



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



**Book of Reports for Synod Meeting on**

Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March, 10am  
Media City Church and Oasis  
King William Street  
Salford  
M50 3UQ

## 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: <mailto:office@nwsynod.org.uk>  
Tel: 0161 769 1122

Attendance      When you register you will receive: **name badge,**  
Expenses      **expenses form and voting card** (where applicable).  
Voting Card      Please note that the meeting will be livestreamed but will NOT be recorded.

Disabled      There is limited disabled parking available but please let  
Parking      the office know by **11<sup>th</sup> March** if you require one. Main Parking is off Broadway.

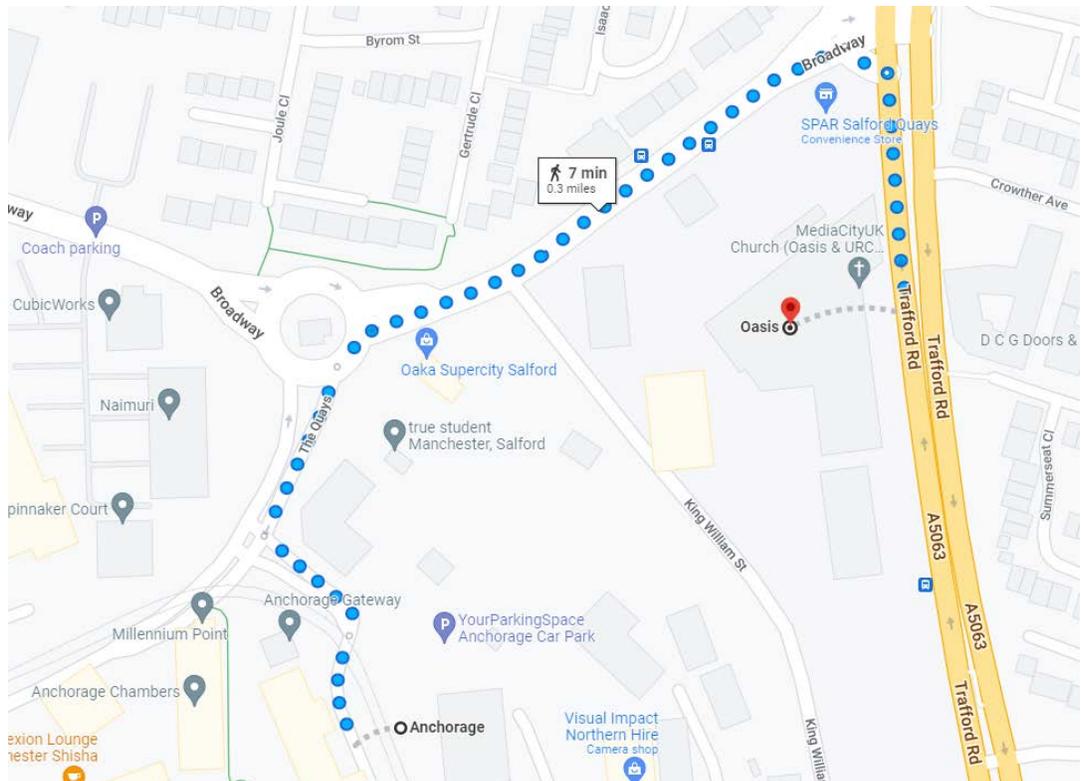
Stewards      There will be stewards both inside and outside the Hub. Please do not hesitate to ask one of them if you require assistance.

Refreshments      Tea and coffee will be served on arrival and at lunch time. There will be bacon barmcakes available in the morning and there will also be a vegetarian option. Please bring your own lunch.

If using satnav, please use the postcode M50 3UQ

## Directions from Anchorage tram stop

1. Walk North on Anchorage Quay
2. Slight left to stay on Anchorage Quay
3. Turn right onto the Quays
4. At the roundabout, take the 1<sup>st</sup> exit onto Broadway
5. Turn right towards Trafford Road/A5063
6. Turn right onto Trafford Road/A5063



Dear Friends

## **Synod Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

Following our Autumn Synod, when many were able to attend in person and others could watch a Live Stream of the meeting, I am very pleased that our Spring meeting at Oasis MediaCity UK is intended to be a fully hybrid meeting. We are not the first Synod to hold hybrid meetings, but it will be North Western's first hybrid Synod Meeting, and I am very hopeful that this will mean that those who are not able to get to Salford in person, will still be able to fully engage in the discussions, presentations, questions and voting which will be taking place. I feel sure that as we all become more familiar with using technology in this way, hybrid meetings will become the standard, and that can only be a good thing for accessibility and inclusivity. It is, though, always good to be able to meet face to face, and I hope that as many of you as possible are able to do so on the 19<sup>th</sup> March.

Although legal restrictions have been lifted, we are suggesting that masks are still worn whilst singing – there will be disposable masks available at Oasis on Saturday.

As with our meetings during 2021, Revd Clare Downing, Moderator of General Assembly, has been asked by Synod Executive to convene and chair this Synod. Synod Meeting will be invited to appoint her as its chair in the opening session, and I am very grateful

to her for agreeing to do this. Clare will have chaired the Synod Meeting at her own Synod of Wessex the week before, and her willingness to chair another Synod Meeting so soon after her own is much appreciated. I hope that this is acceptable to Synod, but if you have any concerns about this please contact Synod office as soon as possible. It will not be possible to make alternative arrangements at short notice. Rev Elizabeth Gray-King, Synod Pastor, will be sharing the leading of worship with Rev Ruth Watson, Special Category Minister at Oasis.

General Assembly, in July 2021, proposed a new Ministerial Disciplinary Process and Incapacity Procedure . Resolutions 39 and 40 of that meeting will bring the new process into effect from General Assembly 2022, and Synods are required to notify General Assembly of any objections by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. The documents relating to this provision can be found [here](#). If you wish to have this matter discussed at our Synod Meeting, please notify your request, and objections, to [office@nwsynod.org.uk](mailto:office@nwsynod.org.uk) no later than midday on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

It is unusual, when preparing for Spring Synod, for a Synod Meeting to have already taken place earlier in the year. However, that was the case this year. This has meant that the revival and/or introduction of some Committees which it is hoped will be able to do important work has been able to start. You will hear a little of what they are beginning to do, during Synod Meeting and it is hoped that by Autumn Synod their work will be well underway. It is really encouraging to see people's commitment and enthusiasm to progress the Mission & Discipleship Network; the Communications Committee; the Nominations Committee and it was good to be able

to begin their revival early in 2022 to allow our Spring Synod to focus on the work of Missional Partnerships, and the Finance Consultation – two central, and very important issues facing North Western Synod this year.

I hope that you are able to prayerfully consider the documents contained within this Book of Reports, along with their ideas and proposals in readiness for our meeting.

I look forward to seeing you at our meeting this year, whether it is in person or online.

With every good wish

Tim Hopley

## Spring North Western Synod Meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> March 2022

### Agenda

- 1 Opening worship
- 2 In Memoriam
  - a Ministers who have died
  - b Churches which have closed
- 3 Committee reports and updates
  - a Updates on Committees
  - b Executive report (Part I):
    - i Missional Partnerships
    - ii Facilitation Group
  - c M&D Network update
- 4 Legacies of Slavery presentation

### Lunch break

- 5 Presentations:
  - a Digital Ministry (Andy Braunston)
  - b Eco Church (Daleen ten Cate)
  - c Pioneer Ministry (Mike Walsh)
- 6 Executive Report (Part II): Finance Consultation
- 7 Introductions, welcomes and thanks
- 8 URC Jubilee celebrations: UK wide
  - North Western Synod
- 9 Closing Worship

Adjourned to 15<sup>th</sup> October 2022

## Minutes of Autumn Synod meeting

- 1 The Synod Clerk welcomed all present online, and in person, to the meeting. Synod Clerk also welcomed Ecumenical colleagues and declared the meeting as formally constituted.
- 2 The Synod Clerk invited the Synod meeting to appoint Revd Clare Downing, Moderator of General Assembly to chair the meeting.
- 3 Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe and Revd Elizabeth Gray-King led the meeting in worship.
- 4 Synod Meeting remembered ministers who had died since the Autumn Synod:
  - Revd Kenneth Hall
  - Revd Glyn Eatock
  - Revd John Griffiths Hetherington
- 5 Synod meeting also heard of churches which had closed since the Autumn Synod:
  - Whalley Road, Accrington
  - Patricroft
  - Chapel Street and Hope, Salford
- 6 Synod Meeting said farewell to ministers who have left Synod since the meeting in October 2021:
  - Revd Dave Fraser
  - Revd Liz Jewitt
  - Revd Dave Harkison
  - Revd Janet McLeod (Methodist)
  - Revd Zena Smith (Methodist)
- 7 Synod Meeting welcomed two new ministers to Synod:
  - Revd Jonnie Hill

- Revd Adam Woodhouse

8 The Minutes of the meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> April 2021 were agreed

9 The Synod Clerk presented the Executive Report, which incorporated reports from the Executive and Pastoral Committees. Resolution 1 was moved as follows:

**Synod Meeting concurs with the appointments of Derek Estill as Convenor of Lancashire Area Pastoral Committee until Autumn Synod 2022, and Ken Snaith as Lancashire Area Lay Preaching Commissioner**

Resolution 1 was carried with 0 votes against.

10 Resolution 2 was moved as follows:

**Synod extends Rev Dr Marion Tugwood's term as Synod Pastoral Convenor until Spring Synod 2022**

Resolution 2 was carried with 1 vote against

11 Revd Dr Lesley Husselbee addressed Synod in relation to the work being undertaken by the Facilitation Group. Some questions from the floor were answered by Revd Elizabeth Gray-King, who confirmed that the questions being asked by the Group are intended to provide an opportunity for all opinions and comments to be aired. The process for analysis of the responses will feedback to Synod.

Resolution 3 was moved as follows:

**Synod meeting welcomes this work and is looking forward to sharing in the report from the Facilitation Group. The outcome of the consultation will make an important contribution to our thinking and to the**

**decisions which Synod will need to take about its future.**

- 12 Resolution 3 was carried with 0 votes against
- 13 Revd Mike Walsh addressed Synod regarding the Renewed Beginnings programme.
- 14 Jean Mullineux, Chair of Trust, presented the Resources and Trust Committee reports, particularly addressing the proposed action to be taken by North Western Synod in response to the deficit of the Ministers' Pension Fund.
- 15 Resolution 4 was put to the meeting:

**The North Western Synod recognises that the extra prudence now required in the valuation of the Ministers' Pension Fund ('MPF') has created a substantial deficit in that Fund; and acknowledges that, although the United Reformed Church Trust Ltd ('URC Trust') on behalf of the United Reformed Church has an obligation to meet the deficit on the MPF, it does not have the resources to do this on its own and that this challenge requires a URC family solution.**

Resolution 4 was passed with 0 votes against

- 16 Lawrence Heath-Moore, Mission Mentor for Central Area, sought assurance that support would be provided to ministers who might face challenges as a result of these difficulties with the Ministers' pensions. Revd John Piper confirmed that pastoral care to those affected is a high priority through this process. Giles Robinson sought clarification that these resolutions dealt only with the

contributions which North Western Synod were making, as part of the whole denomination's response.

17 Resolution 5 was moved:

**The Synod notes that as part of a collective agreement across the URC Family, the Directors of the URC (NW Province) Trust intend to agree to make payments totalling £550,000 to the URC Trust for the sole purpose of funding the pensions of ministers and church related community workers in the period to 31st December 2024, and to make a provisional offer to the URC Trust of £640,000 over the period to 31st December 2030 noting that these amounts will only be asked for if subsequent actuarial valuations of the MPF demonstrate that these are necessary: The Synod notes that any of these funds that are ultimately not required for this purpose will be returned**

18 Resolution 5 was passed with 0 votes against

19 Mike Hart, Synod Treasurer, presented the Finance Report.

20 Resolution 6 was moved:

**Synod notes and adopts the recommendations contained within the Finance Report.**

21 Resolution 6 was passed with 0 votes against

22 Mal Breeze (CRCW in Lancashire East Missional Partnership) proposed that the Synod Clerk sends a letter of support to the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan in light of the current situation. Revd Elizabeth

Gray-King offered a pray for peace, patience, truth and justice in Taiwan.

- 23 The Synod Clerk, on behalf of Synod, thanked Jean Mullineux for her years of service as Chair of Trust and made a presentation of thanks to her.
- 24 The Synod Clerk, on behalf of Synod thanked Angela Bogg for her years of service on a number of Committees and made a presentation of thanks to her.
- 25 The Synod Clerk welcomed Aftab Mughal and Fozia Aftab as Racial Justice and Intercultural Advocates, and Aftab, additionally, as the North Western Synod Representative to General Assembly Mission Committee, and moved the resolution as follows:

**Synod appoints Aftab Mughal and Fozia Aftab as Racial Justice and Cultural Advocates and further nominates Aftab Mughal as the North Western Synod Representative to General Assembly Mission Committee.**

- 26 Resolution 8 was passed with 0 votes against
- 27 Welcomes also expressed to Lawrence Heath-Moore as Central Area Mission Mentor and Revd Dr Rob Hoch as Learning and Training Mentor; and to Professor Christopher Whitehead as Chair Elect to the Trust Committee and to begin his term of office in March 2022.
- 28 A video presentation on Eco issues was made, following which Revd Kate Gray addressed Synod before Resolution 7 was moved:

**Synod Meeting accepts and adopts the Synod Environmental Policy**

- 29 Resolution 7 was passed with 0 votes against
- 30 Julie Rafferty, Synod Safeguarding Officer, presented the Safeguarding Report.
- 31 The Synod Clerk presented Margery Pitcher as Locally Accredited Lay Preacher and Christopher Whitehead as Nationally Accredited lay Preacher; Christine Holmes and Ann Gill had also achieved Locally Accredited Lay Preacher status and will be presented with their certificates on another occasion.
- 32 The Synod Clerk sent congratulations, on behalf of Synod, to Revd Anthony Burnham and Revd Margery Ayton for 60 years since Ordination and to Revd Donald Firth and Revd Brenda Willis for 40 years service since Ordination.
- 33 The Moderator thanked Wilmslow church for hosting the meeting and offering hospitality; Synod Executive for their work over the past months; Revd Elizabeth Gray-King for her work as Synod Pastor, to the Synod office staff and to the Tech Team who have enabled the meeting to take place.
- 34 Synod meeting expressed thanks to Revd Clare Downing for chairing the meeting, and for her support for North Western Synod over recent months.
- 35 Revd Kirsty Thorpe and Revd Elizabeth Gray-King led the meeting in closing worship.
- 36 The meeting was adjourned until 19<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

## **Minutes of Extraordinary Synod Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2022 via Zoom**

- 1 Synod was invited to formally agree that Revd Clare Downing, Moderator of General Assembly, should chair this meeting, and this was passed unanimously.
- 2 Revd Clare Downing led the meeting in an opening prayer
- 3 The meeting was formally constituted.
- 4 The Synod Clerk presented the report for the proposal for a Nominations Committee, and moved the following resolution:

### **Resolution 1: Synod agrees to the creation of a Nominations Committee**

- 5 Resolution 1 was carried with 0 votes against.
- 6 The Synod Clerk was able to advise Synod that Revd Ruth Wollaston had agreed to chair the Nominations Committee, and a further resolution was introduced and presented to Synod:

### **Resolution 1a: Synod appoints the Revd Ruth Wollaston as convenor of the Nominations Committee**

- 7 Resolution 1a was passed with 0 votes against
- 8 Revd Martyn Coe presented the report proposing the reforming of the Mission and Discipleship Committee by creating a Network and Steering Group.
- 9 Questions concerning the nomenclature of the Network and Steering Group were aired, and an amendment to the Resolution was proposed by Revd John Piper, seconded by Revd Mike Walsh and accepted by Revd Martyn Coe

regarding the wording of the Resolution. As amended, the following resolution was presented:

**Resolution 2: Synod agrees to revive the work of the Mission and Discipleship Committee by the formation of a Mission and Discipleship Network and Steering Group.**

- 10 Resolution 2 was passed with 1 vote against
- 11 A further resolution was presented, having changed the reference to 'Chair' in the resolution to 'Convenor':

**Resolution 3 Synod agrees to the appointment of Revd Richard Bradley as convenor of the Mission and Discipleship Network and Steering Group initially until Autumn Synod Meeting 2023**

- 12 Resolution 3 was passed with 0 votes against
- 13 The Synod Clerk presented the intention that the Communications committee is boosted in membership and redoubles its efforts in streamlining communication within and across Synod.
- 14 Revd Elizabeth Gray-King presented the proposal for the appointment of a Deputy Synod Clerk to support the work of the Synod during this current period.
- 15 Some questions concerning the financial implications of staffing costs and staff structures were raised, and the Synod Treasurer confirmed that the costs would come from Synod reserves.
- 16 It was recognized that this was a fixed term appointment, reflecting the current absence of a Synod Moderator.
- 17 Revd Elizabeth Gray-King moved the resolution:

**Resolution 4: Synod agrees to the appointment of a Deputy Synod Clerk for a fixed period of two years**

- 18 Resolution 4 was passed with 0 votes against
- 19 The Synod Clerk presented a proposal that a review be conducted regarding the post and role of Synod Pastoral Convenor during its vacancy.
- 20 The Synod Clerk moved the resolution:

**Resolution 5: Synod agrees to appoint Derek Estill to convene and chair a review of the post of Synod Pastoral Convenor, expecting to report to the Spring 2022 Synod Meeting.**

- 21 Resolution 5 was passed with 0 votes against
- 22 The Synod Clerk presented the proposed appointment of a new convenor for Central Area Pastoral Committee, following the current convenor (Revd Richard Bradley) being appointed as Convenor of the Mission and Discipleship Network and Steering Group.
- 23 Synod allowed an amendment of the resolution to read 2024 instead of 2025 (reflecting the likely date of retirement of the new convenor)
- 24 The Synod Clerk moved the resolution:

**Resolution 6: Synod agrees to the appointment of Revd Jacky Embrey as Central Area Pastoral Committee Convenor until Spring Synod 2024**

- 25 Resolution 6 was passed with 1 vote against
- 26 The Synod Clerk reminded Synod of the need to provide nominations for General Assembly and Assembly Executive

by the end of March, and that names needed to be approved at Synod Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

- 27** Synod was asked to encourage people to put themselves forward for nomination for a period of 1, 2 or 3 years.
- 28** Revd Elizabeth Gray-King closed the meeting in prayer
- 29** Synod Meeting was adjourned until 19<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at Oasis, MediaCityUK.

# **Reports for the Autumn 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. The Executive has continued to deal with challenges arising from the absence of the Moderator, currently on extended leave, and Convenor of Synod Pastoral Committee pending a review of that role. The Committee has been very grateful for the continued support of Revd Clare Downing, who is both General Assembly Moderator and Moderator of Wessex Synod, and Revd Elizabeth Gray-King, who has taken on the role of Synod Pastor offering pastoral support to Ministers, CRCWs, Mission Mentors, CYDO and other staff.

2 In addition, Revd Richard Bradley has continued to attend the monthly Moderators' meetings to represent Synod in relation to vacancies and Opportunities for Ministry within the Synod; and Synod Executive Committee has been meeting monthly, to ensure that during the temporary absence of the Moderator, the work of the Synod continues.

3 Since our Autumn Synod Meeting, the Executive Committee has met on five occasions (including one extended meeting with members of Trust), and has acted on behalf of Synod Meeting during the period in between meetings to plan ahead, respond to emerging issues and advertise new appointments. Executive Committee receives reports and updates from the various committees of the

Synod staff and officers to support local churches, their ministers and church officers.

## **Appointments and Renewals**

4 We are very pleased to report that Elizabeth Hall has agreed to be Convenor of the Cheshire East and Derbyshire Border Missional Partnership; Revd Mike Aspinall has agreed to be Convenor of Lancashire East; Revd Mike Walsh has become Convenor of Bolton and Salford.

5 Elizabeth Hall has also agreed to accept the role as Convenor of Ministries Committee for an initial term of 3 years, until Spring 2025; in welcoming Elizabeth, we also thank Revd Martyn Coe for his years of service as Convenor of that committee.

6 A small group has now conducted a review of the role of Synod Pastoral Convenor, and Executive will now reflect upon how to implement the recommendations from the Review. The recommendation that the role will no longer be considered a 50% scoped Synod role has been accepted.

## **Committees**

7 The Extraordinary Synod Meeting which was held in mid-January has provided impetus for renewed enthusiasm and commitment and you will already see reports from the Mission and Discipleship Committee have been included in the Book of Reports. The Communications Committee will have met for its first meeting shortly before Synod Meeting takes place. The Nominations Committee is close to being ready to begin its work and, once constituted, will have a number of roles to consider in enabling and facilitating the work of Synod.

## **MISSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**

8 The Facilitation Group has been gathering, and continues, to gather views and opinions Synod-wide about the work and role of Missional Partnerships. The Group has held some analysis events to develop ideas from the research findings and has more planned in order that the work of Missional Partnerships can develop and flourish.

9 One of the tasks which Executive has spent a considerable amount of time on is the Enabling Agreement for Missional Partnerships and their Steering Groups. Executive has recognised that, in the effort to get such a radically different way of working up and running within Synod, some of what was done may not have been done as well and helpfully as possible at the time. This was not the intention, but led to some lack of clarity. Executive presents an Enabling Agreement to this Synod meeting, upon which Missional Partnerships can build firm foundations and look forward as they discern God's mission in their local communities. (See page 28). You will see from the editing notes attached to the document that the Agreement has gone through various iterations before reaching what we believe is a workable, practical and encouraging document which will enable the work of each Missional Partnership in its own setting and taking account of its own unique situation.

**Resolution 1: Synod Meeting adopts the Missional Partnership Enabling Agreement to support the ongoing work of missional Partnerships**

10 Executive recognizes that some churches may feel they are in the wrong Missional Partnership and some Missional Partnerships may feel their Partnership does not properly reflect the potential of the churches within it, the nature of the local environment and its geography. Churches and Missional Partnerships are encouraged to have conversations about Missional Partnership boundaries and to submit any proposals for changes to Synod Pastoral Committee by 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022. Synod Executive undertakes to consider these proposals with the aim of agreeing any adjusted Missional Partnership boundaries at October 2022 Synod meeting.

## **SYNOD CONSULTATION ON FINANCE**

11 At the October 2021 Synod Meeting, Mike Hart, Synod Treasurer, provided an overview of the financial position of the Synod and its churches and key issues that Synod would need to address in the next couple of years. In particular, in the context of the Synod's agreed principles for the use of resources:

- that our priority is God's mission;
- that the strong should help the weak; and
- that we belong to each other under God.

He raised three broad areas to be considered:

- How can we make best use of the resources available to the Synod over the next five years?
- How does our support for local churches need to evolve to meet their new context and needs?
- How can we meet our obligations to the wider church in a fair and equitable way?

12 The next two sections offer recommendations based on wide engagement to move forward on the first two of these questions. Proposals to address the third area which focuses primarily on our collective obligations to the Ministry and Mission Fund will form the subject of a separate report to a future Synod Meeting.

### **How can we make best use of the resources available to the Synod over the next five years?**

13 Recent budget reports to the Synod Meeting have sought to provide a greater clarity of information about how the resources available to Synod are used to meet:

- the legal and polity obligations of the Trust and the Synod, and
- to provide support and expertise to help the work of local churches and other mission priorities agreed by the Synod.

14 In broad terms, the legal and polity obligations require an income of around £375k each year (including the contribution to the pension deficit), and the support and expertise about £725k each year (including £200k budget for Grants).

15 For many years, the Synod Budget has been underpinned by a reliance on windfall income particularly from the proceeds of sale from church buildings and the use of reserves. Although both are currently healthy, it is not good practice to place a long term reliance on such sources. Particularly, with the changed circumstances and therefore needs facing local churches, now would be an appropriate time for a more in-depth consideration of the Synod budget (in terms of both its sources of income and the priorities for expenditure).

16 Some work in this area would benefit from the perspective of a broadly constituted task group (Scrutiny Committee) in reviewing the details of current arrangements and developing proposals for future years' budgets. Some work in this area would benefit from a wider consultation.

17 Acting on behalf of the Synod meeting, the remit of such a task group would be to:

- Review the current Synod Budget and Accounts (both income and expenditure)
- Taking a five year perspective, advise on future patterns of expenditure and sources of income consistent with a reduced reliance on windfall income
- To consult with local churches through the Facilitation Group

18 The task group and Facilitation Group would report back to the Synod Meeting in October 2022 to enable proposals to be adopted as part of the 2023 Synod Budget.

19 The task group which is expected to meet 4 or 5 times during the next 6 months would comprise:

20 Appointed from Nominations Committee from nominations from local churches

- 1 x Missional Partnership Convenor,
- 2 x Church Treasurer or Elder with Financial Responsibilities
- 1 x Minister in Pastoral Charge,

Appointed by the Synod Executive

- 1 x Mission Mentor,

- 1 x Member of Synod Executive
- 1 x Trustee of the Synod Trust Company (Nominated by the Trust)

21 The Synod Treasurer would be an ex-officio member of the task group

**Resolution 2: The Synod Meeting approves the creation of a budget task group in accordance with the remit and membership set out above. The group would report back to the Autumn 2022 Synod Meeting.**

**How does our support for local churches need to evolve to meet their new context and needs?**

22 The recent work of the Facilitation Group has identified a number of areas in which churches would welcome greater support from Synod employed staff or volunteers. This will be shared with the task group as part of their consideration of future Synod Budgets. The work of the Facilitation Group also highlighted questions about the availability of Synod Grants, and the funding of the work of Missional Partnerships (including the payment of Ministers' Expenses). These would both benefit from further consultation with local churches through the Facilitation group.

23 In terms of Synod Grants, areas of focus could include:

- Clarity between Buildings and Mission Grants

- The “match” funding contribution expected from local church(es) including from Manse Grants and other grant sources
- Priority topics for Grant applications
- Funding for feasibility / project management work on large grant funded projects

24 In terms of general funding for Missional Partnerships, significantly the largest element of cost is likely to remain the contributions to Ministers’ expenses which under the URC’s Plan for Partnership remain the responsibility of local churches. The current arrangements provide for the Synod to administer these expenses on behalf of local churches and partnerships. They are funded by contributions from each church based on their number of members and regular worshippers. These arrangements were agreed by the Synod Meeting following consultation in October 2019. It is likely that shared work within an individual Missional Partnership would need to be funded specifically by the churches in that Partnership perhaps reflecting the Synod’s principles for the use of resources set out above.

25 As the presentation to the Autumn 2021 Synod Meeting highlighted, whilst the general reserves held by the Synod / Trust total around £4m, those held collectively by local churches are approximately 4 times that amount. Work on church reserves held in 2020 (the last year for which most church accounts are available) identified that the collective reserves of churches in most Missional Partnerships amount to over £1m, and in some cases considerably more.

26 Given that the Facilitation Group has already undertaken consultation which revealed church views on these topics, it is proposed to request them to support the Synod Treasurer by undertaking further specific consultation work in the areas of:

- The provision of grants to local churches by the Synod
- The funding of Missional Partnership activities and responsibilities
- The sharing of resources between churches

27 The work is to be undertaken in a timeframe to enable proposals for future Synod Grants and the funding of Missional Partnerships to be presented to the October 2022 Synod Meeting for implementation from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023.

28 The Facilitation Group have confirmed that they will be happy to undertake this work on behalf of the Synod Meeting.

**Resolution 3: The Synod Meeting approves consultation through the Facilitation Group to consider improvements to:**

- **The provision of grants to local churches by the Synod**
- **The funding of Missional Partnership activities and responsibilities**
- **The sharing of resources between churches**

**The consultation is to be undertaken to enable proposals for improvements in these areas to be presented to the October 2022 Synod Meeting for implementation from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023.**



## North Western Synod

### Missional Partnership Enabling Agreement

---

#### Definition

A North Western Synod Missional Partnership is a Group [The Manual, Section B 1.(1)(b)] of United Reformed local churches and projects committed to a process of exploring and deepening close, intentional following of Jesus and wholehearted participation in God's work of transforming this world into what Jesus called the Kingdom of God. It does this by each church and member being committed to a relationship of sharing lay and ordained ministry, sharing mission activity and supporting each other in pastoral care. A Missional Partnership takes a strategic view of mission in its locality with local people and churches working together, supported by the Synod, to discern how best to be disciples of Jesus and to serve God's mission in their own settings.

#### History

Missional Partnerships were established in 2017 as the Synod expanded its passion for Jesus Shaped Mission with the development of shared local ministry and with the establishment of a resource pool of Mission Mentors alongside other community development and children centred synod staff. Each partnership established a Steering Group and began to explore new relationships and new accountabilities. Commitment to the structure and passion for Missional Partnership purpose have been evident and significant since that time.

This **Enabling Agreement** is a common template as a foundation for each Partnership to define its own commitments and relationships.

#### Role

*Generally, to:*

1. Discern together the mission focus of the partnership as a whole and sections of it, hearing and discerning direction for new mission focus and activity

2. Discern together how recognised ministries may share skills creatively throughout the partnership, understanding the potential for named links with churches and projects as well as partnership wide skill sharing
3. Discern together how all recognised lay leaders may share skills creatively throughout the partnership, understanding the potential for named contact with churches and projects
4. Foster mutual support for local pastoral care
5. Foster mutual support for local worship and spiritual development
6. Foster mutual support in local administrative duties
7. Foster mutual support for the care and development of buildings

*Specifically to:*

1. Maintain an active Steering Group and hold meetings as frequently as the Missional Partnership Steering Group agrees
2. Agree a vision statement for the Missional Partnership
3. Agree practical resource sharing of both finance and people
4. Call recognised ministers according to the policies and practice of the United Reformed Church with the Missional Partnership Steering Group convenor normally acting as Interim Moderator for the call process
5. By its members, participate in the wider councils of the Synod and General Assembly, nominating members to Synod committees as appropriate and agreed by Synod
6. Refer, through the Missional Partnership Steering Group Chair, to Synod Pastoral Committee any matter of concern or uncertainty
7. Make decisions according to the Standing Orders of the General Assembly, with the default being consensus decision making.

### **Steering Group Membership**

- Missional Partnership Steering Group Convenor, appointed by Synod Nominations committee and, where practicable, a member of another Missional Partnership
- One serving Elder or equivalent person from each church or project in the partnership (two, if the churches in the partnership number seven or below, who will be voting members)
- All recognised active URC (United Reformed Church) ministries in the Partnership area including Stipendiary Ministers, non-Stipendiary

ministers of all models, Church Related Community Workers, Ministers in Special Category posts, Pioneer Ministers, active retired ministers, Ministers in LEPs (all of whom are in attendance for Steering Group meetings and are not voting members)

- One Synod Mission Mentor (in attendance)

## Editing History

Draft	Date	Author-Reviewer - Contributor	Note
Draft 1	7 Jan 2022	Elizabeth Gray-King	combination of words from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terms of Reference used and agreed from various committees</li> <li>• original missional partnership papers back in 2017</li> <li>• present Steering Group Terms of Reference</li> <li>• present practice of good Missional Partnerships</li> <li>• evidence from Facilitation Group Consultation data</li> </ul>
Draft 2	1 Feb 22	Elizabeth Gray-King	Simplification, language consistency, references from The Manual
Draft 3	4 Feb 22	Sarah Moore	Review from Deputy Clerk to General Assembly
Draft 4	7 Feb 22	SG Conveners	Contribution from Partnerships' Steering Group Conveners proposed Steering Group Terms of Reference
Draft 5	9 Feb 22	Exec & Trust	Feedback from discussion at joint event
Draft 6	28 Feb 22	Sarah Moore	Review after changes to date
Final Version	1 Mar 22	Exec	Decision based on edits from Analysis events (18, 19 Feb) and final committee review

## Report from the Facilitation Group

29 The Facilitation Group has been in the process of analysing the questions sent to churches.

30 The Questions were circulated in Autumn 2021 and were:

*1 What has your church, community or Missional Partnership done differently during the pandemic of which you are proud?*

*2 Of all of your church related activity for as long as you remember, what single thing do you want to treasure and renew in your future activities with your church, community or Missional Partnership?*

31 Though we have always focussed this consultation to invite comments on structure, the questions were designed to ask members of synod about structure in a reverse way than might have been expected. Instead of asking a direct opinion about the structures whose principles were accepted in October 2019, our questions focussed on what has been creative and celebrated. This was to point synod to structures which can help church life flourish.

32 At the time of writing, the Facilitation Group has received over 63 responses varying from Church Meetings, Elders Meetings, Steering Groups and Individuals. Two thirds of the responses were from groups; this tells us that well over 150 people have been able

to contribute to the thinking. What has been most striking is how well churches have coped imaginatively during the lockdown part of the pandemic and beyond. Two areas stand out most:

**33 Technologies:** firstly, the way in which even quite small churches, some with elderly congregations, have learned how to make use of technologies such as streaming services, work on Zoom, Facebook, YouTube and connecting by telephone and email. While most have embraced Zoom worship, others have not. A few churches are experimenting with developing hybrid worship in order to serve the needs of those who are comfortable to return to church and those who are not or who live at a distance.

**34 Pastoral Care:** secondly, churches have made great efforts to make sure that everyone on their congregations and beyond have been contacted by email, phone, visits, printed newsletters and worship sheets, Zoom coffee mornings, cards and gifts, delivered meals etc. Some churches have organised walks around the area or kept working with such activities as Dementia cafes. Some of this work was new and people showed commitment to continue.

**35 Structure** a significant minority of individuals and churches wrote to us at length about concerns e about the structure of the synod - and particularly the way in which Missional Partnerships relate structurally to the Synod. Some are concerned about the size of some Missional Partnerships and the perceived lack of ministry. Some were concerned about the way in which Missional Partnerships were introduced and cited a lack of consultation. It is

important to many that the Synod listens to them. I report that I contributed this information to a joint meeting between Executive and Synod Trust and the information was key in their preparation of resolutions to Synod.

36 Three analysis events have taken place to enable people to learn from the responses and make recommendations. We will hold as many other analysis events as desired.

*Lesley Husselbee*

*Convenor, Facilitation Group February 2022*

## **Pastoral Committee Report**

### **SPC Report March 2022**

#### **Minister's Comings and Goings**

37 The Mission Mentor post connected to South area will be ready to be advertised in the very near future, reflecting the input from churches in the South Area.

38 Reviews for NSM and SMs in non-pastoral posts are well underway with most now having, or in the process with Pastoral Committee of creating, Terms of Settlement. Reviews are undertaken by an Area Pastoral Committee Convenor and the Synod Pastor.

39 Pastoral committee is working on a Pastorate Profile Template which will highlight the work of the whole Missional Partnership with appendices on each church or project in the partnership. Some vacancies have been vacant too long and it is hoped that more streamlined and focused profiles will help attract interest.

40 Pastoral Committee agreed with Executive that any stipended ministry post may be part-time, perhaps encouraging those who have non-church part-time work to exercise pastoral ministry in Partnerships.

41 Pastoral Committee concurred with the calls of Kate Hunt to the West Area of Cumbria MP and Lisa Wilson to the North Area of Cumbria MP. Ordination will be subject to final agreement by Assembly Ministries Committee.

42 Overall, Pastoral Committee is well aware of the pressure on many of our Ministers, yet painfully mindful of the scoping situation

in the whole URC. The committee is working to make deployment as effective as possible whilst also encouraging people to consider NSM Model 4 ministry.

### **Area Pastoral Committees and Church Life**

43 At Synod meeting in January, The Revd Jacky Embrey was appointed as Central Area Pastoral Committee convener as The Revd Richard Bradley stepped down. He is to be thanked for his service.

44 North Western Synod, as other synods with places of natural beauty, is home to a significant number of retired ministers. Considering the geographical size of the synod, it has become clear that pastoral care for our retired ministers is more effective with closer relationships than one central Synod pastoral carer. The committee agreed that this care should be overseen by Area Pastoral Committees, who may encourage even closer care from people in Missional Partnerships.

45 Bethel URC (Westhoughton) URC and Methodist Churches voted unanimously to form an LEP and a service of celebration is planned for Pentecost Sunday in the afternoon

### **Missional Partnerships activities and concerns**

46 The Commissioning of Lancashire South MP was an excellent event, held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2021.

47 Renewed Beginnings activities are growing throughout the Synod as churches look to their next steps post Covid. Many churches had opened up physical worship by the autumn, but some

had to move to digital in light of new restrictions. A good number of churches have developed the capacity to hold hybrid worship events. All churches are encouraged to speak to Mission Mentors about developing the technology for hybrid worship and other church events.

48 Well over 100 people have attended Sacrament training which is in keeping with the Sacrament Training Policy (available on the Synod website). Training is delivered by Training Mentor, The Revd Rob Hoch and the Revd Jacky Embrey. If an Elder or recognised Lay preacher wants to attend training, they must first be endorsed by their own Church Meeting who then puts their name forward to the Synod Pastoral Committee. Missional Partnerships will have a list of those so recognised and trained in order to support Partnership churches. Thanks are offered to all who so willingly and ably serve our churches in this way.

49 Pastoral committee has been sourcing people to recommend to Executive as Missional Partnership Steering Group Convenors. Convenors, as a group, suggested that the optimum arrangement should be that the convener is from another Missional Partnership in order to bring outside wisdom and relationship and to reduce a risk of conflict of interest. Ideally, a person should be the convener of only one partnership. Pastoral committee is committed to finding people to fill all the roles with these conditions as soon as possible. Convenors may be lay people as well as ministers. If you are interested in this role or know someone that you can recommend then please speak to a member of the pastoral committee.

## **CUMBRIA AREA PASTORAL COMMITTEE**

Pastoral Convenor: Martyn Coe

50 At this synod two of our members stand down. Pam Dent who has served as secretary to the APC for many years also serving as our lay preaching commissioner. Her attention to detail and knowledge of the churches and preachers of the county will be missed on the committee.

51 Nick Andrews steps down as Area Finance Officer. Nick agreed to serve longer than he intended so that he could support us through the pandemic arrangements and move into the new way of working as we strengthened the Missional Partnership Steering Group. Nick's willingness to go the extra mile in supporting churches especially as we worked through each years M&M process has been appreciated.

52 Since the last report to synod folk have recognised a call to work among us.

53 Kate Hunt is called to the Cumbria Partnership for service with the South West Cumbria United Area and her Ordination, Induction and welcome will be in Barrow in Furness on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> August.

54 Lisa Wilson will live in Carlisle and lead in the North East section of the county. Her Ordination and Induction will be in Carlisle Cathedral at 10:30 on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> July

55 Within the Partnership Ministry Team Alistair Smeaton is half time Mission Mentor and Martyn Coe is half time Coordinator (which involves working across the county supporting the work of the Ecumenical county alongside the District Chair, Bishop and Divisional Commander)

56 Our Ecumenical working is called God For All and as we increase the pace of activity following pandemic restrictions, the URC in Cumbria both functions as a URC partnership and encourages local congregations to emphasise the opportunities of working closely with other churches in their local Mission Community. In some areas closer working is realising one goal which is to help sustain a ministerial presence in each community by working together. Although we closed our Sedbergh Church we share in the funding of a pioneer minister for the Dales. Becca is a Church of England priest and is paid for by URC, Methodist and Church of England funds. It is hoped this collaboration will expand but the different ways we all fund and appoint ministry makes it difficult to take a single approach for the county.

57 We have one church considering working without a building and one considering whether its task is complete and we give thanks for their history. In Dalton within the South West Cumbria United Area as I write the report we are seeking tenders for a refurbishment of the building. This will install good quality kitchen and toilet facilities along with a small meeting room into what is now the church hall and upgrade the main meeting space so that it will be a multi-use space we hope this will be in use by late autumn.

58 A number of our churches are concerned as they look to the future and their capacity to provide good governance locally. The increase in good practice is often experienced by our mostly older Eldershops as a difficult burden to bear. We know that charity law and safeguarding are vital parts of who we are (and that some places have sat too lightly to charity good practice for too long) but our capacity is limited and our present structures make support by

the area and possible discernment for the future more difficult than at times we might wish. As a county we focus on mission recognising that we do so in a time of uncertainty and decline. Our ecumenical working is, we hope and pray, the best way to support a Christian meeting in each community so that mission and care can continue.

## **LANCASHIRE AREA PASTORAL COMMITTEE**

Mr Derek Estill (Pastoral Convenor), Miss Margery Pitcher (Secretary), Mr Gordon Bell (Finance Officer), Rev Daleen Ten Cate (Ecumenical Officer & Missional Mentor), Mr Ken Snaith (Lay Preaching Commissioner), Revd Martin Whiffen (Buildings Advisor) Mrs Lynn Lonsdale, Rev Michele Jarmany, Synod Officers are ex officio members.

59 Each committee member is linked with a group of churches and contacts the Church Secretary prior to an APC meeting, so that churches may raise issues or share good news stories to be brought to the meeting. Meetings are being held on Zoom and will be for the foreseeable future.

### ***Ministerial and Pastoral***

60 It is recognised that Missional Partnership Church Profiles need to illustrate partnership working and vision for the future and this is being given further thought as Missional Partnership churches review their Pastoral Profiles.

61 The list of Retired Ministers, Lay Preachers & Worship Leaders are to be updated now that churches have reopened for worship.

62 Lay people's Training and Authorisation to Preside at Communion is now being arranged by and through the Synod

63 Several people have stepped down from leading worship and are greatly thanked for their years of service to the Area and the wider church all of which has been much appreciated

64 Missional Partnerships have taken on responsibility for keeping in contact with Retired Ministers and informing the Pastoral Committee as needed.

### ***Lancashire Missional Partnerships***

**South MP** *Convenor* - Revd Daleen ten Cate

Churches - Kirkham, Chorley, Adlington, Leyland, Longridge, Penwortham

**West MP** – *Convenor* - Revd Daleen ten Cate

Churches – Bispham, Marton, Fleetwood, St Annes, Fairhaven, Poulton, Hambleton, Lighthouse, Elswick, Kirkham

**North MP** *Convenor* – Revd Liz Mullen

Churches – Bolton-le-Sands, Trinity (Lancaster), Halton, Hest Bank, Morecambe, Forton, Garstang

**East MP** *Convenor* – Revd Mike Aspinall

Churches – Revidge Fold, Ragged School, Trinity (Blackburn), Westbury Gardens, Woodlands, Burnley, Darwen Central, Darwen Trinity, Tockholes, Burnley, Clitheroe, Gt Harwood

**65 Note!** The Revd Liz Mullen has stepped down as Convenor of Lancashire East Missional Partnership with many thanks for her service overseeing its Inauguration and Commissioning. It is with much pleasure that East MP has welcomed the Revd Mike Aspinall to be their new East MP Convenor.

## ***MP Away Days/Retreats.***

66 Each of the above Partnerships will soon be holding either Partnership Days or Away Days to promote getting to know each other better and/or to help with work on how best they can engage with 'New Beginnings' etc in each PM area. For example, the Lancashire East Missional Partnership churches will be holding a Retreat for all their Churches Elders which it is hope will be a positive and worthwhile time spent together.

## ***Churches Closures***

67 It is with sadness that we report that the Cleveleys and Fulwood churches have now closed but give thanks for the faithful service their members have selflessly given over many years which has touched, inspired and been a major influence on many people's lives.

## ***Good News***

### ***68 Kairos Hub Ecumenical Housing – Blackburn***

This ecumenical project seeks to meet the needs of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Blackburn by providing safe accommodation & holistic support to refused Asylum Seekers & refugees who find themselves homeless. The Hub provides pastoral care and support from Blackburn and Darwen Churches including a Mosque in Darwen. The Churches include the Community Church, Blackburn and Darwen United Reformed Churches, the Blackburn Methodist circuit Churches, the Kingdom Outreach church, and DARE (Darwen Asylum Refugee Enterprise) providing 6 supported flats for destitute Asylum Seekers including

furniture, bedding, and other equipment. Currently there are 4 tenants with more referrals in process.

69 *Clitheroe URC* have recently made 12 new members, have a very active 'Art4All' group for vulnerable adults, an English as a second language club as well as a monthly Saturday Cake and Conversation session that is open to all. They will soon have a new coloured window install at the front of their church.

70 *Leyland URC* provide a home for a wide variety of community activities for young and old and is currently doing lots of great work to refresh and reconfigure their town centre church to make it an even more open and inviting place as an integral part of the Town Centre working closely with the Town Council.

71 *Chorley URC* is bursting at the seams as the church experiences, what the minister refers to as 'exponential' growth. They have recently had a special service of rededication for their reconfigured worship space and are now in need of expanding their building to accommodate all those using the church for the many activities they provide from what is a very well place town centre location.

72 Synod Support - All the above churches, and others in the Lancashire Area, have been or are benefitting from Synod Grants/loans in support of their local mission which is recognised as very being very important and essential and integral to supporting the mission focused work of our churches across the

Synod.

73 Barrow (near Clitheroe) United Reformed Primary School  
This one and only United Reformed Church Primary School is in Barrow near to Clitheroe. As Covid restrictions ease things are getting back to normal last half term a team of URC Ministers and Lay Leaders, from the LEMP, led school weekly Assemblies with each class joining in separately on Zoom. These will be continuing in the coming weeks, hopefully as whole school in face to face, assemblies in the coming term.

74 As things return to normal the school is looking forward to celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the URC by planting 50 trees in its grounds. In March the school will Host an 'Elders Retreat' providing 50 or more Elders from the LEMP churches an opportunity to see and experience the school, which is a significant and unique part of the URC and member of the Lancashire East Missional Partnership. It will also enable the school to strengthen its connection with the Missional Partnership and the Missional Partnership members to strengthen theirs with the school.

## **CENTRAL AREA PASTORAL COMMITTEE**

Committee Membership: Revds Jacky Embrey (Convenor), Richard Bradley (Ecumenical Officer), Ruth Wollaston, Mr Neil Carter (Finance Officer), Mr Jed Garside and Mrs Wendy Smith (Secretary & Lay Preaching Commissioner), Synod officers *ex officio*. Thanks are extended to Revd Richard Bradley for his work as convenor and to Mike Aspinall, for his as property officer. 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.

Missional Partnerships:

### **Bolton and Salford:**

75 Thanks are extended to Christopher Whitehead, for his work as convenor of the Steering Group. We welcome Revd Mike Walsh as convenor with effect from January, 2022.

76 The steering group was able to meet in person in November and it was good to combine this with seeing the new premises at the Wharton and Cleggs Lane LEP.

77 The opportunity for ministry which was opened up after Revd Ruth Watson moved to her SCM post continues to be on the national vacancy list.

78 Westhoughton URC and Westhoughton Methodist Church have agreed unanimously to form a single congregation, Local Ecumenical Partnership. A service in celebration will be held to inaugurate this on the afternoon of Pentecost Sunday. All are welcome to join in this.

79 Chapel Street and Hope URC held their final service on Sunday 9th October. We give thanks to God for the commitment of many people down the years and to Revd Mike Aspinall for his service there, which continues through his connection with the photography society.

80 The management group for the SCM post at Oasis served by Revd Ruth Watson has been able to have their first on site meeting. We thank Nicola Wiggans for her service on this group and wish her well in her imminent move. We also welcome Revd Adam Scott as Ruth's line manager.

### **Bury, Rochdale and North Manchester:**

81 The Steering Group Continues to meet Convened by the Revd Sheila Coop.

82 Revds Daniel Harris and Richard Bradley meet regularly with Lawrence Moore, Sheila Coop and Kate Hunt (4th Year Student at Northern College) where ideas for missional discipleship are shared.

83 The weekly zoom coffee morning was appreciated by many during the lockdown and enabled folk across the partnership to get to know one another.

84 Littleborough URC are in talks about the future of their fellowship and their buildings.

### **Oldham and Tameside:**

85 Sheila Coop is currently convening the Steering Group and her work is much appreciated.

86 Revd Brian Davison, a Baptist minister, was inducted to serve the Beulah LEP on Sunday 20 February. The church was full for a joyful service, conducted jointly by the URC and Baptist Union.

## **SOUTH AREA PASTORAL COMMITTEE**

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

87 South Area Pastoral Committee has recently been having valuable and wide-ranging discussions on the working relationships between local churches, with the three Missional Partnerships in our area and with other parts of the Synod structures. The convenor tries to convey views from South Area to Synod Pastoral Committee each month, as well as giving SAPC and the Missional Partnerships some understanding of the issues Synod contends with.

88 SAPC has talked recently about the things we value from Synod and the things we lack, such as a new Mission Mentor. We have heard of the need for a renewed programme of support and information meetings for church officers and elders in South Area churches. Appreciation has been expressed for the work of the ministers, alongside concerns about their workload and wellbeing. How to deploy ministers, where vacancies should be declared, and whether the Missional Partnerships are the right size, are 'live' issues.

89 Some congregations are now back regularly worshipping in person, while others are finding that far more difficult to re-establish. Building problems have been very time-consuming for a few churches and in other settings people are exploring significant questions about the future. Several churches have interesting plans and SAPC tries to help when Mission Grant applications and

other projects are being thought through. The Renewed Beginnings material is proving helpful as a tool for opening up important questions and revealing new answers. SAPC has welcomed the new synod training programme for those presiding at the sacraments.

90 The committee expresses its thanks to Professor Christopher Whitehead, Revd Alison Termie and Mrs Eula Mesquita, whose membership of SAPC ends in March. It asks Synod to renew the co-opted membership of Mrs Gina Gibson, Mrs Hilary Grierson and Revd Mike Walsh and to agree the co-opted membership of Revd Jonnie Hill.

91 We now circulate our minutes and agendas to all serving ministers and Missional Partnership Steering Group convenors in South Area, so they are kept 'in the loop' and can attend meetings if they wish. The APC needs to know what is happening in the Missional Partnerships and vice versa. Perhaps this is a pattern for all the APCs to adopt when Synod restructuring plans are finalised.

92 Here is the news, in brief, from the Missional Partnerships.

South Manchester:

- Levenshulme Inspire is working on a proposal for a children and families worker
- The trustees for St Peter's ecumenical church need to appoint a new URC representative
- URC withdrawal from COTE in Droylsden will take place at the end of March

Cheshire East and Derbyshire Border:

- Elizabeth Hall has agreed to act as convenor for a year

- Mike Aspinall has now offered some time as an NSM
- Methodist ideas for Stockport town centre ministry have prompted URC thinking on this

#### Greater Manchester South and Cheshire:

- Sale is starting to explore its future in new ways
- Dandelion Community has completed major work on its buildings
- The Missional Partnership is hoping to meet a ministerial candidate quite soon

# SYNOD MINISTRIES COMMITTEE REPORT

Convener: Martyn Coe

93 This is my final report to synod as convenor of Ministries Committee. I have done a year longer than the original appointment and since Sarah Moore moved from the Synod in 2019 other responsibilities mean that it is right for me to hand over to a new convenor. A nomination is before synod for this role.

94 In the autumn Synod we introduced our new Training and Learning Mentor. Rob is well known to a number of you now and his staff report is included separately.

95 In addition to its ongoing work supporting the ministerial candidating process and those in training the committee has continued to look at the way that NSM ministers can work within Missional Partnerships. With differing training and responsibilities both NSM2 and NSM4 ministers can be a part of a partnership ministry team.

96 We have also worked alongside the Synod Pastoral Committee to support those ministers of word and sacrament who are in other employment. Ministers who (for example) work in chaplaincies might be paid by other organisations but they are certainly working on behalf of the whole church. Terms of Settlement for ministers in other employment are now coming into place and this will help the synod to have a healthy relationship with URC ministers wherever they have been called.

97 Sacraments training is required for those who will be authorised by the synod to serve in our churches. For some this is a refresher while for some this is part of exploring this calling. Pastoral Committee is responsible for authorisations but I am

pleased that Jackie Embrey and Rob Hoch have been delivering the new training which meets the requirements of the National Church.

98 Once again I encourage ministers to take up the training opportunities and grants which are available and for synod worship leaders and Assembly Lay Preachers to apply for the grants which are offered. Talk to Rob about these possibilities.

99 Training dates for the diary.

100 9-13 May national ministers study period in Shropshire.

101 22-25 May 2023 Synod Summer School (along with Northern and Mersey Synods) in Swanwick.

102 I would encourage Partnerships and Churches to help both preachers and ministers to take up the opportunity which are offered. Ministers are given two weeks for study each year and that can include a Sunday even if the course itself is not over a weekend. This is to enable a minister to fully participate in their study without having to prep a service either as part of the study time or in place of taking time off.

103 We need at least one new assessor for ministerial candidates and we are asking the Synod Nominations Committee to search for those who might be willing to undertake this task. If you would like to know more about what is entailed by being a part of this group please contact the office.

104 Legacies of Slavery and being an Anti-Racist Church are high on our agenda and we are working with the national church to provide support, training and encouragement to Partnerships, ministers and Churches.

105 The committee encourages every person to listen for the calling of the spirit as each of us discern our journey with Christ. Those who hear the call from God to serve Christ and the Church as Elders make promises at their ordination and inductions. General Assembly has added to the promises made by Elders so that they more closely reflect the promises made by Ministers of Word and Sacrament and CRCW ministers. A final question was added to the promises in 2021 and ministers conducting inductions are required to add this to the service.

106 Q: Do you promise as an elder of the United Reformed Church to seek its well-being, unity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always so far as you are able to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church?

107 A: By the grace of God I do, and all these things I profess and promise in the power of the Holy Spirit.

108 There is further explanation of these promises in the Guidelines of conduct and behaviour of Elders which can be found online.

109 Recently there have been questions from a church outwith the synod asking if only a minister can ordain and induct Elders. The answer is yes both to provide good order and for the minister to be a representative of the wider church. Eldership is a local calling but it is recognised by the whole of the URC and so we share this liturgy as part of our joint journey of discipleship.

## **RESOURCES COMMITTEE AND TRUST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Acting Convenor of Resources Committee and Chair of Trust Management Committee: Mike Aspinall  
Company Secretary: Tim Hopley

110 The Synod Resources Committee and the Trust Management Committee expresses it's thanks to everyone throughout the Synod in continuing to try to bring some stability to our shared life, in what is still very fluid times.

111 We continue to hold in our prayers all who are having to make difficult decisions in their church life, in some instances leading to closure, in others having to find new ways of being church. We are aware that some churches may not know the best way to proceed with their decision making and/or may not be aware of possibilities; whilst we don't always have all the answers we are very keen to try to help and support. As such we would urge any church with concerns to not hesitate in contacting the Synod office and we will work to assist.

112 The Resources Committee continue to work very hard in all matters relating to property and finance, and we could not continue to do so without the ongoing help from local members in individual churches who act on our behalf.

113 Similarly the Trust Management Committee continue to work overseeing all the necessary legal matters of the Trust, again with the help of the local Elders acting as managing Trustees of the local church, it's assets and finances. To all those Elders we offer our very grateful thanks, and assure you we are aware of the pressures you have been under during these last 2 years to try to maintain your buildings and ensure they are safe for people to once-again use more fully.

114 We will hopefully be welcoming Christopher Whitehead as the new Convenor of the Resources Committee and Chair of Trust Management Committee at our meeting.

## **FINANCE REPORT**

Mike Hart: Synod Treasurer

115 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.

### **Annual Accounts 2021**

116 The table attached to this report sets out the provisional figures for the end of the 2021 financial year. For clarity, the blocks of columns are as follows:

117 Green: Full Year 2021 Budget - the start year budget for the year

118 Blue: January to December 2021 – the provisional end of year position

119 Yellow: January to August 2021 – the position reported to October Synod Meeting

120 Green: Full Year 2022 Budget – the start year budget for 2022

121 There are a number of significant one-off items that affect the accounts for 2021 and need to be understood in any comparisons. The impact of the Covid Pandemic and the financial support

provided to churches particularly in meeting their M&M commitments has brought additional costs which are being funded on a planned basis from reserves as agreed by the Synod Meeting in Autumn 2020. These are shown partly in the Mission Grants line and the balance relating to M&M support paid directly to London in the one-off items. Sadly, there is also a significant inflow of resources from closed churches, and this will certainly continue to be a feature of our accounts in 2022. The year has also seen the refurbishment and opening of the new Synod Office and the decisions taken by the Trust and the Synod in the Autumn to support the denomination in addressing the accumulated deficit on the Ministers' Pension Fund.

122 Where appropriate the costs of the refurbishment of the Synod Office and the fitting of a lift to meet a good accessibility standard have now been capitalised. An up to date valuation of the finished property has been commissioned but is yet to be received and therefore is not reflected in these figures. The legal nature of the agreement to support the Ministers' Pension Fund deficit means that all the contributions for the period 2021 to 2024 have to be included in the 2021 Accounts, hence the inclusion of a cost of £508,487 rather than the £100,000 contribution which was actually paid in 2021.

123 Investment values rose significantly during the year leading to a gain in value of £472,292 over the year. However, realised investment income remains lower than in previous years. Discussions are underway with the Investment managers about means to achieve a better balance between realised income and capital growth. It is hoped that this will also be available to

churches, many of whom rely on their investment income to balance their budgets.

124 The pattern of general Synod Expenditure remains very similar to that reported at the October Synod Meeting. The increase in Synod Office costs arises from an update in Accounting Policy agreed by the Trust relating to the Depreciation of Fixed Assets to bring our policy in line with other Synod Trusts.

125 As reported in October there is an accumulated deficit of approximately £30,000 on the Missional Partnerships Fund for the payment of Ministers' Expenses. As agreed then, this balance and any deficit for 2022 will be written off to general reserves at the end of 2022.

## **Ministry and Mission Fund**

126 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 2021, the accumulated arrears of churches in this Synod to the fund amounted to £11,588, 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 2022.

127 The agreed M&M contribution for 2022 from this Synod is £1.585m. In line with the decision of the October Synod Meeting, £1.483m is being met by local churches through the normal assessment process with the balance being met from general

reserves as part of the Synod's support for local churches with issues arising from the pandemic.

128 Churches will shortly be receiving a request for information to support the assessment process for 2023. Early responses, even if based on unaudited accounts for 2021, will help us to fully assess the position on church membership and finances in setting an achievable approach to our contributions to the M&M Fund for 2023.

129 I am aware of a number of concerns from churches about the current assessment formula which has now been in use since 2015. I understand these concerns and plan to bring proposals to the next Synod Meeting as to how we might look in depth at an improved approach in time for the 2024 assessments.

## **Support for Local Churches**

130 As Synod Members will be aware in February 2021, Congregational Insurance announced that in response to the Supreme Court decision they would accept claims from churches for business Interruption losses incurred because of the Covid pandemic. We have worked 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. By the end of January 2022, local churches in this Synod had received over £800,000 in settlement of claims for business interruption resulting from the pandemic.

## **Staffing**

131 I am grateful to the Synod's Finance Team, Kirsty, Ryhana, and David for their contributions to our work over the last twelve months. I am sad to report that David will be leaving us in the summer. I am sure you will join me in thanking him for the contribution to the life of the Synod over the last 3 ½ years and wishing him well for the future. Before replacing David, we will reflect on the feedback from local churches about the support they would appreciate from the Synod and see how that can best be reflected in the role going forward.

Income & Expenditure Analysis

	Full Year 2021				January to December 2021				January to August 2021				Full Year 2022	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Variance	%	Actual	Budget	Variance	%	Actual	Budget	Variance	%	Budget
<b>Operational Expenditure</b>														
Salaries & honoraria	98,193	114,280	98,193	(16,087)	(14%)	82,168	65,462	(16,706)	(26%)	129,607				129,607
Synod office	47,460	100,961	47,460	(53,501)	(53%)	40,987	31,640	(9,347)	(30%)	51,452				51,452
Expenses: Synod committees	33,000	35,158	33,000	(2,158)	(6%)	22,434	22,000	(434)	(2%)	33,000				33,000
Expenses: Synod meetings	-	1,664	-	(1,664)	0%	1,404	-	(1,404)	-	-				-
Professional: Audit	9,000	9,180	9,000	(180)	(2%)	6,750	6,000	(750)	(13%)	9,000				9,000
Professional: Legal	12,000	8,040	12,000	3,960	49%	10,878	8,000	(2,878)	(36%)	12,000				12,000
Professional: Investment management	1,200	147	1,200	1,053	0%	117	800	683	-	-				-
Professional: Other	4,000	11,233	4,000	(7,233)	0%	11,867	2,667	(9,200)	-	10,000				10,000
Miscellaneous	2,000	24	2,000	1,976	0%	16	1,333	1,317	-	-				-
Insurances	5,500	5,884	5,500	(384)	(7%)	4,263	3,667	(596)	(16%)	6,000				6,000
Balances transferred from closed churches	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	(60,000)				(60,000)
<b>Total Synod Expenditure</b>	<b>212,353</b>	<b>286,570</b>	<b>212,353</b>	<b>(74,217)</b>	<b>(26%)</b>	<b>180,883</b>	<b>141,569</b>	<b>(39,315)</b>	<b>(16%)</b>	<b>191,059</b>				<b>191,059</b>
<b>Property &amp; the Manse Fund</b>														
Property: Buildings	2,500	5,142	2,500	(2,642)	0%	2,190	1,667	(523)	(31%)	1,080				1,080
Property: Graveyards	31,640	16,698	31,640	14,942	89%	12,468	21,093	8,625	41%	32,400				32,400
<b>Total Property Expenditure</b>	<b>34,140</b>	<b>21,840</b>	<b>34,140</b>	<b>12,300</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>14,658</b>	<b>22,760</b>	<b>8,102</b>	<b>(31%)</b>	<b>33,480</b>				<b>33,480</b>
<b>Local Church Support</b>														
LC Salaries & honoraria	175,804	171,033	175,804	4,771	3%	120,760	117,203	(3,557)	(3%)	135,592				135,592
LC Synod office	22,600	12,346	22,600	10,254	83%	8,451	15,067	6,616	44%	21,074				21,074
Area Support	7,000	425	7,000	6,575	100%	353	4,667	4,314	92%	7,206				7,206
LC Professional: Legal	8,000	2,592	8,000	5,408	100%	5,333	5,333	0	0%	8,004				8,004
LC Professional: Investment management	4,000	-	4,000	4,000	0%	-	2,667	2,667	100%	-				-
<b>Expenditure Local Church Support</b>	<b>217,404</b>	<b>186,396</b>	<b>217,404</b>	<b>31,008</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>134,896</b>	<b>144,936</b>	<b>10,040</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>171,876</b>				<b>171,876</b>
<b>Total Operational Expenditure</b>	<b>463,897</b>	<b>494,807</b>	<b>463,897</b>	<b>(30,910)</b>	<b>(6%)</b>	<b>330,438</b>	<b>309,265</b>	<b>(21,173)</b>	<b>(7%)</b>	<b>396,415</b>				<b>396,415</b>
<b>Income</b>														
Investment income	(90,000)	(55,790)	(90,000)	(34,210)	61%	(28,486)	(60,000)	(31,514)	53%	(90,000)				(90,000)
Synod stakes	(98,460)	(98,460)	(98,460)	-	0%	(73,845)	(65,640)	8,205	(13%)	(93,537)				(93,537)
Other income	(57,332)	(22,349)	(57,332)	(34,983)	100%	(21,348)	(38,221)	(16,874)	44%	(5,000)				(5,000)
Transfers from other funds	-	-	-	-	0%	-	-	-	-	(200,000)				(200,000)
Investments - realised	-	-	-	-	0%	(3,625)	-	3,625	-	-				-
Rental income	(20,000)	14,223	(20,000)	(14,223)	0%	(5,000)	(13,333)	(8,333)	62%	(20,000)				(20,000)
Admin Management Fee	(265,792)	(21,667)	(20,000)	1,667	(8%)	(5,000)	(13,333)	(8,333)	62%	(45,000)				(45,000)
<b>Total Operational Income</b>	<b>(265,792)</b>	<b>(184,042)</b>	<b>(265,792)</b>	<b>(81,751)</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>(132,303)</b>	<b>(177,195)</b>	<b>(44,892)</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>(453,537)</b>				<b>(453,537)</b>
<b>Net Expenditure / (Income) Operational Activities</b>	<b>198,105</b>	<b>310,765</b>	<b>198,105</b>	<b>(112,660)</b>	<b>(36%)</b>	<b>198,135</b>	<b>132,070</b>	<b>(66,065)</b>	<b>(33%)</b>	<b>(57,122)</b>				<b>(57,122)</b>

	Full Year 2021				January to December 2021				January to August 2021				Full Year 2022	
	Budget	Actual	Budget	Variance	%	Actual	Budget	Variance	%	Actual	Budget	Variance	%	Budget
Investing in Priorities														
Support for Mission & Ministry														
Expenditure														
Training: General	23,000	9,439	23,000	13,561	100%	605	15,333	14,729	96%	99,541				99,541
Training: Ministers & CRCW	17,000	9,795	17,000	7,205	0%	10,488	11,333	846	7%	17,096				17,096
Training: Elders & Members	25,000	1,567	25,000	23,433	100%	440	16,667	16,227	97%	20,000				20,000
Training: Children & Young People	54,750	54,336	54,750	414	1%	36,287	36,500	213	1%	-				-
Training: Students	11,071	2,917	11,071	8,153	100%	2,167	7,380	5,213	71%	11,071				11,071
External Grants: Welfare	5,000	1,975	5,000	3,025	0%	-	3,333	3,333	100%	2,400				2,400
Net funds received from closed churches	-	(215,729)	-	215,729	(100%)	(238,001)	-	238,001	-	-				-
Property Grants to churches	100,000	32,850	100,000	67,150	0%	26,850	66,667	39,817	60%	100,000				100,000
Mission Grants to churches	100,000	171,300	100,000	(71,300)	(42%)	1,300	66,667	65,367	98%	100,000				100,000
Expenditure Mission & Ministry	335,820	68,451	335,820	267,370	100%	(159,864)	223,880	383,744	100%	350,108				350,108
Mission Projects & SCMS														
Expenditure														
SCM: Cumbria	7,500	-	7,500	7,500	0%	-	5,000	5,000	0%	4,100				4,100
SCM: Chorlton	8,850	2,050	8,850	6,800	100%	1,595	5,900	4,305	100%	4,200				4,200
SCM: Salford	7,500	2,533	7,500	4,967	100%	1,634	5,000	3,366	100%	8,300				8,300
Expenditure Mission Projects & SCMS	23,850	4,583	23,850	19,267	100%	3,229	15,900	12,671	100%					
Wider Church Partnerships														
Expenditure														
External Grants: University chaplaincy	25,000	25,000	25,000	-	-	12,500	16,667	4,167	-	25,000				25,000
Grants: University chaplaincy	(12,500)	(18,750)	(12,500)	6,250	-	-	(8,333)	(8,333)	-	(6,500)				(6,500)
External Grants: Ecumenical subscriptions	6,000	6,982	6,000	(982)	(14%)	4,157	4,000	(157)	(4%)	12,000				12,000
External Grants: Other *2022 Western Dales Pioneer	17,500	30,463	17,500	(12,963)	-	-	11,667	11,667	-	17,000				17,000
Expenditure Wider Church Partnerships	36,000	43,694	36,000	(7,694)	(18%)	16,657	24,000	7,343	44%	47,500				47,500
Mission														
Mission	172,060	102,159	172,060	69,901	68%	71,354	114,706	43,352	61%	145,689				145,689
Mission	567,730	218,887	567,730	348,843	100%	(68,623)	378,487	447,110	(652%)	551,597				551,597
Net Recurrent Expenditure	765,835	529,653	765,835	236,182	45%	129,512	510,557	381,045	100%	494,475				494,475
Total Investment in Priorities & Partnerships														
Net Recurrent Expenditure														

	Full Year 2021		January to December 2021				January to August 2021				Full Year 2022	
	Budget		Actual	Budget	Variance	%	Actual	Budget	Variance	%	Budget	
One-offs												
Sandpiper Quay (new offices)	426,347		20,674	426,347	405,672	100%	317,378	417,470	100,092	32%	-	
Church and M&M Support	116,655		162,426	116,655	(45,771)	(28%)	148,404	116,655	(31,749)	(21%)	-	
Contribution to pension funds	40,000		508,487	40,000	(468,487)	(1)	16,065	26,667	10,601	66%	150,000	
Disposal of fixed assets - realised	-		5,358	-	(5,358)	(1)	5,358	-	(5,358)	(100%)	-	
<b>Total One-offs</b>	<b>583,002</b>		<b>696,946</b>	<b>583,002</b>	<b>(113,944)</b>	<b>(16%)</b>	<b>487,206</b>	<b>560,791</b>	<b>78,944</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>150,000</b>	
Investments: Unrealised												
Total unrealised	-		(472,292)	-	472,292		(392,090)	-	392,090		-	
			(472,292)		472,292	(100%)	(392,090)		392,090	(100%)	-	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,348,837</b>		<b>754,307</b>	<b>1,348,837</b>	<b>594,530</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>224,627</b>	<b>1,071,348</b>	<b>852,079</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>644,475</b>	

## **Resolution 4:**

### **NW Synod Green Apostles Network:**

We are delighted with the work of NW Synod on registration as an Eco Synod and of Synod officers work on divestment from fossil fuels in recent years.

North Western Synod:

- i) Proclaims God as giver of all life, and the earth as a precious gift which we work to protect for coming generations,
- ii) Commits not to invest in fossil fuel producing companies in the future,
- iii) Celebrates the decision of North Western Synod to disinvest from fossil fuel companies,
- iv) Encourages other churches within the Synod to disinvest from fossil fuel companies,
- v) Encourages Church Ministers, Members, Elders, and friends and organisations to disinvest from fossil fuels within the next 2 years
- vi) Signposts churches and households to the practical resources to do this through Operation Noah's Bright Now website <https://brightnow.org.uk>
- vii) Will join the Global Divestment announcement in July 2022
- viii) Invest our resources in climate solutions in renewable energy, energy efficiency, water efficiency and sustainable agriculture

## **PROPERTY REPORT**

Property Consultant: Mike Aspinall

### **Quinquennial Surveys**

132 I am pleased to note that churches are arranging for Quinquennial surveys to be undertaken and catching up where they have missed in the last 12 months.

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

134 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.

135 Please don't hesitate to contact me if you are unsure if your building is due, or you are unsure of the process in appointing a suitable surveyor.

### **Self-Assessment Questionnaires**

136 Self-Assessment Questionnaires have been sent to all churches (except where buildings are owned by another denomination in an LEP) These should be returned by the end of March at the latest, and whilst we have had some responses there are still many outstanding. Could you please check and ensure these are returned without further delay. If you have any concerns on these please contact me.

## **LBAC**

137 A reminder that 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**

138 If you are considering any work within your church, regardless of the value please inform your Area Pastoral Committee (APC). Any work (whether it is 1 job or a number of jobs) having a total value over £16,000.00 in any 12month period must be approved by your APC and Synod Resources Committee, prior to the work commencing.

139 I am aware that some churches are looking carefully, and quite rightly, at their increasing energy bills and considering what alternatives there may be. Please don't hesitate to contact me for advice/assistance and also our Eco-Network. If you haven't yet thought about your energy usage and maybe happy with the level of costs, I would still urge you to consider the environmental impact and your responsibility as stewards of God's creation.

140 If you feel there is a possibility for your church building to close and for your membership to either merge with another (possibly an LEP) or disperse, please speak to either myself, your Missional 140

141 Partnership Steering Group or other member of Synod staff, before taking the decision. There may be alternatives you have not thought about, or if that is the right decision we will do what we can to help you make the choice sensitively and smoothly for all concerned.

**Mike Aspinall**

**Synod Property Consultant**

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

**March 2022**

# CANDIDATE REPORT

Candidates Secretary: Lesley Husselbee

## 142 Candidates for Ministry

**a. People accepted for training by November 2021 Assessment Conference:**

a. **Christopher Lamb (Knott End URC):** NSM4. Chris was accepted by the November 2021 Assessment Conference for preparation for NSM4 ministry.

**b. People candidating for Ministry:**

Two people are currently candidating for ministry, one for Stipendiary and the other for Non-Stipendiary ministry.

**c. People considering candidating for Ministry:**

One person is considering candidating for non-stipendiary ministry and another for Church Related Community Work Ministry.

## 143 NW Synod Students in Training for Ministry

**a. Northern College Manchester**

- I. **Walt Johnson NSM** Year 3(Wilbraham St Ninian's URC)  
Northern College, Manchester
- II. **Kate Hunt SM** (St Anne's URC) Year 4

III. **Katherine (Katy) Ollerenshaw** CRCW Year 4/5  
(Edgeley Community Church, Stockport )

*Lesley Husselbee: February 2022*

## **SAFEGUARDING REFERENCE GROUP**

Synod Safeguarding Advisor: Julie Rafferty

144 We are hoping that 2022 will provide many opportunities for the Synod Safeguarding Adviser to get out and meet people from all the churches, to help, support and encourage them to understand and embed safeguarding procedures to ensure that all churches in the North Western Synod are safe places to be.

### **Mandatory safeguarding training**

145 In the last 18 months Foundation (formerly known as Basic) and Intermediate Safeguarding training has been delivered via zoom and attendance has been good, although as the Covid situation is changing this arrangement is being reviewed, with a view to returning to some face-to-face training. The training attendance figures for North Western Synod are as follows:

<b>Type of training</b>	<b>Number of people attended</b>	<b>Number of churches represented</b>
Foundation (Basic)	308	78
Intermediate	100	42

146 Although encouraging, these figures, together with the data from the Annual Church Return (ACR) <sup>1</sup>2021 suggest that many people still need to attend training and some churches are potentially vulnerable due to a lack of

---

<sup>1</sup> The North Western Synod have 34 Serving Ministers, 3 CRCWs, 535 volunteers working with Children & Adults, 3 paid workers and 807 Serving Elders

attendance. It is acknowledged that there may be reasons for non-attendance as well, these include:

- No access to internet
- Reluctant to engage with online training
- Prefer face to face training
- Completed Intermediate training in 2018/2019 and now due for refresher training in 2022
- In an LEP and completed other denominational training
- A lack of understanding that attendance is required
- Ill health

147 At General Assembly in July 2021, a resolution<sup>2</sup> was passed to introduce mandatory training, outlining which church roles require which level of training. In view of this, it's hoped that churches will acknowledge the need for people to complete all necessary URC safeguarding training. We aim to ensure that most people attend Foundation Safeguarding training as a minimum in 2022.

### **Annual Safeguarding Returns**

148 The Annual Safeguarding Return (known as H1)<sup>3</sup> has been revised and simplified to ease completion and avoid any degree of repetition. For the first time, electronic Annual Safeguarding Returns have been recently sent out to Church Safeguarding Coordinators (CSC) and Church Secretaries in the absence of a CSC. It's hoped that the submission rate will increase and we achieve 100% completion. Early feedback suggests that the form is quicker and easier to complete and submit. The information from

---

<sup>2</sup> [General Assembly July 2021 Paper T5 Safeguarding Training Framework](#)

<sup>3</sup> [URC Annual Safeguarding Return 2022](#)

the returns will be available to the Synod Executive in May 2022 when the Synod Safeguarding Report (known as H2) is completed and submitted to the Assembly Designated Safeguarding Lead

### **Safeguarding administration support**

149 Over the last 4.5 years, the role of Synod Safeguarding Adviser has naturally evolved and the general workload has gradually increased year on year, which you would expect with increased training and engagement with churches. This has been further highlighted during lockdown with a significant increase in online training sessions and the associated administrative work. It has been discussed at the Safeguarding Reference Group meetings and it was agreed that dedicated safeguarding administrative support would be beneficial and the group supported a safeguarding grant application. A small grant application has been awarded towards the cost of safeguarding administrative support for both Mersey and North Western Synods. This is being progressed with the support of both Synod Clerks and resources committees.

### **DBS compliance**

150 Online criminal record checks were introduced using Due Diligence Checking (DDC) over 5 years ago and a significant number of renewals need to be progressed by churches, following the 5yr renewal deadline. In addition, at General Assembly in July 2021, a resolution<sup>4</sup> was passed to update the list of roles that require a certain level of DBS check. Churches will be supported to

---

<sup>4</sup> [General Assembly - URC roles eligible for a criminal record check](#)

comply with this and the guidance in Good Practice 5. DBS compliance is a small part of safer recruitment.

# **Training and Learning Mentor Report**

Revd Dr Robert Hoch Phd

151 At the forefront of my mind is the objective of bringing Synod into compliance with Mission Council's goal to have all ministers in supervision by 2023. The other compliance requirements include a Safer Sacred Space/Boundary Refresher session. Lay Sacrament Training has made a significant dent in the backlog of trainings required. Relationally, I am in ongoing meetings with ministers in our Synod relative to EM3 and EM2 educational plans. Legacy of Slavery consultation has, I think, found its natural home with Mission and Discipleship Network. Lay Ministry assessments, trainings, and offerings are ongoing. Detailed report below.

## **I. EM2s**

152 EM2 Guidelines Review: TDOs have been asked by Jenny Mills to reflect on how/whether the EM2 Guidelines are helpful — I plan to use a lunch meeting with EM2s to review guidelines, especially the larger goals of EM2, including resiliency, self-reflection, and contextual learning. I plan to draw their attention to formal supervision as an option but not, at this moment, a requirement.

## **II. EM3 Supervision, Safer Sacred Spaces, Relationship Building, and Learning Plans**

153 Supervision: I aim to track this closely given the Mission Council deadline of 2023. In sum, according to my review of

Synod's financial record of supervision payments (with the qualification that it is imperfect), and correspondence with ministers, our Synod has:

- 12 ministers who show no financial record of having supervision (many are now seeking supervisors);
- 1 has requested an exemption from the requirement;
- 15 ministers show financial records of having a supervisor or report that they receive supervision through their employing organization;
- 2 ministers completed the required 6 sessions of supervision in 2021 (based on financial records) — the total number of ministers, including chaplains, hospice care chaplains, licensed psychiatrists, completing the required number of supervisions is closer to 5.
- 1 minister has a Supervision Covenant with their Supervisor on file with the Synod.

154 Expect more communications as we seek to come into compliance with URC requirements for active ministers.

155 Safer Sacred Spaces/Boundary Training: Julie Rafferty delivered Safer Sacred Space/ boundary training to Serving and active retired ministers from Mersey and North Western Synods in August and Sept 2020 with Sandra Wellington, the training officer from Mersey Synod. The URC database was updated to reflect the completion of the training. There are still at least 20-30 serving and active retired ministers that still need the training. Also it was discussed that an adapted training could be delivered to serving elders as well. I am scheduled to meet with Julie on 28 February.

Expect announcements of refresher courses in Safer Sacred Spaces/Boundary Training in the near future.

156 Meetings with EM3s: In February, I met either individually or in small groups with ministers to talk about programmes and topics include the CLP, doctoral studies, timing for sabbaticals, learning retreats (monastic), and review of short-term educational opportunities.

### **III. Lay Ministries, Lay Preaching, Sacrament Training, Stepwise Assessments**

157 We publicized Northern College's Conference for Lay Preachers/LRWL by newsletter and direct email. Three lay preachers applied for and received funds from the Assembly to attend the Conference. I am encouraging Lay Preachers to attend the Lent & Lunch Reading the Lectionary for Preaching sessions. 10 people have registered — some of whom are Lay Preachers. Ordained Ministers seem to be in the majority.

158 Lay Preacher Commissioner: Recently received an updated model for the role of the Lay Preacher Commissioner. Presenting to Committee for further conversation and adoption by the Synod.

159 Lay Training with Rev. Jacky Embrey: Jacky (lead) and I (assisted) in communion trainings on 20 January, 26 January, 1 February, 7 February. We led one baptism training on 10 February. We plan to offer an in-person course date TBA for sacrament training for people who do not want to meet in Zoom. Waiting for Pastoral to go through the list of people who did not sign-up for

sacrament training (see appendix for the list of those who completed trainings).

160 Stepwise: I am working with Daleen Ten Cate and John Gordon with Faith Filled Life worship leadership assessments.

#### **IV. Mission Partnerships/Steering Groups and Elderships**

161 Missional Partnership Training Co-Leading "Renewed Beginnings" with Daleen Ten Cate and Adam Woodhouse for East Lancashire Partnership on 5 March 9:30 to 4:30. We will be using a Renewed Beginnings "Lite". I am asking Elderships what kinds of "Elders' Development" opportunities they would like organized for their congregation. The topics could include anything from spirituality, to mission, to Safeguarding, to trusteeship, to pastoral care.

#### **V. Educational Offerings in Synod**

162 Lawrence Heath Moore: 4 sessions (offered at two different times) on "A Year with Luke's Jesus" in month of February. Rob Hoch: Lent and Lunch Preaching from the Lectionary, 12-1:30, 5 sessions, Tuesdays, month of March.

#### **VI. Legacy of Slavery (LoS) Consultation and Strategy**

163 Currently planning a meeting on this topic with Richard Bradley and Karen Campbell. My goal from this meeting will be to establish a plan and, possibly, an outline for LoS sessions in the Synod.

Please keep an eye out for sessions and a larger-scale conference that will introduce participants to the LoS consultation.