formed.

Catherine Lewis Smith asked whether any changes to the deployment markers by the synod pastoral committee will be reported to the synod meeting, and it was confirmed that this would be the case.

Resolution 4 was passed with 2 votes against.

(There were 6 abstentions.)

7. Reports & resolutions

7a. Executive Committee

The clerk presented the report of the Executive Committee. This was received by the synod meeting.

Resolutions arising from the report of the Executive Committee

The Windermere Centre

With the permission of the synod meeting the clerk presented **Resolution 5** (ref Supplementary Paper W).

The clerk moved:

Resolution 5A

The North Western Synod expresses its deep concern to Mission Council about the process by which the future of the Windermere Centre has been and is being considered. The Synod fears that if these shortcomings are not addressed they could cause significant harm to the peace and unity of the United Reformed Church. In particular:

- i) **At the meeting of Mission Council in October 2016, members were presented with a paper concerning the future of the Windermere Centre. They had no notice of this paper. It had been prepared in haste and lacked vital information. There had been no opportunity for proper consultation. Members were put under considerable pressure to make a quick decision, when such an issue deserved careful and reasoned consideration.**
- ii) **Our representatives at that meeting of Mission Council thought that no decision was taken there and that the matter was deferred to the next meeting. Some of the announcements and actions after that meeting suggested that the decision to close the Centre had been taken in principle. This affected the Centre staff personally and affected their ability to generate business.**
- iii) **The consultation process requested by Mission Council in October, constrained by the deadline of the next meeting of Mission Council, has not engaged properly with those beyond the two Assembly committees and the Windermere Management Committee. The timetable has not allowed other interested parties to properly consider the matter or engage with this process. For example, the consultation with the North Western Synod, requested by Mission Council, has been inadequate; and there has been no formal consultation with other synods.**

Following debate and responses by the clerk,
Resolution 5A was passed with 0 votes against.
(There were 2 abstentions.)

The clerk moved:

Resolution 5B

The North Western Synod urges Mission Council to allow a period of, say, two years during which two different reviews should be carried out:

- i) **a strategy for lay training and development across the denomination should be prepared, with wide consultation, aiming at equality of access for all and taking account of existing resources and provision in Synods and in the central URC; and**
- ii) **the ability of the Windermere Centre to generate commercial bed and breakfast business alongside its work as a Resource Centre for Learning should be properly explored.**

There should be no change in the status of the Windermere Centre during this period.

Following debate and responses by the clerk,
Resolution 5B was passed with 0 votes against.
(There was 1 abstention.)

The clerk moved:

Resolution 5C

The North Western Synod recognises that the financial situation at the Windermere Centre is putting significant strain on the central URC budget. The Synod therefore offers to contribute up to £100,000 per year up to a maximum of £250,000, to share some of this financial strain during this review period.

Following debate and responses by the clerk,
Resolution 5C was passed with 2 votes against.
(There were 2 abstentions.)

The clerk moved:

Resolution 5D

The North Western Synod authorises its Moderator, Clerk and Treasurer to continue working with Assembly officers and colleagues from Mersey Synod on this matter, and to frame such resolution(s) as they think fit for the meeting of Mission Council in May 2017, taking account of the views expressed by Synod at its meeting on 25th March 2017.

Following debate and responses by the clerk,
Resolution 5D was passed with 0 votes against.
(There was 1 abstention.)

Appointments

The clerk moved **Resolutions 6-10**; and, with the permission of the synod meeting, **Resolution X** (ref Supplementary Paper T). The synod meeting was in agreement that these resolutions should be taken en-bloc.

Resolution 6

Synod expresses thanks to Angela Bogg (South APC), Ken Greer (Central APC), Dave Coaker (Lancashire APC), Lesley Husselbee (L&M Committee) and Brian Jolly (Pastoral Committee) for their leadership and commitment as committee convenors, as their terms of service conclude at this synod meeting.

Resolution 7

Synod appoints Marion Tugwood as convenor of the pastoral committee until the conclusion of the synod meeting in March 2020.

Resolution 8

Synod appoints Nigel Adkinson as convenor of Central Area Pastoral Committee until the conclusion of the synod meeting in March 2020.

Resolution 9

Synod appoints Kirsty Thorpe as convenor of South Area Pastoral Committee until the conclusion of the synod meeting in March 2020.

Resolution 10

Synod appoints Nigel Adkinson to serve as a member of Mission Council until the conclusion of the synod meeting in March 2020.

Resolution X

Synod expresses its thanks to John Piper for his long service as synod treasurer, and his agreement to serve for a further one-year term, and re-appoints him as synod treasurer until the conclusion of the synod meeting in March 2018.

Resolutions 6-10 and X were passed with 0 votes against.

(There were no abstentions.)

The moderator presented gifts on behalf of the synod meeting to those named in Resolution 6.

7b. Trust/Resources Committee

Jean Mullineux presented the report of the Trust & Resources Committee, which was received by the synod meeting, and moved:

Resolution 11

Synod gives thanks for the sacrificial giving in its local churches that led to a total contribution from this synod to the URC Ministry and Mission Fund in 2016 of £1,905k.

Resolution 11 was passed with 0 votes against.

(There were no abstentions.)

The moderator asked Mrs Mullineux to address the synod meeting about local church trusteeship matters.

Mrs Mullineux referred to a letter she had sent by email to all churches, paper copies of which were in the synod bags, and asked local church representatives to ensure that proper and timely attention is given to the matters raised in the letter.

7c. Other reports

With the permission of the synod meeting the reports of the **Learning & Ministries Committee**, the **Synod Pastoral Committee** and the **Area Pastoral Committees** were presented en-bloc, and received by the synod meeting.

Opportunity was given for questions to be asked or matters raised arising from these reports, but none were forthcoming.

The clerk moved:

Resolution 12
Synod appoints Carole Marsden as a member of
Cumbria Area Pastoral Committee until the conclusion
of the synod meeting in March 2020.

and

Resolution 13
Synod appoints Nick Mark to serve as Cumbria Area
Ecumenical Officer until the conclusion of the synod
meeting in 2020.

Resolutions 12 and 13 were passed with 0 votes against.
(There were no abstentions.)

8. Closing Worship

This was led by Marion Tugwood and Nigel Adkinson.

Appendix

ATTENDANCE AT THE SYNOD MEETING ON 25 March 2017 and apologies

Registered as present: Moderator and 110 voting members + 20 associate members/observers.

They were:

Voting members of Synod:

32 Serving Ministers/CRCW

Rev'ds: B Acty, N Adkinson, M Bates, R Borg, R Bradley, M Breeze, P Brooks, M Coe, S Coop, A Dalton, A Haigh, D Ireland, M Jarmany, E Jewitt, B Jolly, L Kam, C Lewis-Smith, A Lonsdale, N Mark, C Marsden, S Moore, S Nixon, P Noonan, A Scott, G Tarn, A Termie, K Thorpe, M Tugwood, M Walsh, R Watson, J Williams, R Wilson

71 Local Church representatives

Miss J Ashworth, Mr S Baker, Mrs A Bogg, Mrs O Bradley, Mr S Bromley, Mr M Brueck, Mrs P Carpenter, Mr N Carter, Mrs P Clark, Mr A Clark, Mrs P Dent, Mrs D Dunlop, Mr A Dunsmore, Mr B Edisbury, Mr D Estill, Mrs R Finlinson, Miss D Fitzpatrick, Mrs E Fletcher, Mrs P Goodridge, Mrs K Grand, Mrs S Green, Mr A Guthrie, Mrs A Haigh, Mrs A Halstead, Miss J Houghton, Mrs M Heywood, Mr M Hincliffe, Mrs J Holden, Mrs G Hunt, Mrs S Jesson, Mr G Jones, Mrs B Jones, Mrs J Jones, Ms M Jones, Mr G Kynaston, Mrs K Lacy, Mrs B Laird, Mrs S Lawson, Mrs J Liddell, Mrs C Lomax, Mrs L Lucy, Mr G McCrone, Mrs H Mellor, Mr P Melvin, Mr P Mullineux, Mr G Murrin, Mrs J Myers, Mrs A Ollerenshaw, Miss M Prescott, Mrs H Price, Mrs H Rawcliffe, Mr G Robinson, Mrs B Ross, Mrs L Saunders, Mrs A Scott, Mr G Shaw, Ms R Shepherd, Mr J Skipworth, Mrs W Smith, Mr K Snaith, Mrs M Southern, Mr B Stevens, Rev'd M Tait, Mrs H Twigg, Mr J Walmsley, Mrs J Ward, Mr S Wareing, Mr K Whiting, Mrs D Wilson, Mr S Wood, Mr E Wrennall.

18 Observers:

Mrs M Abel, Mrs M Aspinall, , Mr S Carpenter, Ms R Cronshaw, Ms L Cruickshank, Mr J Garside, Mr J Hill, Mrs K Hunt, Mrs N Jones, Mr A Jones, Mrs K Lonsdale, Mrs K Myers, Mr G Ollerenshaw, Dr M Pickles, Mrs P Rea, Miss S Salmon, Rev'd M Smith, Mrs A Stevens

2 Associate members:

Rev'ds: P Frampton, G Tolley

7 Co-opted members

Mrs R Clarke, Mr K Greer, Rev'd L Husselbee, Mrs J Mullineux, Mr J Rea, Mrs C Sutcliffe, Mrs M Pitcher,

3 Students

Mrs C Atkinson, Ms L Battle, Mrs D ten Cate

Staff

Mr T Rutherford, Mrs H Wall

Rev'ds: Tim Mountain, Dave Fraser, Darren Holland

Apologies

15 Serving ministers/CRCWs:

Rev'ds D Cheyne, D Coaker, L Cottam, K Gray, A Hall, D Harkison, A Hufton, M Pengelly Phillips, J Piper, R Selby, A Smeaton, L Talbot, R Jackson, A Barnes, M Whiffen

9 Associate members:

Rev'ds K Argyle, P Brewerton, D Firth, F Houston, N Lemon, J Martin, L Mullen, A Stokes, A Trinder

1 Out of charge: Rev'd E Sheppard

Local Church representatives:

Mrs J Adams, Mrs B Baird, Mrs J Baker, Mrs H Byrom, Mr J Davies, Mrs H Everard, Mr I Lloyd, Mrs M Manvell, Mrs J Martin, Mrs S Mason, Mrs M Piper, Mrs M Settle, Miss A Stevenson, Mrs L Tonge, Mr D Williams, Mrs D Young

2 Co-opted:

Miss G Bowen, Dr B Woodhall

2 Students:

Mr Braunston, Mr Mudharara