



**Book of Reports for the Spring Synod
Meeting on Saturday 17th April 2021**

Dear Friends

Although restrictions are lifting, and hopes are rising, our Spring Synod is still having to be conducted as an online 'virtual' meeting: this means that we miss the chance to 'catch up' and meet others across the Synod in the way that was possible when we met in person. Nevertheless, I hope that it is a positive, productive and uplifting meeting where the life and future of our Synod can be prayerfully and thoughtfully considered, and where decisions which reflect our collective mission of bringing God's kingdom can be made.

I am very grateful to Rev Clare Downing, Moderator of Wessex Synod and one of the General Assembly Moderators, has agreed to chair our Synod Meeting at the request of Synod Executive during Brian Jolly's absence. Equally, thanks go to Rev Dr John Bradbury who will lead our opening and closing worship for our Meeting. In these challenging times, it has been good to have the support and help of the wider church.

During our Closing Worship, we are very pleased to be able to include the ordination of Rev Ruth Watson to her new SCM post at Oasis in Salford.

We are immensely proud of the fact that North Western Synod has become an 'Eco Synod' with special thanks to our Green Apostles for their work in achieving that; and congratulations to the local churches which have achieved Eco status too.

Although we are absent our own Moderator for the time being, the work of and within Synod continues; some of the work on restructuring the committees and councils of the church has temporarily paused, but work in supporting, encouraging and enabling local churches as they emerge from lockdown is a clear and important priority and it is hoped that some useful and productive discussions can take place during our Synod Meeting to look at how best we can do that.

Many of us find 'Zoom' meetings tiring and sometimes quite hard, but I nevertheless hope that you feel able to play a part in our Meeting. I hope that you are able to prayerfully consider the papers within the Book of Reports, and the proposals and ideas within them for the support of ministry and mission within our local churches.

I look forward to seeing you, albeit 'virtually' on Saturday 17th April 2021

With every good wish

Tim Hopley
Synod Clerk

Important Information

- Apologies** **Even though we are virtual this year, could you please send apologies to Synod office if you are not able to attend the meeting on the 17th April 2021. These should be sent to office@nwsynod.org.uk or telephone 0161 769 1122**
- Voting card** As we are not meeting in person, we will invite Voting Members of Synod to amend your screenname to include a 'V' (Voting) or 'NV' (Non Voting) in front of your name. We will explain this further at the practice session on Monday 12th April and on the morning of the 17th April 2021
- Practice Session** There will be a Zoom practice session on Monday 12th April 2021 between 6 – 7pm. It is recommended that you attend this meeting, even if you are very familiar with Zoom. We will be going through the features that we will be using at Synod. It will help you familiarize yourself with where everything is, and what to expect at the meeting.
- The Zoom link for this meeting is the same as the link for the Synod Meeting on Saturday 17th April, but is also reproduced below.
- Bookshop** In normal times, we would have some URC and other material available to purchase. Unfortunately, this year that will not be possible. We would therefore ask you to order directly from the URC Bookshop at Church House in London. You can order online at <https://urcshop.co.uk/> or telephone on 020 7916 8629.

Zoom link for Practice Session on Monday 12th April and for the
Synod Meeting on 17th April 2021:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83324252521?pwd=T0RWeFdRMk1nSU
FTcURQNFBWNIZxdz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83324252521?pwd=T0RWeFdRMk1nSUFTcURQNFBWNIZxdz09)

Meeting ID: 833 2425 2521

Passcode: 463528

Agenda

- 9.30am “Doors open”
- 10am Welcome
- Constitution of the meeting and appointment of Chair
- Opening worship led by Rev Dr John Bradbury, General Secretary of the URC
- Ministerial Movements and Deaths
- Introduction of Reports
- 11.15am Rev John Plant speaking on behalf of Christian Aid, followed by discussion
- 11.45 Break
- 12 noon ‘Renewed Beginnings’
- 12.30 Lunch break
- 1.30 ‘Renewed Beginnings’
- Resolution from Macclesfield URC
- 2.30 Closing worship, including the Induction of Rev Ruth Watson to Oasis

Zoom link for our Synod Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83324252521?pwd=T0RWeFdRMk1nSUFTcURQNFBWNIZxdz09>

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**North Western Synod of the United Reformed Church
Minutes of the Synod Meetings held, virtually, on the 10th
October and 14th November 2020**

Saturday 10th October 2020

Constitution of the Synod Meeting and opening worship.

- 1 Rev Brian Jolly, Moderator of the North Western Synod, welcomed members of the Synod Meeting. He constituted the meeting.
- 2 Worship was led by two new Ministers to the North Western Synod, Rev Daniel Harris and Rev Janet Calderley.
- 3 At the conclusion of worship, the following ministers were recognised who, since the Synod Meeting in October 2019:

- Rev Annette Haigh has moved to the Yorkshire Synod
- Rev Mark Bates has moved to Mersey Synod
- Rev Becca Gilbert has been welcomed into her role as Western Dales Pioneer Minister, Cumbria
- Rev Janet Calderley has been welcomed into ministry within the Lancashire West Missional Partnership
- Rev Daniel Harris has been welcomed and ordained into ministry within the Rochdale, Bury and North Manchester Missional Partnership
- Rev Lee Battle has been welcomed and ordained into ministry within the Manchester South Missional Partnership
- Rev Jacky Embrey has been welcomed into ministry within the Bolton and Salford Missional Partnership

The meeting also remembered the following ministers who had died since the Synod Meeting in October 2019:

- Rev Jack (John) Edward Thompson
- Rev Dr Stanley Russell

- Rev Donald Whitehead
- Rev Cecil Stuart Ross
- Rev Brian Hudson Bailey
- And Mrs Carole Sutcliffe

Good News Stories

- 4 Synod Meeting watched a presentation of the Youth Eco Day which had taken place at Elswick URC
- 5 Rev Ruth Watson introduced a presentation of the YourChurch online project
- 6 Synod Meeting heard from Rev Martyn Coe who brought a presentation showing the redevelopment of Kendal URC, and introduced Rev Becca Gilbert the new Western Dales Pioneer Minister
- 7 Rev Dave Fraser brought news from the South Area of Synod of their activities at Marple Bridge, Altrincham, Wilmslow and many other churches within that area
- 8 The Synod meeting expressed its thanks for these presentations.
- 9 The Book of Reports was then introduced by the Moderator, and information about the online 'Q&A' sessions which were due to take place over the next four weeks was shared.

Synod Review Update

- 10 Mike Hart (Synod Treasurer) but speaking in his capacity as former Interim Synod Clerk, presented the written report regarding the Synod Review. He acknowledged the input which had been gratefully received from Mel Campbell
- 11 Whilst this was only the initial part of the work of the Synod Review, the need to focus on the needs and challenges facing local churches was central to this work

Pastoral Committee Report

- 12 Rev Dr Marion Tugwood, Convenor of the Synod Pastoral Committee, presented the written report within the Book of Reports. Thanks were expressed to all who serve on the various Pastoral committees within the Synod.

Finance Report

- 13 Mike Hart, in his role as Synod Treasurer, presented the written Finance report, focusing particularly on the need to offer support needed by local churches arising from the Covid crisis.
- 14 The Moderator reminded the meeting about the Q&A meetings over the next few weeks, and that the Synod meeting will reconvene, online, on the 14th November 2020 at 10am.
- 15 The Moderator then adjourned the meeting, closing this part of the Synod meeting with the Grace.

Six Q&A sessions took place on the 14th, 15th and 19th October, and 2nd, 4th and 6th November during which the Synod Review, Pastoral Committee and Finance Reports were all considered.

Saturday 14th November 2020

- 16 Rev Brian Jolly, the Moderator, welcomed members of the Synod to the second part of the Autumn Synod meeting, and constituted the meeting. He then led the meeting in opening worship.

Synod Review Report

- 17 A further presentation was given by Rev Dr Kirsty Thorpe and Mike Hart following the Q&A meetings, during which an amended Resolution 1 was presented.

18 Questions of clarification were considered, and Synod Meeting agreed to allow the amended Resolution to be put.
19 Synod Meeting then entered into debate on the amended Resolution 1 during which Rev Mike Walsh proposed a further amendment, which was seconded by Rev John Piper. The amended Resolution 1 was debated, and was then accepted by a majority vote of the Synod Meeting.

20 The amended Resolution 1 read:

Synod Meeting thanks those who have worked on the review of synod structures and produced the proposals contained in the book of reports and:

- ***warmly agrees to the principles for the new Synod structures as set out in section 2 of this report and,***
- ***supports the further development of the proposals as outlined in section 3, concerning membership and terms of reference for the new standing Committees;***
- ***supports a consultation with local churches and more widely across the Synod, focussed on the role of Missional Partnership Steering Groups within these new structures***

Synod meeting believes that decisions should be made as near to the local as possible, consistent with The Structure of the United Reformed Church. The Synod meeting resolves that

- ***A facilitation group be formed comprising one representative from each Missional Partnership Steering Group***
- ***The Revd Doctor Lesley Husselbee be invited to act as convenor***
- ***The facilitation group will propose its terms of reference and questions to ask the Missional Partnerships to the Synod Executive by the end of this month***

- ***The group will invite submissions from local churches and individuals***
- ***The group will consider submissions made so far, in writing or via Zoom***
- ***The group will form detailed draft proposals***
- ***The group will work with Synod Executive to shape proposals for consideration at the next Synod Meeting in March 2021***

The Synod meeting notes the target remains to complete these changes by Summer 2021.

- 21 The amended Resolution 1 was then moved, and was passed by the Synod meeting with 94% in favour and 6% against.
- 22 The Moderator thanked all involved in the preparation and presentation of the work of the Synod Review.

Finance Report

- 23 The Treasurer moved Resolution 2:
Synod Meeting notes the Trustees Annual Report and Accounts for 2019
- 24 Resolution 2 was carried with no votes against
- 25 The Moderator thanked the finance team, and especially the Treasurer and Finance Officer for their work on behalf of Synod.
- 26 The Treasurer moved Resolution 3:
Synod Meeting agrees
- ***to support the proposals above to make grants available to local churches in response to the impact of the closures of church buildings; and***
 - ***to note the Trusts commitment of £750,000 from accumulated reserves to support these grants and Synod led support programmes***

27 Resolution 3 was carried with no votes against

28 Resolution 4 was moved:

***The Synod meeting notes the budget for 2021 agreed
by the Trust Management Committee***

29 Resolution 4 was carried with no votes against

30 The Moderator expressed thanks to all those working in
committees and Synod for their work during the past year.

31 Closing worship was led by two Ministers new to North
Western Synod, Rev Lee Battle and Rev Jacky Embrey

32 The meeting was closed by the Moderator, with prayer.

Reports for the Spring 2021 Synod Meeting

Synod Executive Committee

Secretary: Tim Hopley

1 The membership of the Executive Committee comprises the Convenors, 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 Executive has faced unexpected challenges arising from the absence of the Moderator and Convenor of Synod Pastoral Committee, who are currently on extended leave. The Committee has been very grateful for the input and support of Church House and General Assembly, particularly from the General Secretary, Rev Dr John Bradbury and Rev Clare Downing, who is both General Assembly Moderator and Moderator of Wessex Synod, as well as from others.

2 The Area Pastoral Convenors have been meeting fortnightly to ensure that the churches are supported, in the absence of the Synod Pastoral Convenor; Rev Richard Bradley is now attending the monthly Moderator's meetings to represent Synod in relation to vacancies and Opportunities for Ministry within the Synod; Rev Elizabeth Gray-King has been seconded from Church House on a part-time basis to offer pastoral support to our Ministers, CRCWs, Mission Mentors, CYDO and other staff; and Synod Executive and Pastoral Committees have been meeting together, jointly and monthly, to ensure that in the temporary absence of the Moderator, the work of the Synod continues.

3 Lancashire Area Pastoral Committee is currently without a Convenor, and Richard Bradley is assisting that Committee and its secretary, Margery Pitcher, during the vacancy. Executive invites

Synod Meeting to endorse Derek Estill and Martin Whiffen being co-opted onto that committee to support the work in Lancashire Area, until the Autumn Synod 2021. Executive also invites Synod Meeting to confirm the co-option of Rev Lee Battle to South Area Pastoral Committee, from March 2021 for a three year term, to renew the appointment of Rev Dr Kirsty Thorpe as Convenor until March 2023 (completing two terms) and to renew the co-option of Rev Louise Gough for a second term until March 2024.

Resolution 1: Synod endorses and agrees the co-option of Derek Estill, Martin Whiffen, Lee Battle and Louise Gough to their respective Area Committees and renews the appointment of Kirsty Thorpe as Convenor of South Area Pastoral Committee

4 Since our Autumn Synod, the Executive has met on six occasions, and acted on behalf of the Synod Meeting during the period in between those meetings to plan ahead, respond to emerging issues and advertise new appointments. It receives reports and updates from the various committees of the Synod and monitors the work being undertaken by Synod staff and officers to support local churches, their ministers and church officers. It has been hugely encouraging to hear of all the new ways in which churches are continuing their mission, even through challenging times.

5 At the last Synod Meeting, work was agreed to progress the Synod Review and to give consideration to the role of the Missional Partnership Steering Groups within the proposed new structures. That work is now on temporary hold and Executive hopes to be able to update Synod Meeting further in the Autumn. Agreeing a revised Synod structure is important but the original timetable of completing many of the changes by Summer 2021 is not realistic. Meanwhile, the Executive continues to focus on the challenges facing our local churches, of which more later in this report.

Eco Synod

6 Synod Executive is very pleased to advise Synod Meeting that we have now been registered as an Eco Synod and continue to work towards being environmentally responsible. Thanks are expressed to our Green Apostles and to all those who worked so hard towards achieving this status.

7 Some of our local churches have, themselves, achieved Eco status, and we send especial congratulations to all of them:

8 Silver Award: Garstang; Clitheroe; Revidge Fold; Chorlton Central; Wilmslow. Bronze Award: Westbury Gardens; Trinity Brownhill; Bamford Chapel

Synod Office

9 The purchase of a new Synod Office, which was reported at our last meeting, has now been completed and work has begun on refitting it and making it an attractive, useable and accessible environment for the office staff, and for all members of Synod for committee meetings and gatherings over the coming years. It is hoped that the new Synod office will open during June, and that many of you will then get a chance to visit and make use of the facilities there.

Office Staffing

10 The Finance Team has been working particularly hard to give financial support and advice to churches during the pandemic, helped by some restructuring of the team. We were pleased to welcome Kirsty Thomas to join us as Synod Accountant in January on a 6-month temporary contract. David Wyke, Finance Officer, has reduced his working days and refocused his role on finance support for church treasurers and Elderships. There have been many very

positive comments about the work which Tracey Booth has been carrying out to support churches through the Covid restrictions and rules. She has also taken a 12-month part time role as Project Officer within our proposed Renewed Beginnings programme. We welcome both Tracey and Kirsty to their work with the Team.

Appointments and Renewals

11 A number of committee and Synod roles come up for renewal at this Synod Meeting:

Resolution 2: Synod appoints

Mike Hart, as Synod Treasurer, for a further three-year term until March 2024

Rev Martyn Coe as Convenor of Ministries Committee for a further three-year term until March 2024

Rev Dr Lesley Husselbee as Candidate Secretary for a further three-year term until March 2024

12 Rev Dr Marion Tugwood's 3-year term as Synod Pastoral Convenor is also due for review. Executive invites Synod Meeting to extend her term for 12 months, until March 2022, as it is not possible to conduct an effective review whilst she is on extended leave.

Resolution 3: Synod extends Rev Dr Marion Tugwood's term as Synod Pastoral Convenor for 12 months until March 2022

New Appointments

13 The Executive Committee invites Synod Meeting to approve the appointment of Fozia Aftab and Aftab Mughal (members at Westbury Gardens URC) jointly to the role of Intercultural and Racial Justice Advocate for North Western Synod.

Resolution 4: Synod appoints Fozia Aftab and Aftab Mughal jointly to the role of Intercultural and Racial Justice Advocate for the North Western Synod.

14 The Executive Committee identified the need for a Training and Learning Mentor and wishes to appoint a suitable candidate to that post for a fixed term of 18 months on a part time basis.

15 The Executive Committee identified the need for a part time paid Property Officer for Lancashire and Cumbria and wishes to appoint a suitable candidate to that post.

Resolution 5: Synod approves the appointments of a Training and Learning Mentor, and a Property Officer for Lancashire and Cumbria

Terms of Settlement

16 Ministers' Terms of Settlement have been updated to reflect adjustments to payments of travel, telecoms and housing expenses and allowances.

Church of the Epiphany, Droylsden

17 As reported at Autumn Synod, the URC has now given notice of its wish to withdraw from the Sharing Agreement with its Church of England and Methodist partners. Discussions with our ecumenical partners, the Church of England and Methodist Church, now need to take place to ensure as smooth and non-disruptive a withdrawal as possible.

‘Renewed Beginnings’

18 The URC, in common with all Christian denominations worldwide, has faced significant and entirely new challenges over the past twelve months due to the pandemic.

19 Innovative, exciting and technological solutions have been found to some of the practical problems facing worshipping communities, although many have felt that none of them can replace the joy of worshipping together in one place, as a gathered fellowship.

20 The Executive Committee has recognized the impact which the pandemic has had on local churches within our Synod, and the further challenges facing us as the restrictions of the pandemic slowly lift.

21 Whilst some of our churches are planning to re-open and resume a number of their previous activities. alongside new opportunities, with enthusiasm others face very different challenges. Some of our local churches are faced with difficulties in finding people to serve as the officers or elders of their church; some are facing significant financial challenges; some have been affected badly over the past twelve months by the impact of an ageing membership and deteriorating health; and some now face challenging property problems made worse by their buildings having been largely empty for a year. A combination of these issues have led some Elderships to be unsure about how, or whether, they are can carry on. As the lockdowns lift, the reality of resuming life as a worshipping community can appear overwhelming and daunting.

22 Executive Committee wants to ensure support for all our churches, recognizing the different needs and strengths of each; the proposed rollout of ‘Renewed Beginnings’ brings an opportunity for each church, both individually and within its Missional Partnership, to explore their future, supported by enablers from within the Missional Partnerships and the Synod as a whole.

23 The ‘Renewed Beginnings’ initiative, which will be introduced during our Synod Meeting, uses a tool known as the Pastoral Cycle to help churches review their situation. It also draws on the ‘New Reality: Same Mission’ document produced by the URC nationally in 2020. Synod Executive encourages local churches to take this opportunity to review their mission; to be honest and open with one another about their challenges; to ask themselves difficult questions, and to be imaginative and daring in their thinking – and trusts that Synod meeting will support, encourage and enable this work to be done.

24 Some churches have already been helped with this process and have found huge benefit from the opportunity to review their mission and their role within their local setting; Executive encourages all our local churches to take the opportunity for a renewed beginning as we emerge from an international pandemic.

25 Executive Committee holds all local churches in prayer and renews it’s commitment to Synod Meeting that we are here to offer help to all North Western congregations in a spirit of unity and fellowship.

Resolution 6: Synod welcomes the work of ‘Renewed Beginnings’ and supports the steps being proposed to assist and uphold local churches in this way

26 Macclesfield URC has asked that the following resolution be considered at our Synod Meeting:

Resolution 7: Given the fact that the North Western Synod has suffered a decrease in membership of around 15% over two years, a greater decline than any other Synod, that a review be conducted as a matter of urgency to ascertain the reasons and enable Synod effectively to address the challenges.

SYNOD PASTORAL COMMITTEE

Convenor: Marion Tugwood

Deployment

27 I am often drawn to the Bible passages which speak about “The Body Of Christ” and how we are all a part of it and together we serve the Lord Jesus Christ and one another in various forms of ministry lay and ordained. One of the challenges that faces the Church nationally, Synod wide and locally is the diminishing number of Stipendiary Ministers the denomination has to deploy across the 13 Synods. For many years those numbers have been decreasing but we must remember that that is only one form of ministry the church has been blessed with.

28 This report is based on figures that have been given to our Synod by the national church based on decisions made by the General Assembly. The Synod Moderators (of whom there are 13 when all the roles are filled) have a mutual agreement and accountability structure which means no Synod will have more than the agreed number of Stipendiary Ministers in post. If a Synod goes over its deployment number the Synod Moderators work together to reduce the number of Ministers to the agreed allocation. At present North Western Synod is below its quota of Stipendiary Ministers. Each of the 13 Synods across the denomination receives deployment figures based on a General Assembly agreed formula.

29 I must add that we are only talking about the deployable Stipendiary Ministers in any figures quoted in this report. Non-stipendiary ministers, Special Category Ministers and CRCWs are not counted in the deployment figures.

30 Synod Executive appreciates the support and help currently being given to us by the other Synod Moderators in the absence of

our Moderator. Last month the Area Pastoral Committee Conveners met with the Revd Steve Faber (Moderator of West Midlands Synod) who guided us through the figures for North Western Synod.

31 The table below contains figures given by the national Ministries Office in Church House, London for the number of Stipendiary Ministers we can have at the end of 2021 and the next four years:

by the end of 2021	29 ministers
by the end of 2022	27 ministers
by the end of 2023	27 ministers
by the end of 2024	25 ministers
by the end of 2025	24 ministers

32 Please note that these figures do not take into consideration any changes there might result from the Covid-19 Pandemic. They do, however, include a 10% increase on the “affordable” minister numbers to allow for movement of ministers.

33 At the end of March 2021 our synod had the equivalent of 21.3 ministers in post (including 2 ministers who have accepted calls to ministry and are completing their studies at Theological College.)

34 We have declared three further opportunities for ministry which are now on the national Vacancy List - one in Lancashire, one in Central and one in South Area - and a further two in Cumbria

that may come onto the national Vacancy List via the Moderators' Meeting in April.

35 At present the Synod Executive are only pursuing opportunities for ministry that are within a single Missional Partnership. The possibility of asking ministers to fulfil a split role across two Missional Partnerships was not widely welcomed when it was first proposed last year. Synod Executive felt further prayer, discussion and wider consultation was needed into those suggested ministries. Our intention is to start such a process soon so we can move towards our target figure of deployable Stipendiary Ministers.

Synod Pastoral Committee Convenor

36 In the absence of the Revd Dr Marion Tugwood as the Convenor of the Synod Pastoral Committee the Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe, Revd Martyn Coe and Revd Richard Bradley are sharing the role of chairing these meetings. The Lancashire Area Pastoral Committee Secretary Miss Margery Pitcher is also offering extra support for the work of Synod Pastoral Committee.

37 Over the coming months, as churches emerge from lockdown, a number of them will probably be seeking help to reconsider their future. Synod Pastoral Committee will try to play its part in offering support, advice and help.

CUMBRIA AREA PASTORAL COMMITTEE

Pastoral Convenor: Martyn Coe

38 To start the report, I would like to pay tribute to Ruth Clarke a former moderator of General Assembly and indefatigable worker for justice and equality who was a member at our Carver Church in Windermere and died in February this year.

39 Several colleagues will leave ministry to our Partnership before the next Synod.

40 Dave Harkison will retire this autumn completing 30 years of ordained service and 16 years in Cumbria. We thank him for all he has done in the church in chaplaincy and in the community through those years and wish him well as he moves south.

41 Zena Smith is a Methodist minister serving our churches in the South West Cumbria United area she moves to a new post this summer and our prayers go with her to her new post.

42 Jennet McLeod and Richard Skinner are Methodist Ministers serving respectively South West Cumbria and Workington. They both sit down this summer (retire). We thank them both for their friendly and supportive collegiality and wish them peace and refreshment in retirement.

43 Those staffing changes mean we are refocussing where our ministers are located and now have opportunities for ministry in the North East and South West of the county.

44 God for all is our ecumenical partnership in Cumbria. At its core the Church of England, Salvation Army, Methodist Church and ourselves are working together to share resources, encourage discipleship and encourage churches to work together for mission.

45 Over the last two years a Vision Refresh has been undertaken. The new logo points to the clarified focus. Feedback from churches across the county wanted social justice and green issues to be included in the strategy. They are now clearly to the front in care deeply and tread gently. Follow daily is the strand encouraging personal discipleship and speak boldly is about confidence in faith and evangelism and owning and proclaiming the other threads.

46 You can see a presentation about God for all on this link <https://vimeo.com/529420270>

47 We continue to work with our partners on developing God for all and intend to have a collective strategy to bring to synod in the autumn in the hope that you will continue to endorse our endeavours.

LANCASHIRE AREA PASTORAL COMMITTEE

Pastoral Convener: Vacant (See below)

Area Pastoral Committee

The Area Pastoral Committee currently comprises:

Miss Margery Pitcher (Secretary), Mr Gordon Bell (Finance Officer), Rev Daleen Ten Cate (Ecumenical Officer), Mr Ken Snaith (Pastoral Review Co-ordinator), Mrs Lynn Lonsdale (Co-opted Member), Rev Michele Jarmany (Co-opted Member), Synod Officers *ex officio*.

48 We are pleased that Rev Richard Bradley has agreed to convene the committee on a temporary basis and that Rev Martin Whiffen and Mr Derek Estill have agreed to join, subject to confirmation at Spring Synod.

49 Committee members are linked with groups of churches and contact the Church Secretary prior to APC meetings, through which the churches may raise issues or share good news stories to be brought to the meeting. Meetings are currently held via Zoom.

Ministerial and Pastoral

50 We are pleased that Rev John Gordon will be moving to the Lancashire North Partnership when purchase of a manse is completed and Rev Adam Woodhouse will be joining Lancashire East Partnership in the summer.

Missional Discipleship

51 Daleen Ten Cate, Missional Mentor, continues to lead regular online Bible Studies, Communion Services and Coffee mornings for each of the partnerships.

Church Life

52 Although some congregations had resumed services in church for a while, these all ceased with the higher Covid-19 restrictions introduced in December. While some churches are able to meet online for services, meetings & coffee mornings etc., others are keeping in touch by phone and/or distributing newsletters.

53 The refurbished Chorley church building has been handed over but an official 'opening' service has been deferred until normal services can be resumed. They have managed to keep the Open Kitchen project running on two evenings by serving take-away meals and donated pizzas.

54 Three churches in Blackburn joined the Mosque twinning project.

Barrow Primary School

55 The school has been renamed 'United Reformed Church Primary School' to indicate its status as a church school and now has 3 URC foundation governors. Visits to Clitheroe URC are currently on hold but Rev Jarman and others have led assemblies etc in school.

Margery Pitcher
February 2021

CENTRAL AREA PASTORAL COMMITTEE

Committee Convenor: Richard Bradley

Committee Membership: Revds Richard Bradley (Convenor & Ecumenical Officer), Mike Aspinall (Property Officer), Ruth Wollaston, Marian Tugwood, (Convenor of Synod Pastoral Committee), Brian Jolly (Synod Moderator), Mr Neil Carter (Finance Officer), Mr Jed Garside and Mrs Wendy Smith (Secretary & Lay Preaching Commissioner)

Missional Partnerships

Bolton and Salford

56 The Steering Group continues to meet Convened by Christopher Whitehead.

57 Revd Jacky Embrey has settled in well and has got to know the churches well even in the time of lockdown. Revd Dave Fraser is offering some time to the Partnership until a new Mission Mentor is found for the Central Area.

58 Patricroft URC took the decision at a recent Church Meeting to close by the end of 2021. We offer our prayers for the people of Patricroft URC and the difficult decision they took.

59 The Revd Ruth Watson began her SCM Ministry in February 2021 so has left her role as a specific Missional Partnership Minister. We hope the full-time opportunity for ministry in this Partnership will be taken to the Moderators' meeting in March.

Bury, Rochdale and North Manchester

60 The Steering Group Continues to meet and we have a new Convener in the Revd Sheila Coop who has, at the time of writing, convened two meetings of the Steering Group. We have been blessed to have Kate Hunt a 3rd year student at Northern College on placement with the Partnership. Kate led some Advent reflections during the weekly zoom coffee mornings in 2020 which were greatly appreciated.

61 Revd Richard Bradley is leading the LIFE Explored course fortnightly leading up to Easter. The sessions are run twice one on a Tuesday evening and repeated again on a Thursday morning – 4 or 5 churches are represented at those sessions.

62 Revd Daniel Harris is leading a SOUL SPARK course with individual churches in the Missional Partnership.

63 Worship is offered on zoom, in text form and pre-recorded form for churches across the partnership (and beyond!)

Oldham and Tameside

64 Oldham and Tameside Steering Group meet monthly on Zoom and a number of activities continued into the New Year, also on Zoom. The Friday Coffee Mornings continue on Zoom and attract a number of regulars, mainly from the Tameside churches. The weekly Bible Discussions (Tuesday evenings) continue on Zoom and a new series has just commenced using the York Courses “Caring for Creation”. Daleen is offering an Eco-Church session (for the Central Area) is planned for early May and this seemed a fitting addendum to the Lent series. Mid-Week worship is offered twice/month at 2pm on Thursdays. Discussions at our last meeting included very positive responses to the Well-being sessions offered by Dave Fraser and Daleen brought a number of suggestions from

the Mission Mentors which were enthusiastically welcomed to help churches look at the post-restriction world. The ministers are planning Holy Week reflections on Zoom to which all are invited. The churches are working well together and have supported one another during this difficult time by sharing on-line activities.

People and Local Church Situations

Revd Darren Holland

65 At the end of 2020 the Central Area said goodbye to the Revd Darren Holland who had served as its Mission Mentor for 3 or 4 years. Thanks were expressed to Darren and gifts purchased for him from Synod staff/officers and the churches in the Central Area.

Revd Ruth Watson

66 Ruth began a new ministry as the SCM at the Oasis Academy and Church based in the Oasis Academy in February this year. Ruth will be inducted into her new role at the March 2021 Synod.

Trinity URC/ CE LEP Cheetham Hill

67 Discussions continue between the North Western Synod and the Archdeacon of Manchester about the fellowship and church building at Trinity.

Thanks to the churches

68 I want to commend the churches in these difficult times for the pastoral care being offered to their 'members'. I hear often how churches are offering pastoral care. In addition, the worship material being made available has been appreciated whether in text, audio or video formats.

Thank you

69 Thanks to everyone who sits on the APC, for their dedication, commitment and hard work in assisting people, and churches to enable the work of the kingdom to continue.

SOUTH AREA PASTORAL COMMITTEE

Pastoral Convenor: Kirsty Thorpe

Convenor Kirsty Thorpe; Secretary, Hilary Grierson; Finance officer, Allan Haigh; Property officer, Colin Fox; Church Links, Christopher Whitehead, Mission Mentor Dave Fraser; co-opted members - Gina Gibson; Louise Gough; Eula Mesquita; Alison Termie; Mike Walsh.

70 South Area Pastoral Committee is adjusting to the challenge and possibilities of online gatherings and currently meets online bi-monthly. We continue to handle a range of financial, property and other issues that benefit from being handled mid-way between Synod committees and local churches. The three Missional Partnership Steering Groups in South Area - Cheshire East and Derbyshire Border, Greater Manchester South and Cheshire and South Manchester – continue to grow as places for news sharing, mutual support and encouragement.

71 Dave Fraser, Mission and Discipleship Mentor for South Area, facilitates and leads worship, offers training, hosts support sessions for church officers and is active in other ways helping local churches. The mid-week online sessions with worship and bible study which he leads now regularly attract more than 40 people.

72 He also co-ordinates a meal-based mission project, Space at the Table, initiated in 2020 by the Missional Partnership ministers. This currently feeds over 200 people in food poverty each week. The project received £5000 from the Synod in 2020 and has also benefitted from significant financial gifts made by individual churches in South Area. Those volunteers who deliver the pre-cooked meals are drawn from 14 different churches. Some congregations are finding a new way into mission through this

initiative. It has funding until summer 2021 and was originally seen as a short-term project but could now continue because the need has not gone away.

73 As we prepare to move out of lockdown the committee is exploring how to help churches facing an uncertain future. We can offer advice and share experiences on finance, property, governance and processes. Relationship building is important for the Synod's wellbeing, however our structures may look in the future, and the APC's are part of making this happen now.

- South Area Pastoral Committee meets next, via Zoom, on Monday May 17th.
- We are delighted that the Revd Lee Battle has agreed to be co-opted onto SAPC.
- Gatley URC has received a Synod grant towards the cost of repointing the church building.
- Hatherlow URC has cleared out the Sunday School hall, prior to sale, and is focusing on plans to improve facilities within the church to make it a significant community resource.
- Jonnie Hill, a final year ordinand at Northern College, has accepted a call to stipendiary ministry in Greater Manchester South and Cheshire Missional Partnership and will be ordained this summer.
- Kirsty Thorpe has been on Churches Together in England's online ecumenical officer training and will oversee ecumenical concerns in South Area in the short term.

RESOURCES COMMITTEE AND TRUST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Convener of Resources Committee and Chair of Trust Management Committee: Jean Mullineux
Company Secretary: Tim Hopley

74 The Synod Resources Committee and the Trust Management Committee expresses its thanks to all our Churches for their ongoing hard work during what has been an exceptionally challenging twelve months.

75 We also thank Tracey Booth who has joined the Synod staff to support local churches ensuring that they are kept up to date with their responsibilities relating to the impact of the pandemic. This has been a challenging task as the guidance has changed constantly as science has evolved and the world has learned.

76 If your church has any concerns, please do not hesitate in contacting the Synod office and we will work to assist you in the best way we can.

77 The Resources Committee and continues to act on behalf of the Synod on matters of property and finance.

78 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.

79 The Elders meeting of each local church is the Trustees of the funds and assets of the local Church but not its buildings.

80 The Trust Company is the Trustee for all the Synod's assets.

81 The Trust Management Committee acts on behalf of the Trust Company.

FINANCE REPORT

Mike Hart: Synod Treasurer

82 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 Synod informed and as a way of being accountable to them.

83 Since the last Synod meeting and with the agreement of staff, the role of Finance Officer has been split into two part-time roles. David Wyke's role now focusses on our work with churches and ministers including arrangements for Ministers' expenses, Grants and other support for local churches, the management of Investments and contributions to the Mission and Ministry (M&M) Fund. Kirsty Thomas has joined us at the beginning of January on a temporary basis as the Synod Accountant and is responsible for the day to day financial management and reporting for the Trust and Synod. I am grateful to David, Kirsty and Ryhana for their support in these challenging times.

Annual Accounts 2020

84 In many respects the draft Management Accounts for 2020 (included below) provide an illustration of the impact of the Covid pandemic on the work of the Synod compared to the assumptions used to create the original budget at the start of the year. The figures include expenditure of £286,287 funded from the release of reserves to support post Covid work agreed at the last Synod. A further £184,698 has been committed in 2021 from these resources the majority to support Church contributions to the M&M fund.

85 Expenditure also includes investment in support for a number of developments notably work associated with the purchase of the new Synod Office, and the redesign of the Synod website. The increase in legal costs reflects progress on a number of long standing issues, where costs had accumulated from previous years, including two long standing Sharing Agreements.

86 As local churches will be aware from their own accounts, returns from both savings accounts and investments have been significantly reduced in 2020. Combined with delays in the disposal of surplus properties this has created a sizeable shortfall in income compared to budget assumptions. Our expectation is that property sales will return to more normal levels in 2021.

87 Work is underway to review the budget for 2021 and to develop a longer term budget strategy for consideration at the Autumn Synod Meeting. There are a number of important developments that will need to be addressed in this strategy, these include supporting the wider denomination in dealing with the accumulated deficit on the Ministers' Pension Fund, and the continued funding requirements for the Mission and Ministry Fund, and how to continue to support local churches in this Synod in developing their ministry and mission with their local community.

88 Reflecting the significant reduction in our ability to travel to meet people, the Ministers' expenses fund recorded a small surplus in 2020. This will be retained in the fund and used to limit the need for increased contributions from local churches in future years.

Ministry and Mission Fund

89 I am grateful to local churches and particularly their Treasurers for their continued prioritisation of this important part of

local church expenditure in the current circumstances. At the end of December 2020, the accumulated arrears of churches in this Synod to the fund amounted to only £20,000, compared to £193,000 at the end of 2017. Discussions are in progress involving the Area Finance Officers to ensure that these small remaining issues are resolved during 2021.

90 Following the agreement at the last Synod Meeting financial support has been provided to 46 churches to meet their assessed commitment to the M&M Fund for 2021. The final assessed contribution for 2021 from this Synod was £1.616m.

91 Churches will shortly be receiving a request for information to support the assessment process for 2022. Early responses, even if based on unaudited accounts for 2020, will help us to fully assess the impact of the pandemic on church membership and finances in setting an achievable approach to our contributions to the M&M Fund for 2022.

Support for Local Churches

92 In February, Congregational Insurance announced that in response to the Supreme Court decision they would accept claims from churches for business Interruption losses incurred as a result of the Covid pandemic. We are working closely with Edwards Insurance to support individual churches in making claims for their losses, and I am grateful to David Wyke for his diligent work on this with both Edwards and the loss adjusters appointed by Congregational Insurance.

93 Four online workshops were held in early March attended by over 80 church representatives to help the completion of the initial request for financial information required by the loss adjusters.

Churches who have provided the required information to the loss adjusters are already receiving interim payments. It is important to note that the scope of losses that can be claimed are significantly wider than those used to assess the Synod's support last year; and are expected to include any losses incurred by churches from this cause in 2021. There is no intention to require churches to repay any support provided by the Synod from the proceeds of any successful claims.

URC North Western Synod

Full Year 2020

Income & Expenditure Analysis

Operational Expenditure

Synod Costs (legal requirements)

Expenditure

	Actual	Budget 2020	Variance	%	Budget 2021
Salaries & honoraria	78,077	77,960	(116)	0%	82,193
Synod office	47,331	41,400	(5,931)	-13%	47,460
Expenses: Synod committees	16,619	25,000	8,381	50%	33,000
Expenses: Synod officers	-	-	-		-
Expenses: Synod meetings	1,964	4,500	2,536		-
Professional: Audit	10,992	9,000	(1,992)	-18%	8,000
Professional: Legal	23,504	12,000	(11,504)	-49%	12,000
Professional: Investment management	5,431	6,000	569	10%	6,000
Professional: Other	29,155	5,000	(24,155)	-83%	4,000
Miscellaneous	24	2,000	1,976		2,000
Insurances	2,194	6,000	3,806		5,500
Sundry designated / restricted funds	-	-	-		-
Total Synod Expenditure	215,292	188,860	(26,431)	-12%	200,153

Property & the Manse Fund

Property: Buildings	11,826	2,500	(9,326)	-79%	2,500
Property: Graveyards	15,437	14,500	(937)	-6%	31,640
Property: Manse Fund	-	-	-		-
Total Property Expenditure	27,263	17,000	(10,263)	-38%	34,140

Local Church Support

Salaries & honoraria	138,658	106,974	(31,684)	-23%	191,804
Synod office	9,395	15,100	5,705		22,600
Area Support	1,356	5,000	3,644		7,000
Professional: Legal	8,787	8,000	(787)	-9%	8,000
Professional: Investment management	-	4,000	4,000		4,000
Expenditure Local Church Support	158,196	139,074	(19,122)	-12%	233,404

Total Operational Expenditure

Total Operational Expenditure	400,750	344,934	(55,815)	-14%	467,697
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URC North Western Synod

	Actual	Budget	Variance	%	Budget 2021
Income					
Investment income	(77,616)	(116,500)	(38,884)	-50%	(90,000)
Synod stakes	(98,460)	(100,000)	(1,540)	-2%	(90,000)
Other income	(5,184)	-	5,184		(77,332)
Cash/Properties transferred to manse fund	-	-	-		-
Transfers from external trusts	-	-	-		-
Investments - realised	-	-	-		-
Rental income	-	-	-		-
Total Operational Expenditure	(181,260)	(216,500)	(35,240)	-19%	(257,332)
Net Expenditure / (Income) Operational Activities	219,489	128,434	(91,055)	-41%	210,365
Investing in Priorities					
Support for Mission & Ministry					
Expenditure					
Training: General	60	-	(60)		23,000
Training: Ministers & CRCW	6,798	35,000	28,202		17,000
Training: Elders & Members	373	20,000	19,627		25,000
Training: Children & Young People	57,225	64,620	7,395	13%	53,550
Training: Students	5,138	-	(5,138)		11,071
External Grants: Welfare	1,820	5,000	3,180		5,000
Net funds received from closed churches	(25,450)	-	25,450		-
Property Grants to churches	163,917	75,000	(88,917)	-54%	100,000
Mission Grants to churches	285,474	75,000	(210,474)	-74%	100,000
Expenditure Mission & Ministry	495,355	274,620	(220,735)	-45%	334,620
Mission Projects & SCMs					
Expenditure					
SCM: Cumbria	-	16,321	16,321		7,500
SCM: Chorlton	1,366	8,850	7,484		8,850
SCM: Salford	-	2,250	2,250		7,500
SCM: Oldham	6,000	-	(6,000)		-
Expenditure Mission Projects & SCMs	7,366	27,421	20,055		23,850
Wider Church Partnerships					
Expenditure					
External Grants: University chaplaincy	12,500	25,000	12,500		25,000
External Grants: Ecumenical subscriptions	10,803	6,000	(4,803)	-44%	6,000
External Grants: Other	-	7,500	7,500		17,500
Expenditure Wider Church Partnerships	23,303	38,500	15,197	65%	48,500

URC North Western Synod

	Actual	Budget	Variance	%	Budget 2021
Missional Discipleship					
Expenditure					
Mission	154,965	178,062	23,096	15%	172,060
Total Investment in Priorities & Partnerships	680,990	518,603	(162,387)	-24%	579,030
Other Income					
Grants: Training	-	-	-	-	-
Participants' contributions to training courses	-	-	-	-	-
Loan interest	-	-	-	-	-
Donations and legacies	(467)	-	467	-	-
Grants: University chaplaincy	-	(12,500)	(12,500)	-	(12,500)
Property transferred from closed churches	-	-	-	-	-
Disposal of fixed assets - realised	(90,456)	(325,000)	(234,544)	-	(400,000)
Total Other Income	(90,923)	(337,500)	(246,577)	271%	(412,500)
Net Investment in Priorities & Partnerships	590,067	181,103	(408,964)	-69%	166,530
Net Recurrent Expenditure	809,556	309,537	(500,019)	-62%	376,895
One-offs					
M&M Support	-	-	-	-	-
Contribution to pension funds	21,397	-	(21,397)	-	40,000
Total One-offs	21,397	-	(21,397)		40,000
Unrealised					
Investments - unrealised	178,648	-	(178,648)	-	-
Property revaluation - unrealised	(17,000)	-	17,000	-	-
Total Unrealised	161,648	-	(161,648)		-
Grand Total	992,602	309,537	(683,065)	-69%	416,895
Manse Fund	(698,898)	-	698,898		100,000
Missional Partnership	(7,996)	-	7,996		-
Net Total	285,708	309,537	23,829	8%	516,895

PROPERTY REPORT

Convener: Mike Aspinall

Quinquennial surveys

94 The oversight of church buildings is important to ensure the fabric of the building is maintained.

95 The organising of an Inspection cannot be ignored. Church Elders, as Managing Trustees of their church have an obligation to maintain the building. For Listed Buildings in particular this can have serious legal implications, although for all church buildings there are also Charity Commission implications if the assets of the Trust (e.g. the building) is not adequately maintained.

96 It is crucial that churches ensure their Quinquennial surveys are undertaken every 5 years. Surveyors have continued to work within the restrictions over the last 12months. If your church is due a survey or was during the last 12months (or earlier) you must ensure this is undertaken without further delay.

97 As churches open after having been closed for many months it is essential you undertake your own checks around the property, particularly for signs of damp or mould growth.

98 I realise this may throw-up work which you feel will create further problems for you, but it is far better to know of problems than to think they don't exist.

99 An updated list of approved surveyors for Quinquennial surveys can be provided if you are unsure who to call-on - just contact me.

100 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.

LBAC

101 If you are in a Listed Church and intend to undertake any work whatsoever you **must** seek approval from the LBAC. This applies whether the work affects the specific area of listing or not.

Undertaking work without approval can lead to possible action from English Heritage and a substantial fine.

General

102 If you are considering any work within your church, regardless of the value please inform your Area Pastoral Committee (APC).

Any work having a value over £16,000.00 in any 12month period must be approved by your APC and Synod Resources Committee, prior to the work commencing.

103 I realise some churches may be considering their future after such a lengthy closedown. Please contact your APC to discuss matters, or your Missional Partnership Steering Group, before making any final decisions. We are all here to try to help and support each other

104 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.

[\(propertyconsultant@nwsynod.org.uk\)](mailto:propertyconsultant@nwsynod.org.uk)

April 2021

MINISTRIES COMMITTEE

Convenor: Martyn Coe

105 We are pleased to be able to (electronically) present Margery Pitcher from Fulwood URC with her certificate as a synod recognised lay preacher.

106 We have other folk who are waiting for assessments and we are working to enable that to happen before the next meeting of synod.

107 New proposals are in the pipeline to develop lay preacher's training and a new Worship Leader designation. We have been quite some time without a Training officer, which means that the budget can sustain a part-time post which is more than half time. The new position of Learning and Training Mentor will be advertised shortly. The postholder will work alongside the other mentors to support the training needs of the synod's churches, preachers, worship leaders, elders and ministers. This boost to the hours will be for a limited period allowing us to get this work underway while considering how this post should be configured in the longer term.

108 Lay preachers are encouraged to apply for their training grants, whether that is because you wish to explore new ways of working or prepare for the return to in-person worship. Do please find appropriate ways of using the allocated cash.

109 Ministers are now expected to undertake Pastoral Supervision and funding and guidance for that is available via the office. Spiritual direction is funded for ministers by the synod. This year, the minister's training grant has been increased. I would encourage

all ministers to take up that offer and for Partnerships and Churches to encourage their ministers to use the funding and time allocated.

110 There will be a minister's refresher in September, which will be an in-person gathering for two days.

111 Mersey, North Western and Northern synods are offering ministers the opportunity for a retreat online on 16th and 17th November. This will be facilitated by Rev'd Rachel Poolman. That same grouping has now rescheduled a ministers summer school which was planned for 2020 to 20-25 May 2023. We had to go to 2023 as in 2022 it is hoped that all our ministers will go to a national gathering from 9-12 May. Ministers are encouraged to attend that gathering and churches and partnerships are encouraged to plan meetings and activities so that this is possible (it would also be reasonable to consider releasing ministers from Sunday duties on the 15th).

112 Ministerial students have continued their training this year and we are thankful for this, for their hard work and the work of the RSLs in all that they do. Candidating and training are part of this committee's responsibility. It is important to remember that candidating for ministry continues. NSM service is a vital part of our church's life, and although the number of stipendiary posts reduces, we still expect that God is calling people to serve in this way.

CANDIDATE REPORT

Candidates Secretary: Lesley Husselbee

Candidates for Ministry

a. **Two people are candidating for Ministry:**

1. NW Synod Students in Training for Ministry

a. Northern College Manchester

- I. **Walt Johnson** NSM (Wilbraham St Ninian's URC)
Northern College, Manchester year 2
- II. **Kate Hunt** SM (St Anne's URC) Year 3
- III. **Jonathan (Jonnie) Hill** SM Year 4 (Chorlton Central Church).
- IV. **Katherine (Katy) Ollerenshaw** CRCW Year 4/5
(Edgeley Community Church, Stockport)

Lesley Husselbee

March 2021

SAFEGUARDING REFERENCE GROUP

Synod Safeguarding Advisor: Julie Rafferty

Co-ordinator: Rev Brian Jolly (North Western Moderator) Rita Griffiths (Mersey Synod Clark), Lorna Griffiths, Leo Roberts (CYDO – North Western), Steven Mitchell (CYDO), Rev Tim Presswood (Baptist representative) Ros Ellison (Church Safeguarding Coordinator & minute taker)

Safeguarding Strategic Plan

113 The Safeguarding Reference Group established a small working party to consider how the six objectives of the Safeguarding Strategic Plan can be achieved and the best way to support churches to ensure that the requirements of the strategic plan are met within appropriate time scales. The plan was launched by the URC's Assembly Safeguarding team in October last year, using an online Symposium as a way of communicating the key areas. Due to technical difficulties with breakout rooms, people attending from the North Western Synod were not able to discuss their concerns and thoughts with Julie Rafferty, the North Western Synod Safeguarding Adviser. To remedy this, an online webinar is currently being arranged in conjunction with the other Northerly Synods to address both the Safeguarding Strategic Plan and Good Practice 5.

Training

114 Basic Safeguarding Training sessions started in November 2020. Due to lockdown and the government restrictions, all training has been delivered via Zoom. The two-hour training session is for all volunteers and paid workers, including elders and Ministers, within the churches, who have not attended any URC Safeguarding training in the last three years. Although the sessions have been limited to 20 people per session, attendance has been excellent and over 200 people from churches in the North Western Synod have attended the training to date. Basic safeguarding training will

continue to be delivered and currently sessions are planned until the end of June 2021.

115 As part of the URC Safeguarding training framework, the Intermediate safeguarding training programme will start in May/June 2021, again, this will initially be delivered via zoom and will be a two-hour session. Further information will be circulated to all churches soon.

Annual Safeguarding Returns

116 A large percentage of Annual Safeguarding Returns have been completed and returned to the synod office. The returns provide a wealth of information for the Synod Safeguarding Adviser to analyse and helps her to establish where the strengths and weaknesses are in the churches, highlighting aspects of safeguarding where churches need additional support and guidance. This information contributes to the Annual Synod Safeguarding report which is provided to Church House at the end of April 2021.

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

The Keld Project

Report to the North Western Synod Spring 2021

A resource for Christian Mission: a place for those whose ears, eyes and hearts are prepared to penetrate the background noise of a secular world.

1. The Mission Project at Keld is led by the United Reformed Church Northern Synod, shared by the neighbouring Yorkshire and North Western Synods, together with ecumenical partners in the Anglican and Methodist Churches and the Tees Swale Mission Pastorate.
2. This tiny hamlet has long been recognised as a 'thin place.' The Project aims to contribute a spiritual dimension to the lives of the thousands of visitors who pass through it. Like all churches - and every other public resource - the Keld Project, including the Upper Room conference facility, the Keld Visitor Centre and the Manse, have been closed on account of the coronavirus epidemic. This has been at a significant cost in terms of lost income and the disappointment of being obliged to delay our plans to restore and develop the old School.
3. Nevertheless, contributions in the visitors' book during the limited recent opening times are supportive and give us encouragement for the future. These include:
 - *Visitors from South Devon: 'Praise God for the amazing beauty of his creation, especially this wonderful place at Keld and its surroundings, and this Resource Centre. God bless this place, and all involved!'*
 - *From Northamptonshire: 'Back in Keld after 12 years, if only for a flying visit. Wonderful to see the Resource Centre with all the history of the place. Last visit it was still a derelict building.'*
 - *From Skipton: 'Great walk, lovely centre, thank you!'*
 - *From Toronto: 'What a lovely walk! Hope it doesn't take too long to get back to Muker though, hopefully before it gets dark.'*
 - *From New York: 'With so many thanks for a fabulous place - our New Year's Eve walk. Welcome, 2021!'*



Figure 1: Presenting the Project at Muker Show 2019. The show was cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19 but we hope to be back in 2021.



Figure 2: The Visitor Centre is a huge success, attracting over a thousand visitors a year and providing a base for a popular programme of events.

4. With enterprising plans for the old School finalised, and the pandemic hopefully receding we are now actively seeking funding for this last stage of the development and are confident that the work on the first phase of it will be able to go ahead in 2021/22. This involves stabilising the building, unused for twenty years, installing heating, and creating what we will call a 'Muddy Boots' facility. This will be a discovery room to welcome walkers and school parties as well as visitors in general. It will be simply furnished, display information about the village along with a new exhibition on the history of Christianity in the Dale, and will also act as a 'base camp' for our team of volunteers.



5. When eventually all the stages are finished, this will mark the completion of our long period of

Figure 3: The upper room in the Literary Institute provides excellent facilities. We have very fast broadband but are still waiting for 1G let alone 5G mobile.

reinstating Keld's historic buildings as a resource for mission. This was the vision of the Keld minister James Wilkinson in the mid 19th Century, reimagined by the creation of the Keld Project in the early 1970's and refocused in the time of Julie Martin, the Keld minister between 2008 and 2013.

6. We hope that at least the Muddy Boots Centre, (the first of three phases) can be completed in 2021/2022 and would welcome an expression of encouragement and support from the Synod.



Figure 4: Keld Resource Centre is an ideal location for small group work such as awaydays and training

Resolution 8: Synod thanks all involved for their work at the Keld Project and continues to encourage and support its ongoing mission