

Tel: 0121 783 1177 or 07305 100328
Email: synodclerk@urcwestmidlands.org.uk

Synod Office
Digbeth-in-the-Field URC
Moat Lane
Yardley
Birmingham B26 1TW

26th September 2023

TO: MEMBERS OF SYNOD & All attending Synod in person

As a continuation of our Vision4Mission events, our residential Synod is entitled '**Growing through challenging times**'.

We are delighted to welcome Bishop Mike Royal, General Secretary of Churches Together in England, as our keynote speaker who will address Synod on Saturday. We will also have Mission Streams offering insights and information on reaching out to diverse audiences, helping all to grow in faith.

This residential meeting will be held at:

The Holiday Inn, Birmingham Airport, Coventry Road, Birmingham B26 3QW

from 5.30pm on **Friday 13th** to 4.30pm on **Saturday 14th October 2022**. It is assumed that all those wishing to attend will already have booked, in response to previous communications. If you have not booked a place and still want to come, you **MUST** contact Lindsay Peniston at the Synod Office immediately.

Directions and a map are enclosed. There is ample parking at the hotel, and charges will be paid directly by the Synod. There will be space for disabled badge holders to be dropped off outside the **Holiday Inn**. There will be a free Shuttle Service from Birmingham International Train Station to the Holiday Inn, but this **MUST** be booked in advance – please note carefully the information on page 3.

We are conducting Synod business a little differently this time. On Friday evening there will be an opportunity, both in person and online, to hear about the Synod Review and initial proposals to respond to issues raised, as well as time for informal fellowship. On Saturday, there will be worship, our keynote speaker and mission streams, plus a 'Synod Lite' session to which all are welcome.

This year we are introducing an online meeting at 7pm on Thursday 19th October for Synod representatives to make formal decisions on matters raised at the residential Synod meeting. This booklet contains all the Synod reports.

The **Hurricane Room** will be used as a Quiet room, thus enabling you space to think and reflect. Provisional timings for the agenda items are as indicated.

Please let me have any apologies **by 10th OCTOBER 2023**, by telephone, letter or email.

We hope that you will go back to your local church reinvigorated by the experience of this event and able to share it with members of your congregations.

Best wishes,
Rachel Wakeman
Synod Clerk

Attendance and Name Badges

As you arrive at Synod, registration will take place (please indicate if you are attending the business sessions), name badges will be provided.

Refreshments

Tea and Coffee will be available on Saturday morning at 8.30am and 10.35am, and at 4.00pm at the conclusion of the Synod.

For those who have signed up either for the whole weekend or Saturday only, lunch will be provided at 1.00pm. As this Synod is being held in a hotel, it will not be possible to bring your own food.

Travel Expenses

Travel expenses will **NOT** be paid at Synod. An expense slip which is included in this mailing, and will also be available at the event, can be handed to any member of the Synod Office staff, who can be easily identified by their name badges. These will then be dealt with after the event.

Contributions to Synod

If you have not already done so and you wish to make a financial contribution towards the event, then this can be handed to **Lindsay Peniston or Emma Price**, who will issue you with a receipt.

Bookstall

We are grateful to **Helen Cavaco and Trish Willetts** for providing a bookstall for members of Synod. It will be located in the **Lancaster Foyer**.

**Directions to Holiday Inn (Birmingham Airport),
Coventry Road, Birmingham B26 3QW**

Can we please encourage you to share transport where possible?

Birmingham International Railway Station

The hotel's usual free shuttle service is not available, but the hotel has offered to make special arrangements for us. It is essential that we know, if you are using the train, what time you expect to arrive at Birmingham International and what time train you are catching back home. **We cannot guarantee transport unless this information reaches us by Monday 10 October so that the transport can be arranged by the hotel.** We are sorry that this is likely to cause some inconvenience to those coming to Synod, but this is beyond our control, and we are working with the hotel to minimise the impact. If you need to get a taxi to the hotel, please share with others if possible – and ask for a receipt so that Synod can reimburse the cost.

National Express West Midlands X1 departs from ‘Stop SA’ outside the station. There are 3 stops from the station to “Cargo Terminal”, the bus stop closest to the Holiday Inn (Trinity Park, Falcon Way, then Cargo Terminal). It's a 3-minute walk from the bus stop to the hotel. Buses run approximately every 20 minutes. Fare: £2.40.

Driving

Exit M42 at Junction 6.

Follow A45 towards Birmingham. After approx. 1 mile, at the first set of traffic lights, turn right and entrance to the hotel car park is located on the right-hand side.

Parking

On-site parking is available and the costs for this will be covered by the Synod. There is overflow parking in the nearby NCP car park. Guests who are required to use the overflow car park are required to visit reception to get a parking pass.



**‘SYNOD LITE’ SESSION AGENDA
SATURDAY 14TH OCTOBER**

- 3:00pm Movements of Ministers In and Out of the Synod**
- In Memoriam**
- Jubilee Ministers**
- 3.10pm Lundie Memorial Award**
- Children’s & Youth Work events**
- 3.20pm URC Visual Identity**
Reform magazine
- 3.30pm Flourishing Churches: Viability, Vitality and Vocations**
- 3.45pm Farewells**
- 3.50pm Closing Worship**
- 4.0pm Tea & Coffee & depart**

**SYNOD BUSINESS SESSION
ONLINE AT 7PM ON THURSDAY 19TH OCTOBER**

Reports are below and resolutions will be taken at the meeting. Please email synodclerk@urcwestmidlands.org.uk with any questions.

Resources & Compliance Committee and Trust Board incl Budget	5 10
Ministry Development Committee	12
Missional Discipleship Development Committee	13
Safeguarding Report	14
Synod Carbon Footprint for 2022	15
Synod Executive Report	17
incl Synod Review update	20
Synod Staffing Proposal	23
Matters from General Assembly 2023	29
Minutes of the Synod held on Saturday 18th March 2023	30

REPORT FROM TRUST BOARD AND RESOURCES AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE TO SYNOD, OCTOBER 2023

ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022

The audited Financial Statements for 2022 will be made available on the Synod website www.urcwestmidlands.org.uk. A copy can also be obtained by contacting the Synod Office. The Financial Statements were approved by the Trustees at the Trust Company Executive meeting on 14 June 2023. The Financial Statements, as well as containing the numbers, include the Annual Report. This details the activities supported by the Trust over the last twelve months, together with future plans.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

A summarised document entitled 'Financial Review 2022' is enclosed with these Synod papers. This document includes a comparison of expenditure against budget as well as a total comparison of income, expenditure, property transactions and investment movements compared to the previous year, along with a list of grants awarded in 2022.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE TO DATE 2023

- Investment income has continued to recover, partly due to increases in the rate of interest.
- Grants awarded from Mission Fund and Youth Grants are below the anticipated levels
- No grants have been awarded from the Ministry Support Fund
- There has been large take up of Ministers' Training grants but lower than anticipated spending on Lay training.
- Property Grants awarded to date are just over £26k, against a budget of £75k.
- There has been a large take up of energy Efficiency grants totalling £276k.
- We are now paying for the insurance on all manses occupied by ministers and churches are beginning to claim the £750 annual Manse Repairs Allowance.
- Staff costs are reduced due to the vacancy of the Trust Officer and CYDO.
- Governance costs have increased due to a catch up of legal fees and increases in audit fees, we are anticipating the costs of the Synod Review.
- Including the first instalment of £250k of support for the Ministers' Pension Fund, there is a year-to-date operating deficit of £520k, but this was planned use of reserves.
- There has been one manse sale completed this year resulting in a surplus accruing to The Synod Manse Fund and three Churches sales completed with proceeds being earmarked for Major Buildings Development Grants.

BUDGET 2024

The budget which was approved by the Synod Trust Board on 20 September is presented differentiating: Core activities and Ecumenical costs including chaplaincy; Manse Funds; and Designated Funds such as Buildings Fund, Mission Fund and Ministry Support Fund. We have planned expansion of spending, investing in our churches and supporting the wider URC. We are budgeting a deficit of over £1.483m before any property sales and investment gain. This might appear to be a large unsustainable sum, but the majority of this is planned spending of existing reserves, the largest part relating to funding of the Ministers' Pension Fund. However, there is a residual sum of £419k which should be met from growth in the value of investments. This has been carefully considered by Resources and Compliance Committee and the Trust Board and is believed to be a sustainable level, meaning that we can continue to provide the same level of

support as we have in past. We have agreed to contribute £35,000 into Inter Synod Resource Sharing which supports Synods who struggle financially.

INCOME

After a large decrease in Investment Income during Covid we anticipate a slight increase in 2024, but since we are planning to spend reserves, we cannot rely upon increases in future years. We do have the benefit of rent from two manses whilst their future use is considered. We also receive some grant funding from Assembly to support chaplaincies and training.

EXPENDITURE

The Synod is wanting to increasingly support our churches financially, we are aiming to do this in a number of ways, starting with M&M. It is clear churches are finding it harder to meet their M&M commitment, we have therefore put into the budget £200k to pay into M&M such that churches should pay less. We continue to budget for a large value of Energy efficiency grants, and in order to address the issue of Ministry being spread more thinly the Ministry Support Fund is budgeted to spend £100k for additional staff to support ministry. In addition, there are grants for property, Manses, Youth and Training. For purposes of planning of resources, but not as a limit, we have provided for Mission Fund Grants of £60k. In addition, we have budgeted £34k for manse insurances and small manse repairs allowance. Quinquennial Surveys will be scheduled, and costs are likely to remain at a similar level to prior years. We have provided £100k to embark on the next phase of improving the energy efficiency of our manses. We continue our support for Chaplaincy costs, which support five Higher and Further Education roles, and Ecumenical positions across the Synod with the cost being similar to earlier years.

Whilst we have had staff vacancies during 2023, we have budgeted for those posts to be filled and, following the Synod Review, it is proposed to create the roles of a Mission Development Officer and Communication Officer as well as fixed term role to develop Leading Your Church into Growth.

We are committed to the training of all involved in ministry and leadership, both ordained and lay, accordingly, and we have budgeted for all foreseeable training costs, including the costs of a CYDO, and a Training Officer.

Some of our professional fees have increased in the Governance heading. Premises and Office costs are broadly similar to prior year budgets and spending. However, in common with other organisations we are budgeting for continued higher cost of our heat and light.

RESOURCE SHARING

Within the 13 Synods there is a process by which better off Synods are asked to support those who struggle financially. We increased our contribution in 2023 from £20k to £25k, however in response to an indication that there could be a shortfall between contributions and bids the Trust has agreed to increase this to £35k for 2024. The collection and distribution of funds from resource sharing is now carried out by this Synod.

MINISTRY & MISSION 2023 & 2024

2023 M&M

The majority of churches are paying the agreed M&M. Contact has been made with those churches not currently meeting expectations.

2023 M&M

Resources and Compliance Committee have discussed the pledge for 2024 and chose to maintain the pledge set for 2023 £1,537k, reflecting a slightly smaller membership and fewer churches but an increase in costs. However, the total being sought from Churches will be reduced by Synod committing approximately £200k to the M&M fund. We remind churches that the commitments to pay for ministry and mission remain even though church finances have been under pressure.

MANSE INSURANCE AND REPAIR ALLOWANCE

Churches are reminded that as agreed from March 2020 Synod, the Trust would meet the cost of manse insurance added to the Trust's group policy. Also, we offer an allowance initially of up to £500, increased to £750 from 2023, against invoices for each manse occupied by a minister subject to certain conditions been met; any unused allowance or excess spending being able to be carried forward for up to three years, thus allowing for larger periodic repairs.

SYNOD GRANTS AND LOANS

There are a number of sources of funding for churches in the Synod area a simple leaflet was distributed at March Synod describing the purpose, level of funding and how to apply. This inform will also be available on the Synod website and discussed in one of the workshop sessions.

MISSION GRANTS

The Mission Fund is open to applications from churches to support mission activity and the achievement of mission pledges. We continue to keep our criteria under review to make it accessible to all.

At the time of writing, since Synod last met, Mission Fund Panel not met but has a meeting scheduled. The current balance on the Mission Fund is £474,012

LISTED PLACES OF WORSHIP SCHEME GRANTS

The Listed Places of Worship Scheme allowing listed churches to claim a grant equivalent to the VAT on most repairs, was scheduled to end in March 2022. However, the scheme was extended to the 31st March 2025 and further extensions are currently being reviewed. We hope that the scheme might continue beyond that date but there are no guarantees. Accordingly listed churches should consider the timing of any planned work.

The Property Officer, supported by the Synod Resource and Compliance Committee, has provided advice and guidance to numerous churches since the last Synod.

CHURCH BUILDINGS – GRANTS AND LOANS

Longton	Accessible Toilet & Car Park Repairs
Sutton Coldfield	Roof repairs to facilitate solar panels
Chesterton	Disabled Access ramp

CHURCH BUILDINGS – ENERGY EFFICIENCY GRANTS

£

Swindon URC	3,296	Lighting & Windows
Malvern URC	2,662	Heating Controls
Lodge Road	4,846	Heating & Control
Tetbury Church	2,500	Glazing
Oakengates	5,563	Heating Boiler
Beacon URC	2,416	Thermostatic Controls
Longton URC	14,702	Windows, Lighting & Insulation
Brockworth URC	5,744	Heating Boilers
Baginton Road URC	24,343	Heating Boilers
Rodborough	6,805	Insulation
South Aston	5,615	Doors
Wombourne	1,802	Lighting
Abbey Hill URC	12,510	Windows
Broadway	9,372	Heating & Lighting
Pype Hayes	599	Lighting

There has been an encouraging number of applications from churches for work to improve energy efficiency of church buildings, some for interesting or innovative solutions. Total Grants to date are £276k to 30 churches supporting work costing a total of nearly £500k. Some recipients have received an initial (Bronze) or higher Eco Church Award.

It has been shown that it is helpful that there is some type of assessment solutions to improve energy efficiency prioritising the most effective measures, for one successful application this was undertaken by a member of the church and for another is was an external body that assists churches in the Birmingham area. The cost of such a survey would be eligible for grant funding. There is no limit to the number of applications that can be made such that work can be phased over time, but as total spend increases the level of grants does decrease, so it beneficial to prioritise the most effective solutions.

If any church wishes any clarification, then they should contact Mervyn or Matthew in the Synod office.

CHURCH BUILDINGS – GENERAL INFORMATION

Newton Road URC, Great Barr	Marketing, with full and final offers, took place in late September 2023.
Weirbrook URC, Shropshire	Details are being finalised for the marketing and sale of the property.
Welsh Frankton URC	The church has been sold, subject to contract, and an application for Planning Permission to convert the property into a dwelling is currently being considered by the local authority.
Hatherton	The church was sold and sale completed on 14 th September 2023.
Potters Green	Exchange took place on 14 th September 2023 with completion to occur on 11 th October 2023.
Bournville URC	The church closed in July 2023 and is being leased to The Pavilion Church, Rowheath.

MANSES AND ADDITIONAL HOUSES

Judges Close, Hereford	The manse was sold on 11 th July 2023.
St James' Road, Dudley	The manse was sold on 21 st September 2023.
Fourlands Avenue, Sutton Coldfield	The property was bought and the minister moved in on the 20 th September 2023.
Birmingham Road, Sutton Coldfield	The property remains on the market.
Underwood Road, Elmwood	The property has been sold, subject to contract.
Woodcote Road, Tettenhall Wood	The property has been sold, subject to contract.
Perrin Avenue, Kidderminster 2023.	The property will be placed on the market in October 2023.
Broad Street, Littledean 2023.	The property will be placed on the market in October 2023.
Chartwell Close, Church Stretton	The property has been sold, subject to contract.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY OF MANSES

In March 2023 we set out our revised approach to ensuring the energy efficiency of manses. Since then we have been developing an approach as to how to prioritise manses and types of work. We will need the assistance of those occupying manses and church property committee to help identify those measures which will improve energy efficiency. We have set out a process so that decisions will be made promptly.

Steve Powell, Mervyn Davies and Matthew McDade: September 2023

RESOLUTIONS WILL BE VOTED ON AT THE ONLINE MEETING ON THURSDAY 19TH OCTOBER

23/10 Resolution 1:	<i>That this report is received.</i>
23/10 Resolution 2:	<i>That the accounts be adopted.</i>
23/10 Resolution 3:	<i>The budget be accepted</i>

BUDGET

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH (WEST MIDLANDS) TRUST LTD 2024 BUDGET APPROVED SEPT 2023

	2022 ACTUAL £	2023 TOTAL BUDGET £	2024 TOTAL BUDGET £	2024 CORE & ECUMENICAL £	2024 MANSE £	2024 DESIGNATED £
INCOME						
Investment Income						
Investments	541,528	525,000	609,500	457,125	152,375	
Total Investment Income	541,528	525,000	609,500	457,125	152,375	0
Grants received						
Buildings - Derrington	8,678	8,650	8,900			8,900
Chaplaincy Funding	8,725	7,225	7,225	7,225		
Training	8,847	9,525	9,525	9,525		
Pulpit Supply	39,654		16,200			
Total Grants	65,904	25,400	41,850	16,750	0	8,900
Rents received						
Churches and Manses	10,782	10,008	9,504		9,504	
Total Rents	10,782	10,008	9,504	0	9,504	0
Other Income						
Donations	111,497	0	0			
Investment Charge - Redditch Trust	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000		
Total Other Income	113,497	2,000	2,000	2,000		0
Total Operating Income	731,711	562,408	662,854	475,875	161,879	8,900
EXPENDITURE						
Costs of Generating Funds						
Investment Management Fees	67,861	70,000	70,000	52,500	17,500	
Total Cost of Generating Funds	67,861	70,000	70,000	52,500	17,500	0
Charitable Activities						
Grants- Education Chaplains	27,950	29,950	29,950	29,950		
- Ecumenical	15,929	16,933	16,933	16,933		
- Local Mission	0	4,000	4,000	4,000		
- Youth and Children	2,338	15,700	15,700	15,700		
- Mission Fund	112,106	60,000	60,000			60,000
Pulpit Supply	18,957		16,200			
Ministry Support Fund	218,360	100,000	100,000			100,000
Carbon Offset	335	600	600	600		
Resource sharing	20,000	25,000	35,000	35,000		
M&M Pledge	46,862	45,000	200,000	200,000		
Pension Funding	250,000	534,000	534,000			534,000
Support costs inc Area Ministers	14,043	16,320	5,900	5,900		
Total Ministry & Mission	726,880	847,503	1,018,283	308,083	0	694,000
Training						
Ministers	9,920	10,875	10,950	10,950		
Students	1,540	1,320	1,320	1,320		
Members /Lay Training	1,923	10,900	10,900	10,900		
Health & Safety	0	1,875	1,875	1,875		
Local Ministry and Mission review	0	250	250	250		
Training - Treasurers	608	500	500	500		
Training -staff	322	500	500	500		
Training- Staff costs & expenses	62,403	77,394	134,741	134,741		
LYCiG			20,000			20,000
Support Costs		500	500	500		
Total Training	76,716	104,114	181,536	161,536	0	20,000

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH (WEST MIDLANDS) TRUST LTD
2024 BUDGET APPROVED SEPT 2023

	2022	2023	2024	2024	2024	2024
	ACTUAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	CORE &	MANSE	DESIGNATED
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Property:-						
Church Repairs	38,029	75,000	75,000	75,000		
Energy Efficiency Grants		350,000	250,000			250,000
Manse Repairs	47,686	50,000	50,000		50,000	
Manse Energy Efficiency	0	100,000	100,000		100,000	
Manse Insurance and repairs allowan	24,930	34,000	33,500		33,500	
Manse expenses	13,091	13,578	4,500		4,500	
Church Surveys	8,651	22,000	22,000	22,000		
Other properties- Rental properties	1,448	2,002	1,901		1,901	
Support Costs-Staff plus expenses	32,564	32,787	34,894	17,447	17,447	
Total Property	166,399	679,367	571,795	114,447	207,348	250,000
Governance Costs						
Synod and Assembly Expenses	1,585	5,300	3,700	3,700		
Synod - Vision for Mission	10,011	14,000	0	0		
Synod Employment Costs	152,275	199,731	225,739	225,739		
Professional Indemnity	0	500	500	500		
Audit	11,200	10,988	16,224	16,224		
Legal - trust related	0	3,000	10,000	10,000		
Bank charges	242	180	240	240		
Committee Support Costs	275	2,500	1,000	1,000		
Sundry Costs	0	300	300	300		
Total Governance Costs	175,588	236,499	257,703	257,703	0	0
Indirect Costs						
Premises Costs:-						
Rent	1,600	1,600	1,600	1,600		
Insurance	4,657	4,050	5,400	5,400		
Electricity and water rates	3,045	3,600	3,600	3,600		
Depreciation of Synod Office	11,137	11,137	11,137	11,137		
Eco Work on Office	0					
Repairs, maintenance and Cleaning	7,161	4,708	5,776	5,776		
Total Premises costs	27,600	25,095	27,513	27,513	0	0
Office Costs:-						
Telephone	3,179	2,800	2,898	2,898		
Printing Stationery and Postage	5,999	5,585	5,585	5,585		
Computer expenses	6,163	8,435	8,435	8,435		
Advertising	1,508			0		
Equipment Depreciation		0	0	0		
Furniture and Equipment		500	500	500		
Sundry office costs	971	1,500	1,500	1,500		
Total Office costs	17,820	18,820	18,918	18,918		
Total Indirect costs	45,420	43,915	46,431	46,431	0	0
Total Operating Expenditure	1,258,864	1,981,398	2,145,749	940,701	224,848	964,000
Net Income/(Expenditure) on Operating Account	(527,153)	(1,418,990)	(1,482,895)	(464,826)	(62,969)	(955,100)
From MSF		100,000	100,000			100,000
Pension Funding		534,000	534,000			534,000
Mission Fund		60,000	80,000			80,000
Manse Fund		100,000	100,000		100,000	
Energy Efficiency Grants		350,000	250,000			250,000
Investment Gains		274,990	418,895	418,895		
Transfer To General Funds				45,931	-37,031	-8,900
	0	0	0	0	0	0

MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (MDC) – Synod Report October 2023

This is a report from 3 meetings of the MDC which have taken place since the March Synod.

There is one issue which is the greatest concern of the MDC at every meeting and this is the difficulty at finding and training suitable people as Interim Moderators. The Training Officer made an appeal at the March Synod without any success and this is an ongoing concern and a problem.

Information from the Areas:

Shropshire – Mark Rodgers has been Ordained and Inducted to the Shropshire Area during the summer and Camilla Veitch will be Inducted shortly. That will complete the ministry for that Area. The Synod has also raised various points for discussion on their Constitution and these are being dealt with.

Hereford & Worcester – Baxter URC and Trinity Methodist in Kidderminster are exploring working more closely together. Concerns have been raised by the Hereford churches re the costs of the Team Ministry as the ministers will be travelling further as well as the location of the Manses and the Moderator is in the process of arranging a meeting with them to discuss these issues.

Gloucestershire – The recent refurbishment of the Quarry Chapel and the reopening were noted. They are also seeking to extend the services of their Development Worker. They were not able to attract secular grants and had asked the Synod for a renewed grant for a further 3 years.

North & Mid Staffs – There has been considerable discussion re the Group Constitution. These discussions did not include Leek Meth/URC. Leek will go into stationing this autumn and should have a new Methodist minister from 2024.

Karen Jones was Ordained and Inducted into the North Staffs pastorate on the 9th September 2023.

Trinity Church Hednesford closed on the 16th July 2023.

The Wolverhampton Area/South Staffs has 2 vacancies for full-time stipendiary ministers and is in the call process for both posts.

In the Central Area, West Birmingham and Walsall have an active vacancy for a Stipendiary Minister, and another vacancy is being prepared for the South East Birmingham and Solihull Pastorate.

Bournville United Reformed Church closed during the summer.

Coventry and Warwickshire - there is much discussion on the future deployment of ministry and this is ongoing. The 1st Term Review of the CRCW post in Wyken, Coventry has been completed.

The Training Officer led a discussion on an EM2 consultation paper.

Sabbaticals – The Revd Iain McLaren from the Cheltenham Churches has completed his sabbatical.

Request for Authorised Elders -agreed since March Synod: Margaret Marshall & George Jones for Brinklow URC and Barbara Prettie & Gerald Peters for Lea Road URC, Wolverhampton.

Revd Kathryn Louch

Convenor

21st September 2023

MISSIONAL DISCIPLESHIP DEVELOPEMENT COMMITTEE (MDDC) - Synod Report October 2023

The Committee met on Wednesday 21st June 2023 and Wednesday 13th September.

Personalia: Jan Scott has finished as Spirituality Consultant and thanks were expressed for her work; she was sharing notes to help take the role forward. Stuart Scott is retiring at the end of October and his work over many years in the Synod, firstly in pastoral ministry and latterly as Synod Training Officer was much appreciated. Nick Stanyon's term ends as Synod Evangelist ends on 10 October and he was thanked for all his work and input over the last 10 years. The End of Term Review Report for the SCM Post had been submitted and more information about sabbatical research would be shared. A Staffing Proposal is coming to Synod for a Training & Development Officer/Pastoral Consultant together with a Synod Mission Development Officer, taking into account issues raised during the Synod Review.

Leading Your Church into Growth (LYCiG): A request was granted for funding for the Coventry area, reported that other churches are also taking forward the initiative. The proposal to the Synod Executive to second the Yorkshire Evangelist for up to 15 months to further help support and develop this initiative was welcomed.

LMMR: It was reported that the scheme is being considered by the URC Assembly Ministries Committee, as it is not being delivered in any of the Synods

Ecumenical matters: The Christ Church Nailsworth constitution and the Stafford LEP constitution were agreed. It was reported a General Assembly paper will offer support to try and enable more ministry in LEP situations.

Lay Preacher Training: It was reported Assembly Education & Learning are producing a prospectus for the course delivered by Northern College which leads to Assembly accreditation.

Eco Matters: It was reported that the Green Apostles' Network is working well, with people responding proactively within the network. Churches are encouraged to appoint 'Eco Friends' to establish a network of people interested in eco developments. It is hoped to deliver a previously postponed Webinar in November 2023. The Energy Efficiency Survey circulated at the March Synod resulted in only 16 responses. The Synod Environmental policy is being revised in the light of a new Assembly policy. The provision of solar panels for manses is also under consideration as part of energy efficiency improvements to our Manse stock. 27 applications for energy efficiency grants have been received and £220k has been allocated.

Youth Grants: An individual grant of £500 was agreed and grants to two church projects - £1047 to the Malvern Seeds for Life project to purchase, own and store gazebos and £1500 to Wade Street, Lichfield for the Summer Baseball Camp. 2 young people hoped to attend a central Youth Leadership Training Course; agreed that Synod would cover travel costs.

Stuart Scott & Rachel Wakeman
September 2023

SAFEGUARDING REPORT

The Synod Safeguarding Officer (SSO) has continued to deliver training, respond to safeguarding matters and deal with concerns and cases throughout the Synod.

Activity March 23- Oct 23

Engagement

- SSO completed annual safeguarding return. 77% churches in West Midlands Synod completed their return. The 22 that did not will be contacted to see if they need any support with safeguarding processes.
- The Safeguarding Coordinators Forum continues to take place on a quarterly basis however attendance waned during the summer quarter.
- The Safeguarding Symposium will take place online on 12th October via zoom. Over 300 people have signed up from across the country.

Training

- SSO attended two focus days with the national safeguarding team and took part in training and workshops on victim support, dementia awareness and preventing burnout.
- SSO co-delivered domestic abuse training with the national safeguarding training coordinator for all synods in March. The training was well received.
- SSO delivered Advanced Safeguarding Training to East & West Midlands synod attendees. This was the first time this module has been delivered and served as a pilot for other synods.
- Face to Face intermediate training took place at Lea Rd URC & Holyhead Rd URC

Additional safeguarding modules are available, facilitated online by the Safeguarding Training and Development Coordinator Carrie Kaunda based at Church House. Modules include:

- Elders as Trustees
- Domestic Abuse
- Modern Slavery
- Ministers Supporting Survivors
- DDC Verifiers
- Churches Supporting Survivors

There is an updated version of the e:foundation course. It will be made available through synod booking and the website in due course.

Strategic

The SSO regularly meets with the national SSO team for strategic planning (SSPG).

SSO is also an active and contributory member of the national Safeguarding Training Review Group who develop training for all URC churches.

Good Practice 6 is very close to completion and publishing. The SSO has consulted on its development together with the national safeguarding team.

Work on the URC report on the findings of IICSA (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse) is ongoing with the SSO being a member of the working group for this piece of work.

There is now a case management system for safeguarding that is an extension of the main URC data base.

Going forward

For the coming months SSO will (in addition to case work, national teamwork & training):

- undertake relevant training and CPD.
- Work on improving engagement
- Contribute to Synod Review

Donna Gordon, Synod Safeguarding Officer

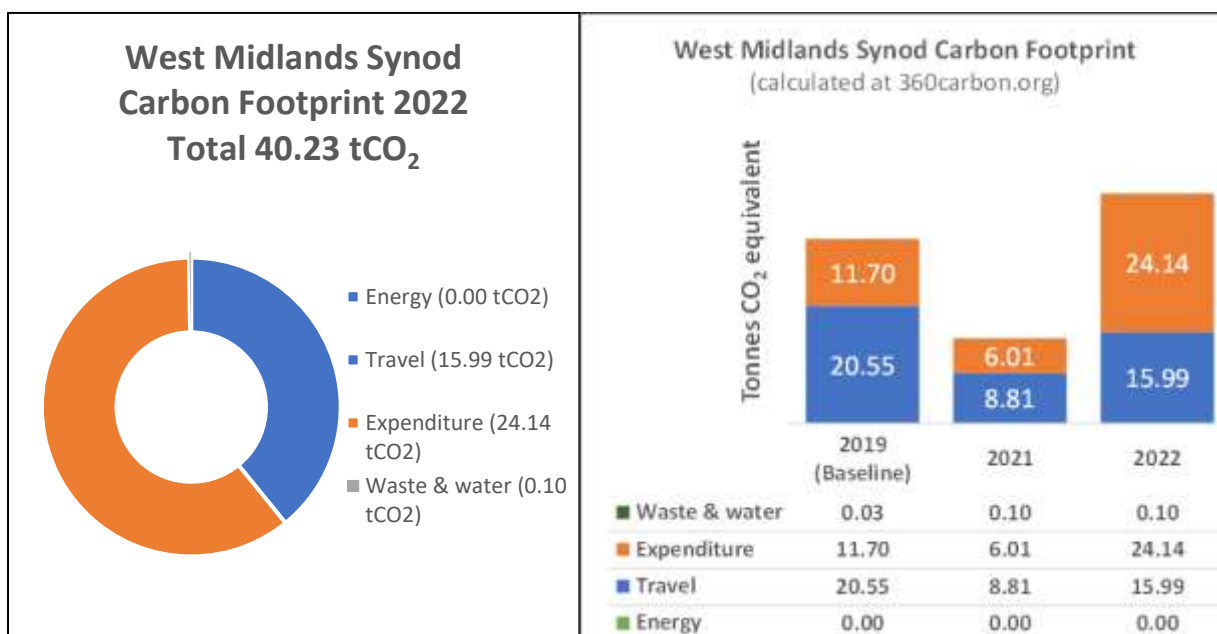
SYNOD CARBON FOOTPRINT FOR 2022

In 2019 we calculated a carbon footprint (the amount of carbon dioxide emissions) related to Synod activities and set that as a baseline against which future years' performance can be measured. The calculation includes the work of Synod officers and committees (mostly travel-related), the Synod office itself (looking at energy, expenditure, waste, etc.) and events over which the Synod has direct control (such as Synod meetings.)

We use the online tool at www.360carbon.org, which is the system recommended by Church House, and A Rocha, the charity behind the Eco Church scheme.

Our policy aim is to reduce emissions resulting from Synod activities year-on-year, and work to achieve a net zero position.

In 2019, we calculated that our activities represented the equivalent of 32.28 tonnes of CO₂ emissions. In 2022, we saw this not only increase from the 2021 figure, but also exceed the 2019 baseline. The graphics below show the comparisons and how the totals is split between expenditure, travel, energy consumption and waste and water.



It should be understood that the 360Carbon.org model has developed and more items are now included in their model, so this isn't a true like-for-like comparison. Excluding new calculation lines, our carbon footprint for 2022 would be 31.34 tCO₂e – marginally less than the 2019 baseline, but still substantially more than the 2021 figure, and therefore missing our aim of annual reductions. There are two significant factors in this. Firstly, without the pandemic restrictions on travel, we have almost doubled our emissions compared to last year. This represents a more realistic picture, but shows that we must still think about the balance between in-person and online meetings, and the use of public transport where possible. We are committed to not moving to wholly online meetings – there are additional benefits in being with people and enabling better conversation when we are face-to-face over against meeting on Zoom.

Secondly, last year's figure included a residential Synod meeting which neither 2019 nor 2021's calculations included. The calculation tool, based on expenditure on the event, added a very significant 5 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent emissions, and this doesn't include travel to hotel, which is accounted for separately within the 15.99 tCO₂e shown in the graphic above.

We believe that the residential Synod meetings, which we have agreed will be held biannually, are significant in developing relationships and connections between churches and between churches and Synod Officers. The 2023 residential Synod is the one that falls into the bi-annual cycle, whereas the one in October 2022 was a pandemic “catch-up”.

In all of our activities – those for the Synod, those in local churches and those in our individual lives – we have to make choices about how we shall live. Technologies as well as modern lifestyles don't yet allow us to live truly carbon-zero lives. The simple act of breathing emits some carbon dioxide into the atmosphere!

Whatever our choices, we will still be carbon emitters. We can, however, take conscious steps to reduce those emissions and so cause less harm to the environment, and that is the aim of our carbon reduction plans.

The second-best strategy is to achieve net zero emissions through carbon offsetting, which we achieve through Climate Stewards, the charity again recommended by Church House and A Rocha. For 2022 we have offset our emissions by a payment of £1005, which is used to support projects in Ghana, Kenya, Nepal, Peru, Tanzania and Uganda. They fund work to enable people to produce less carbon through their daily farming, household and industrial activities. 2022 is the third year in which we have done this. We are at net zero for our Synod activities, but we must do better for the planet and for us all if we continue to reduce our own emissions first, and only offset emissions we cannot yet avoid.

Steve Faber, for the Synod Eco Group

SYNOD EXECUTIVE REPORT for October Synod 2023

Church Changes

Bournville URC closed on 9th July 2023

Trinity Church, Hednesford, closed on 16th July 2023

Coleshill United Church closing on 15th October 2023

Deaths

Charles Edward Lammond Price died on 15th May 2023. He served at Redcar 1963-71; Chorlton 1971-4; Wigton Moor, Leeds 1974-77; Industrial Chaplaincy 1978-83; South Norwood 1983-91; St Columbas Finchfield, Wolverhampton 1991-2002, retiring to Lingdale, Saltburn-by-the Sea.

Rosemary (Rosie) Buxton died on 30th May 2023. Having served for many years as an Elder at Banners Gate Church, Rosie was commissioned as a Church Related Community Worker (CRCW) and served at St David's, Bettws 2006-11; Swansea Region Churches in Community 2011-18; New Life Project (Brackenhall, Moldgreen and Waverley Group) 2018-23.

John Ewart Francis died on 7th June. He served at Saffron Lane, Leicester 1953-58; Falkirk 1958-61; Green End, Manchester 1961-68; Principal, Overdale College 1968-75; Sparkhill, Birmingham 1973-78; Christ Church, South Manchester 1978-85; Lecturer, Northern College 1981-91; Central Salford 1985-91; Larkhall & Rush Hill, Bath 1991-95, retiring to Tettenhall Wood, Wolverhampton.

Revd Kenneth Brian Charles Fear died on 6 July 2023. This year marked the 50th anniversary of his Ordination to Ministry in the United Reformed Church. His service was at St Aidan's, West Ealing 1973-77; Hitchin 1977-82; Sandon 1977-82; Walkern 1977-81; Hobs Moat, Solihull 1982-88; & St Ninian's, Solihull 1982-90.

Revd George Edward [Rikki] Twigg died on 22 September 2023. He served at Burslem with Tunstall 1988-95; Holly Mount, Malvern & Malvern Link 1995-99. He retired to Hagley, originally joining Halesowen before becoming a member at Hagley Free Church.

Movement of Ministers

Mark Rodgers	Ordained and Inducted to Shropshire Pastorate, 19 August 2023
Karen Jones	Ordained and Inducted to North Staffs Pastorate, 9 September 2023
Camilla Veitch	Inducted to Shropshire Pastorate, 23 September 2023
Marcus Griffiths	(Baptist, with a URC Certificate of Limited Service) Inducted to Wistanwick URC, 25 September 2023
Danielle Leigh	(Baptist) to be welcomed to Wade Street Church, Lichfield on 28 October 2023
Cristina Cipriani	Moves to Crawley URC and becomes Southern Synod Ecumenical Officer, 31 October 2023
Stuart Scott	Retires to National Synod of Wales, 31 October 2023
Nick Stanyon	Special Category Ministry term as Synod Evangelist ends in October 2023

Personnel

Lindsay Peniston was welcomed at the March Synod, having just started work as Office Manager and Moderator's PA; Helen Cavaco retired at the end of March following the handover period. Charlotte Butler finished as Part time Administrative Assistant on 19th July and we welcomed Emma Price to the role on 18th September.

Following an unsuccessful Legal & Trust Officer appointment in May, we re-advertised, and Paul Mountain has been appointed, starting on 7th November.

Having served the Synod as Finance Officer for nearly 9 years, first coming in to rescue our accounts when we needed help and then happily accepting a permanent role, Mervyn Davies has accepted a new role closer to home and will be much missed. We are hoping to recruit quickly to minimise the vacancy; please bear with us in the meantime, as Mervyn will leave a big gap in our operations.

Synod Executive met virtually on 21st June and in person on 11th September 2023. Among the issues considered were: -

Synod Review

A paper is attached setting out the process and findings to date. These will be presented to Synod on the evening of Friday 13th October and discussed further at the online meeting on Thursday 19th October.

Synod Staffing Proposal

The Review Group encouraged Synod to proceed with recruitment in response to the findings to date. They did not specify roles, being of the opinion that the detail of operations is best dealt with internally. Noting the retirement of Revd Stuart Scott, Training and Development Officer, and the end of the Special Category Ministry Post of Rev Nick Stanyon, Synod Evangelist, in October, plus the particular need to improve communications; proposals are accordingly attached.

Synod Environmental Policy

Work to update this is underway and it is hoped to bring a revised policy to March Synod 2024.

URC Children

Sam Richards, URC Head of Children's and Youth Work, joined us to help explore how we might hear and respond to children, and be mindful of the impact of decisions on children and future generations. The session provided much food for thought, and there was subsequent discussion around how to make synod communications more accessible for all, not only children.

Resolutions from General Assembly

The Assembly Business digest with the summary from the recent General Assembly, can be found at <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Assembly-Business-Digest-2023-FINAL.pdf> Full papers can be found at <https://urc.org.uk/general-assembly-assembly-executive-assembly-committees/general-assembly/general-assembly-papers/> These include the Book of Reports and the Record of Assembly. The summary page from the Record of matters for consideration and action by local churches, synods and Ministers is included in these reports.

Visit of Bishop Sameer Khimla

The new Bishop for the Diocese of Durgapur in North India with 2 others will be visiting the Synod from Saturday 4th November until Monday 6th November.

Nominations

The list of vacancies remains long, in spite of the reduction in committees.

Continuing priorities are to find: -

- Area reps for Shropshire, South Staffs & Black Country, and North & Mid-staffs for Synod Executive
- Racial Justice Advocate
- Missional Discipleship Development Committee Convenor
- Chair of Trust, plus additional directors particularly to improve diversity

Further information available from synodclerk@urcwestmidlands.org.uk

Representatives for General Assembly 2024

Nominations are sought from local churches for representatives to attend General Assembly from 12th to 15th July at Swanwick. Please email synodclerk@urcwestmidlands.org.uk

ALL OF OUR VACANCIES ARE OPEN EQUALLY TO URC MEMBERS BUT WE PARTICULARLY WELCOME NOMINATIONS THAT WILL GIVE GREATER DIVERSITY AMONGST THOSE SERVING OUR SYNOD.

Please contact the Synod Clerk if you would like further information.

Rachel Wakeman, Synod Clerk
October 2023

RESOLUTIONS

The following resolutions are to be voted on at the online Synod Meeting on Thursday 19th October: -

23/10 Resolution 4: *Synod gives thanks for the work of all those who have served, and who continue to serve, on its committees.*

23/10 Resolution 5: *Synod welcomes the appointment of Steve Powell as Line Manager for the Legal & Trust Officer from October 2023 – October 2026*

23/10 Resolution 6: *Synod concurs with the appointments made by Synod Executive since the March Synod: -*

LISTED BUILDINGS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LBAC)

Revd Simon Helme (Convenor)

Revd Chris Dowd

Peter Jackson

David Marshall

Nigel Walter (accredited conservation architect)

Iain Walker (accredited conservation architect)

All appointed for 3 years from June 2023. RCC Convenor and Property Officer in attendance.

Aston University Free Church Chaplaincy Committee URC rep: Amina Stokes

SACRE in Birmingham URC Rep: Rev Dr Marius Felderhof [previous URC rep, has agreed to rejoin while we continue to seek a replacement.]

External Synod Review Progress Update – September 2023

Background

In March 2023, the Synod Meeting agreed to commission an external review into a number of areas of Synod structure, operation and governance.

In the Terms of Reference for the review team, the following perceived issues were noted:

1. “Synod” is felt too remote from local church life.
2. Synod processes are considered by some local churches to be cumbersome, bureaucratic, and slow in responding to felt needs expressed by local churches.
3. The Synod has “too much money” and is too reluctant to put it to work to support local churches.
4. Congregations are struggling to be effective in growing the church through making new disciples and the Synod Executive has identified a low take-up of the missional discipleship focus and ineffective support of local churches in this area.
5. There is a lack of engagement from local churches in developing the work and policy of Synod operations and the agenda of the Synod Meetings
6. Synod officers are aware of difficulty in communicating effectively on issues around compliance and many congregations are struggling to maintain legislative compliance in operating safely and maintaining safe buildings.
7. The attendance at worship and membership has not recovered from Covid lockdown restrictions/the pandemic.
8. The available level of ordained ministry and lay leadership is insufficient, and/or ministry not deployed in the places where it might make the greatest impact.
9. Too many Synod posts that remain unfilled for extended periods (there are too few people sensing a vocation to connect with and serve the wider church)
10. There is a lack of engagement with training (safeguarding and other areas)
11. There are differences of understanding and perception about what “Synod” can and should deliver, and what can the “Synod” reasonably expect of local churches.

(NB There is no presumption that these perceptions are valid, but these are views that have been expressed by local churches and Synod office holders.)

Process

The Review Team sent out, through the Synod office, a brief questionnaire to all churches asking what works well in their relationship with the Synod, about significant challenges that local churches experience in working with the Synod, and if there was one aspect of the working relationship that might be changed for the better, what would it be? 20 responses were received from individual churches or on behalf of a multi-church pastorate (representing altogether 25% of our churches), plus one response from an individual.

These responses were collated and considered, and fed into a series of meetings with staff members and officers. Findings to date have been presented to the Moderator and Clerk who are liaising with the Review Team.

Findings

The Review Team concluded after examining the questionnaire responses that the perceived issues above were largely what they heard. The Review Team agreed that most of what they have heard points to issues around communication and relationships, rather than definite weaknesses in governance and procedures; they are “management” rather than governance issues, and until questions around communication are addressed, any changes to structural governance may not have much effect.

They commented on questionnaire responses as follows:

1. *Whilst many of the comments were negative, there are some that are not.*
2. *Some are contradictory – no communication in one case and excellent communication in another.*
3. *In some cases, Synod staff are “praised” for always being available and helpful whereas the opposite is recorded elsewhere.*
4. *Also, a plea for less bureaucracy but some of the perceived deficiencies and ways to resolve them are likely to cause more.*
5. *Geographical distance came up a lot.*
6. *Where Synod staff have been seen, this is welcomed – name to a face.*
7. *A closer relationship between Churches and Synod is a recurring theme.*
8. *There were good practices cited, which might give a way forward to act as a template.*
9. *Use positive messages to spread across all Synods – would need careful handling because we would not want Synods thinking they were being targeted (even if they are!).*
10. *As you would expect, the positive messages arose in relation to individual staff members – and vice versa.*
11. *There is not a good universal understanding of the relative roles of the local church and the Synod, and of the obligations imposed on the Synod by external bodies which may constrain its discretion and flexibility.*

The Review Team then held three meetings with different groups of staff members and Synod Officers, and noted very open and positive engagement from those with whom they met. Those meetings both confirmed the findings from the responses of churches and offered some further thoughts and insights to feed into the next steps in the overall review.

The Review Team summarise the outcome from those meetings:

The key messages that we heard were around:

- *communication;*
- *relationship building;*
- *the perceived need for ‘bureaucracy’ (which is quite often driven by external Regulators);*
- *understand the roles of individuals and who does what;*
- *the need for an easily understandable synod strategy;*
- *the need for greater intentionality or consistency on joined-up thinking and working;*
- *the need to demonstrate the kind of behaviours that we want to see.*

(NB. The last bullet point refers to a number of reported instances where communication from local churches, including Ministers, to Synod staff and officers has at times been characterised by bullying, aggression and rudeness. As a whole Synod, part of Christ’s Church, we must agree that this sort of behaviour is completely inappropriate and must not be accepted.)

Next Steps

It is clear that the external review cannot be completed within the original timetable, and some work needs to continue beyond the October 2023 Synod Meeting.

The Review Team believe that they should now:

- Look at ways that some of the points made could be addressed now, within the current governance setup. This would have the advantage of demonstrating that the points made are being taken seriously and enable the Synod to take advantage of the learning that will no doubt arise over the next few months as a result of the Church Life Review Group and associated work. With limited resources at our disposal, it is important to not duplicate where not necessary.
- Given that the key people to implement change are those working in the Synod office and those in the churches, it is vital that they are engaged with the change that we want to see come about. Making the changes referred to below will help that.

They therefore offer the following recommendations as an interim:

- 1) the current staff vacancies should be recruited to as soon as possible;
- 2) a systemic approach to information sharing should be developed – to ensure the same basic understanding for all, e.g. on ecclesiology, synod strategy, structure, ‘who does what’, internal bodies/committees, external regulators;
- 3) senior Synod staff will look at initiating regular ‘team meetings’ so that staff can exchange information, ideas, upcoming issues and any areas of concern;
- 4) we will need to look at the demands for information placed upon churches to see if any of them could be either streamlined or eliminated;
- 5) once the above are underway, we will look closely at the systems and processes to see where further improvements could be made.

A further meeting of the Project Team (the External Review Team, Moderator and Clerk) will be arranged after the Synod Meeting to report back on the conversation at Synod and to go into further detail on the next steps to be taken.

23/10 Resolution 7: Synod receives the interim report on the Synod Review and endorses the work carried out so far.

Synod Staffing Structure Proposal

Context

In March 2023, the Synod commissioned a small group to conduct a review of various aspects of its structure, governance and operation. Part of the brief to the review team was to advise on an appropriate staffing structure.

In consulting with churches, the Review Team concluded that the priority was to address some perceived weaknesses in relationship and information sharing between Synod staff/officers and local churches. They encouraged Synod to proceed with staff recruitment as needed rather than risk stretching synod operations and relationships further.

As the Synod Evangelist's second five-year term ends in mid-October and the Training and Development Officer retires at the end of October, the Synod Executive have agreed that there is significant urgency in addressing replacement staffing needs for the Synod operation.

The proposals in this paper are therefore arising from the work carried out under the Synod Review, but come from the Synod Executive directly, taking into account the listening exercise undertaken by the external reviewers.

The Synod Executive are mindful that long vacancies for Trust Officer and Children's and Youth Development Officer, alongside a shorter vacancy for the Administration Assistant, have presented significant challenges to the smooth-running of Synod operations and the support that has been available from the Synod Office to local churches. We place on record our deep gratitude for the existing office staff and other officers (including the Synod Treasurer, Synod Clerk, Chair of Resources & Compliance Committee and several Trust Board members) who have borne an extra workload during the vacancies.

The Executive were additionally mindful that communication is a two-way process, not just a dissemination of information from the Synod Office to local churches: we need good communication from the local to the "centre" as well, and that is much harder for the Synod structures to address.

Current Staffing Structure

Administration team

- Synod Clerk: Rachel Wakeman (3 days)
- Office Manager/Moderator's PA: Lindsay Peniston (4 days)
- Admin Assistant: Emma Price (3 days)
- Finance Assistant: Lynne Lloyd (1 day)

Technical Officers Team

- Finance Officer: Mervyn Davies (f/t)
- Property Officer: Matthew McDade (3 days)
- Trust Officer: VACANT (4 days)

Field Officers Team

- Children's & Youth Development Officer: VACANT (f/t)
- Synod Safeguarding Officer: Donna Gordon (2.5 days)

In addition, these two Ministers serve in Synod roles as part of the Field Officers Team:

- Training & Development Officer: Stuart Scott until Oct 23 (Deployed, f/t)
- Evangelist: Nick Stanyon until Oct 23 (Deployed Special Category Minister, f/t)

Total employed staff resource, including current vacancies: 4.5 FTE of various grades

Proposed Employed Staff

Current employed staff as above, plus the following:

Field Officers Team

Mission Development Officer – employed f/t

Administration Team

Communications Officer – employed (10 hours/week)

Increase in staffing establishment: 1.2 FTE.

In addition, the following appointment will be pursued through Deployment:

Training and Development Officer/Pastoral Consultant – deployed stipendiary ministry post (f/t). The working assumption is that the postholder will live in the manse at 44 Elizabeth Road, Moseley.

Temporary Consultant to roll out LYCiG in the Synod

The Revd Ashley Evans is the Yorkshire Synod Evangelist Yorkshire Synod have asked whether we could consider seconding him to work with rolling out LYCiG (Leading Your Church into Growth) across the West Midlands, as part of extending LYCiG across the denomination. This would be a direct follow-up to the input from Ashley and colleagues from Yorkshire at the October 2022 residential Synod.

With the current rate of decline in congregation across the denomination, it is clear that intentional, proactive steps are needed to increase confidence in faith-sharing, and it must be in a way that is accessible to the people we already have in our churches – that is with a rich mix of theology and also with a large number of our members who have extremely limited experience in faith sharing. We must also recognise the primary demographics of the people we are working with, where the great majority are well within retirement age, and are “cradle Christians”, that is, those who were brought to church by their parents and have grown up within the Church, a great many of whom would find it difficult to relate a particular conversion experience in their Christian formation.

The experience of LYCiG in Yorkshire and the other northerly Synods of the URC as well as ecumenically is that this is a scheme that works well within our context. It is already being implemented in Gloucestershire and about to be launched in north Warwickshire. It is our intention to use LYCiG much more widely within the West Midlands Synod, and having an experienced practitioner advocate for the programme and walk with churches in learning how to implement it would be hugely beneficial. Many other churches – within the URC and ecumenically – attend the national LYCiG conferences to learn how to use the material, but these are heavily over-subscribed. The Deputy General Secretary (Mission) and the Assembly Mission Committee are also keen to see LYCiG in operation more widely within the United Reformed Church.

LYCiG have asked/encouraged Ashley to adapt the material to use language more familiar within the URC – removing references to parishes, etc. – as the material originated within the Church of England. Ashley and the team working with him are keen to hold the first of what they hope will be a series of URC-specific LYCiG training conferences, and would be keen to run at least one of these from within the West Midlands, but open to churches across the URC.

We would therefore like to take up this secondment of Ashley, probably for up to 15 months from January 2023.

Yorkshire Synod and we need to agree the terms, but informal conversation with their Synod Moderator Jamie Kissack suggests that:

- we will need to commit a 50% scope from within our deployment quota (which is possible without negatively impacting other deployment plans);
- Ashley will continue to occupy his current Manse with Yorkshire meeting 100% of the costs associated with that;
- we will pay for travel to the West Midlands and other costs necessarily incurred with his work for us;
- we would need to pay for/arrange any local accommodation for when he needs to stay overnight;
- the two Synods would share the costs of his pastoral supervision;
- he will remain under the care and discipline of Yorkshire Synod, with close liaison between the two Moderators;
- he will need local oversight/supervision to manage and direct his workload.

On this last point, his work overall would be overseen through MDDC in this Synod, but the committee meets too infrequently to give proper support and direction for his work.

It is our usual practice to make a contribution from Synod funds towards the M&M fund to offset Synod-deployed posts, so that is easily quantifiable, as is the cost of his Supervision sessions (we would fund three per year, with up to 50% of the cost being covered by Church House.) Travel, accommodation and other incidental expenses are much harder to judge, but we are suggesting that we budget for an average of two overnight stays per week, and assume Travelodge or similar accommodation. A lot of work can be undertaken online, but he will certainly need to have a number of evening/weekend sessions in-person. We are recommending booking accommodation on an as-needs basis, so that he can stay more locally to the place where he is actively engaged from time to time, rather than commit a Manse (which would presumably need to be furnished) or rent a flat as a long-term commitment.

The budgetary implications are:

Contribution to the Ministry & Mission Fund for 50% of stipend and associated on-costs: say £23,000 pa

Travel from Bradford to West Midlands, average 260 miles return journey, once per week, plus travel within the Synod of approx. 90miles, say £7,000 pa

Overnight accommodation, including evening meal and breakfast, twice per week, say £11,250pa

Pastoral supervision, £90pa

Resources, ongoing development and incidental expenses, say £1,660pa

Total budgeted expenditure: £43,000pa

23/10 Resolution 8: Synod agrees to the establishment of the Mission Development and Communications Officer posts.

23/10 Resolution 9: Synod agrees to establish a temporary LYCiG Consultant post and agrees to the secondment of the Yorkshire Synod Evangelist to fill this role.

Training & Development Officer/Pastoral Consultant

Aims of the Post

- To support Elders and Ministers' training and development needs
- To support the Moderator in care of churches in the Synod

Main duties and responsibilities

- Plan and deliver Synod Education for Ministry Phase 2 (EM2) and EM Phase 3 programmes for Ministers and be first point of contact for the education and learning for EM Phase 1 students and EM2 Ministers
- Lead the planning and implementation of Ministers' Summer Schools
- Lead training for LMMR partners
- Initiate, support, deliver and advocate training for worship leaders and lay preachers
- Network with the Assembly Education and Learning Committee, TDOs and equivalent posts in other Synods, and ecumenical partners to develop and advocate best practice in training and discipleship development
- Work with the Mission Development Officer and others to encourage and develop local churches in mission and discipleship
- Provide training for Ministers and Elders including in pastoral care, Safer Sacred Space (mandatory training in professional boundaries for Ministers and others), the role of Elders, etc.
- Assist the Synod Safeguarding Officer in the delivery of Safeguarding training at Foundation and Intermediate levels and in other ways as required
- Assist the Moderator with supporting ministers and churches through pastoral difficulties, including conflict resolution and disciplinary cases, and developing new pastorates and ministries
- Work with the Synod Candidating Secretary to prepare candidates for ministry before they commence EM1
- Develop and manage, with the Missional Discipleship Development Committee, the annual training budget
- Deputise for the Moderator on any matter as required

Terms and Conditions

This is a full-time scoped deployed post open to Ministers of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Workers on the Ministerial Roll of the United Reformed Church, for a period of five years initially (subject to review), and is a post within the scope of the Plan for Partnership, including housing, travel and other expenses, annual leave, etc.

Suitable IT hardware and software will be provided by the Synod.

Administrative and secretarial support is provided at Synod Office.

Mission Development Officer

Aims of the Post

- To work with Churches and Minsters to better enable mission and discipleship development and so stimulate and encourage growth within the Synod

Main duties and responsibilities

- Train and support the Ministers and churches so that they can:
 - Understand their church and mission environments
 - Fulfil the potential of the Church's mission through utilising and developing the churches' resources
 - Identify the dynamics of church and local communities and enable churches to participate in God's mission locally and in the wider world.
- Assist churches in identifying mission pledges and responding to the outcomes of their Local Mission and Ministry Review.
- Work with churches to promote a mission-based church and to create and develop mission projects, including Fresh Expressions of Church, church plants and other projects within existing local churches
- Work with ecumenical partners in developing networks towards best practice in mission and discipleship activities
- Act as a signpost to appropriate mission resources and the range of available initiatives within the United Reformed Church and beyond
- Seek to develop a network of mission practitioners from the churches of the Synod.
- Promote the Synod Mission Fund and Ministry Development Fund and support churches in developing grant applications to those funds, and serve as Secretary to the Mission Fund Panel.
- Be a Synod Discipleship Advocate, playing a key role in discipleship within the Synod, helping local churches and volunteers keep discipleship at the heart of all they do
- Ensure that those responsible for education, learning and mission development within the Synod, including Stepwise, are supported in keeping discipleship at the heart of all that is on offer.
- Be a member of the Missional Discipleship Development Committee and Synod Executive, promoting a missional and discipleship mindset and promoting action to further the ethos within the Synod
- Attend and report to Synod meeting, twice a year.
- Work collaboratively with other Synod officers as appropriate
- Participate in the URC Mission Enablers Network
- Generally to work as one of the Synod Officers, representing the West Midlands Synod to local churches, ecumenical partners and the wider Church, undertaking other duties as necessary

Terms and Conditions

This is a full-time employed post. Starting salary will be £40,000. The successful post-holder will have the rights of abode and to work within the UK.

In accordance with the Equalities Act 2010 Part 1; Schedule 9, there is a genuine occupational requirement for the post holder to be a practising Christian.

Suitable IT hardware and software will be provided by the Synod.

Administrative and secretarial support is provided at Synod Office.

Communications Officer

Aims of the Post

- To improve communications between Synod, its Churches and the wider URC

Main duties and responsibilities

- Manage social media feeds for the Synod
- Update the Synod website to work as an iChurch site (a Wordpress template)
- Maintain the Synod website
- Gather news stories from local churches and Synod officers, Synod committees and the wider Church to promote on Social Media, the Synod e-newsletter and the website
- Follow denominational and other relevant Social Media and news stories and cascade them to local churches
- Liaise with the denominational Communications team where good news stories are potentially of interest to wider media outlets
- Attendance as an observer at Synod Executive and Synod Meetings

Terms and conditions

This is an employed post for 10 hours/week, at a starting salary of £15/hour (£27,300 pro rata). The hours may be worked flexibly but will necessarily include some evening and weekend working. The post will be home based, but some attendance at the Synod Office will be necessary. The successful postholder will have the rights of abode and to work within the UK. Suitable IT hardware and software will be provided by the Synod. Administrative and secretarial support is provided at Synod Office.

Matters for consideration and action from General Assembly 2023

The list of General Assembly resolutions below are of particular relevance to local churches, Synods and ministers, and should be taken note of and acted upon as appropriate.

Local churches

- 11 Commissioning of those who work with children, young people and families as ministry
- 16 Use of iChurch for Congregations without active websites
- 17 Use of Design and Digital Visual Identity
- 21b Pastoral care of transgender, non-binary and gender non-conforming people
- 28 Updated Pastoral Supervision Policy
- 31 Poverty and Inequality
- 43 Reflections on Theology of Money
- 44 Theos Report
- 45 Flourishing Churches Resource
- 70 Whistleblowing Policy
- 73 Illegal Migration Bill

Synods

- 12 Accreditation of Children's Youth and Family Leaders by Synods (in conjunction with Youth and Children's Work Committee)
- 17 Use of Design and Digital Visual Identity
- 24a Synod support of M&M Fund
- 27 Updated core-competencies for CRCWs
- 28 Updated Pastoral Supervision Policy
- 29 Updated policy to Extension of Stipendiary Service beyond the Normal Retirement Age
- 30 Withdrawal of Call policy
- 31 Poverty and Inequality
- 38-39 Ecumenical resource sharing and stipendiary MWS for Ecumenical contexts
- 43 Reflections on Theology of Money
- 44 Theos Report
- 45 Flourishing Churches Resource
- 64-68 Changes to Ministerial Discipline Policy
- 69 Removal of Incapacity Process
- 70 Whistleblowing Policy

Ministers

- 27 Updated core-competencies for CRCWs
- 28 Updated Pastoral Supervision Policy
- 29 Updated policy to Extension of Stipendiary Service beyond the Normal Retirement Age
- 30 Withdrawal of Call policy
- 64-68 Changes to Ministerial Discipline Policy
- 69 Removal of Incapacity Process

Excerpt; p4 of Record of Assembly June-July 2023

WEST MIDLANDS SYNOD OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 18th March 2023, at Sutton Coldfield United Reformed Church commencing at 10am.

The Moderator welcomed everyone to the Synod Meeting. The Revd David Walton, on behalf of the Church, welcomed Synod to Sutton Coldfield URC and explained some of the Health & Safety issues and practical details for the day.

Lay Preachers led Worship for Synod including a Call to Worship of Psalm 95 v 1-3.

23/1 PRESENT

The Synod was attended by 20 Serving Ministers, CRCWS and Elders in Local Leadership; 5 Retired Ministers; 34 Lay Representatives; 10 Lay Preachers; 1 Synod Youth Representative; 5 Synod Officers and 6 Visitors.

APOLOGIES HAD BEEN RECEIVED FROM: -

URC Serving Ministers: Ash Barker, Roger Charlton, Cristina Cipriani, Peter Clarkson, Fiona Elvins, Simon Helme, Andrew Mann-Ray, Chris Watson

1 Elder in Local Leadership, 10 Retired Ministers, 17 lay representatives (3 of whom sent replacements), 1 Lay Preacher, and 1 Synod Officer.

23/2 PASTORAL NEWS, WELCOMES, GOODBYES

23/2/1 Movements

The Revd David Bintliff (Methodist) welcomed to Trinity Church, Stafford Sept 2022

The Revd Robert Maloney retired on 26th February 2023

The Revd Tim Mullings resigned from Tettenhall Wood URC and left URC ministry 28th Feb 2023

23/2/2 Deaths

The Revd Nina Mead on 11th November 2022 having moved to Stratford URC in retirement.

The Revd Harold Dixon on 3rd December 2022, served at Eignbrook, Hereford 1980-1992.

The Revd Jessie Clare on 7th January 2023, served at Painswick 1992-95.

The Revd Marion Thomas on 5th March 2023, served at Worcester & Hereford District 1998; Hampton Park & Eignbrook 1998-99; Silverdale 2003-04; Clayton 2003-2013; Burslem 2003-16; & Longton, Tomkin, Uttoxeter, Chesterton & Wolstanton 2011-16. Remained active in retirement in Staffordshire, including as a member of the Keele Chaplaincy Free Church Resource Group.

Lay members from our churches who had died were also remembered.

23/2/3 Church changes

Bournville URC, Birmingham, resolved to close on 9th July 2023.

23/2/4 Personnel

Helen Cavaco – taking early retirement after nearly 24 years working for the Synod

Richard Knott – leaving to become CYDO in the East Midlands Synod

Lindsay Peniston – new Officer Manager & PA to the Moderator

Revd David Walton – finishing as Chair of Trust

23/3 CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Richard Knott, CYDO, was introduced to update on Children and Youth work and Claire Kerrigan was welcomed as the new West Midlands Youth Representative and all were encouraged to contact her on youthrep@urcwestmidlands.urch.org.uk.

The Moderator congratulated Shrewsbury URC on their Children and Youth Friendly Church Award and presented it to Mervyn Davies on their behalf.

Richard reported briefly on current news and events, with information available at <https://urch.org.uk/your-faith/children-young-people/children-youth-work/>. He highlighted the monthly online gathering for all who work with children and young people, hosted by the CYDO+ team online at 7pm on the fourth Thursday each month.

23/4 ASTON HIGHER EDUCATION CHAPLAINCY 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Jan Scott was welcomed to report on Chaplaincy in Higher Education, highlighting the numbers of university students in Birmingham and around the Synod with current numbers totalling over 193,000. Jan explained that she was a chaplain at Aston University in Birmingham at the Martin Luther King Multi-Faith Chaplaincy, where they recently celebrated their 50th Anniversary. Looking at data highlighted the number of Christians and those of other faiths and none at Aston University. There are 9 chaplains in the multi-faith chaplaincy team who welcome students starting in September and January, often with food and drink. The chaplaincy offers a safe, alcohol free space for students and is open for quiet times for students and staff. The current Vice-Chancellor has increased the prayer spaces available. All faith festivals in term time are celebrated and there are other opportunities for supporting people in their faith. The University is very much a secular institution, and wellbeing therapies are also offered to all which provide an opportunity for conversations and support.

Jan advised that she was finishing at Easter after 10 years as a Chaplain and asked all to pray for the work and the students and consider what they can do to support the Chaplaincy. She also suggested that everyone consider training to become a Chaplain, voluntary or paid. She asked for another volunteer for the Aston University Chaplaincy Committee, John Fletcher having recently finished after many years of service.

The Moderator thanked Jan and led Synod in prayer for her as she entered retirement and for the Chaplaincy and students and staff.

23/5 LEGACIES OF SLAVERY TASK GROUP

The Moderator explained that, on 12 July 2022, as her first act as Moderator of General Assembly, the Revd Fiona Bennett read out a statement that included the words: "We, the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church, mindful of our own history and that of our antecedent bodies, wish to confess and apologise for our role in transatlantic slavery, and the scars which continue to blight our society, our Church, and the lives of black people in our midst and around the globe today."

The Confession and Apology followed a process of consultation with synods across the URC and also discussion and decision in General Assembly itself. But Assembly also agreed that the URC must "find constructive ways by which we can move from saying 'I'm sorry' into concrete actions of 'repairing justice' and so contribute to the prophetic work of God's coming kingdom."

Since the General Assembly, the URC's Legacies of Slavery (LoS) Task Group has been drawing up a shortlist of proposals and possible projects, based on feedback from synods and churches during the consultation in 2022. These will be presented to this year's General Assembly. The intention is to combine elements of the local, the national and the global – supporting existing or emerging projects and working with partners

both within and beyond the UK. At their heart is a commitment to journey towards creating an actively anti-racist Church.

A video was shown with Synod being asked to consider: -

- How do you respond to the film? Does anything in the film surprise you?
- To what extent do the issues highlighted resonate with your own local context, or situations you have encountered in other parts of the URC?
- What practical actions could be taken by the local/wider church to address the issues as part of our commitment to becoming an actively anti-racist Church? What support might be needed to enable the journey?

The Moderator emphasised the importance of focusing on the need to move to an actively anti-racist church and asked Synod to join in buzz groups to discuss the questions. Feedback included:-

- Iain McLaren, from Cheltenham, explained that they host a black congregation and now share fellowship with them.
- Chris Dowd asked for some good training materials and signposting, not just looking to our BAME members to do so.
- John Marsh said a lot of listening and a lot of repenting was needed.
- Ann Tempest talked about her experience at Wilton Road URC in Handsworth.
- Claudette Binns reflected on how 20 years ago, when a minister preached with a view, people were talking about accents and work visas.
- Michael Jagessar said that he was struck that you could not concern yourself about whether you had black people in your congregation, he recommended working on what it means to be a white congregation with white privilege. He advised all to reflect and not exclude others.

The Moderator asked everyone to give feedback on ideas.

23/6 JPIT: Churches responding to social issues

The Moderator welcomed Simeon Mitchell, URC Secretary for Church and Society. Simeon explained how he also worked as part of the JPIT Team: the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team of the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches which helps our Churches to work together for peace and justice through listening, learning, praying, speaking and acting on public policy issues. The team faces in two directions – supporting churches and talking to external bodies with power to change. He reflected on the questions ‘Why is the Church engaged in Justice in Society and its politics?’ and ‘Should we not be focused on spiritual matters and practical caring for those in need?’ Simeon was clear that we need involvement in politics and power also. Jesus was born into a family that became refugees and challenged those in power. Our God first revealed himself as a liberator and deliverer to Moses and called his people to work for the liberation of others. Simeon talked about an incarnational God, a God of justice and a transforming God.

Synod was given a few minutes to talk in buzz groups about what they are doing in their churches to respond to social issues around them. Simeon asked who was talking about warm spaces, foodbanks, debt related problems, engaging with their MP or local councils. He went on to talk about 3 particular areas of work.

1. Poverty – Sharing the story of ‘Charlie’ a single Mum of 4 kids who have never wanted for anything until recently, when energy bills went from £83 to £283 a month with no warning and she had to cancel her direct debit and go on to a prepayment meter. As a full-time carer of the elderly, she wonders if she should consider alternative, less caring, roles, for less hours and more money. Simeon noted that an average family of 4 on benefits is around £200 per month worse off this year than last, however the Cost of Living Crisis was only acknowledged when middle class families started suffering. Simeon highlighted the need for the Church to act as poverty levels rise as a result of political choices. A new campaign ‘Guarantee our Essentials’ aims to tackle the problems by ensuring those on Universal Credit have the basic minimum to survive i.e setting the level according to real needs.
2. Refugees & issues around asylum and immigration policy & legislation – looking at everything from the Windrush scandal to different rules for asylum seekers depending on their method of arrival. JPIT will continue to advocate for a fairer asylum system and a culture of welcome in our wider society.
3. Politics – one of JPITs roles is to encourage churches to engage with political representatives and processes. E.g. Currently raising awareness of the need for photo ID to vote from May 2023. Also aim to build understanding and positive relationships between churches and MPs by inviting them to attend a church project or take a walk locally with you, i.e., deepening the relationship with them.

Current work focused on 6 hopes for society

- A society where the poorest and most marginalised are at the centre
- A society that welcomes the stranger
- A politics characterised by listening, kindness and truthfulness
- A planet where the environment is renewed
- A just economy that enables the flourishing of all life
- A world which actively works for peace

All were encouraged to find out more at www.jpit.uk and sign up for a monthly newsletter and initiatives.

The Moderator thanked Simeon and others for their work on JPIT. As a member of the JPIT policy group, he emphasised the quality of the work carried out and also encouraged all to engage.

LUNCH

23/7 PERSONNEL

The Moderator introduced Lindsay Peniston, new Office Manager and Moderator’s PA, now available on moderatorspace@urcwestmidlands.org.uk as needed.

23/8 CHURCH LIFE REVIEW

Synod watched a video update on the work of the Church Life Review Group. The Moderator then spoke explaining that the final report was nearly ready to be published. They would be asking a different group of people to look at a second phase to help the Church with significant cultural change needed. The financial information would be ready for publishing shortly and shows how we are not financially poor, we are short of people, not money. More information to follow in the coming months with the report to General Assembly.

23/9 ECO SYNOD

The Moderator advised: -

- 2022 Carbon footprint for Synod activities will be calculated and shared
- We are offsetting our carbon production through Climate Stewards, in the knowledge that we need to reduce and not just offset.
- Eco survey for churches distributed for return by 3rd April 2023

A video by Nick Stanyon was shown telling the story of Broadway URC, Worcestershire, and its project to plant 50 trees, to encourage more churches to take up the challenge. They planted 2 trees on church land, asking the congregation to plant some which added another 8. They asked the community to join in and that has enabled further planting, as well as joining with a local project at the Heart of England Forest. (Available on the Synod You Tube site <https://www.youtube.com/@westmidlandssynod544>)

23/10 RESOURCES & COMPLIANCE AND TRUST REPORT

Steve Powell, Synod Treasurer, spoke to the report. He highlighted

1. Energy Efficiency Grants – encouraging churches to apply.
2. Manses – Energy Efficiency – a revised approach, not just limited to PV solar panels.
3. Manses – major repairs & insurance paid for by Synod, plus allowance for day-to-day maintenance increased from £500 to £750 per year from 2023.
4. Ministry & Mission Fund – thanks to all for their giving to what is the first call on church resources. It is likely that giving will need to be broadly the same next year as, while numbers are going down, stipends are going up.
5. Grants Leaflet – distributed at Synod with information for all churches about the wide range of sources of help for local churches.
6. Finance Consultation on 24 June 2023 on zoom.
7. Staff are available to help, however they are under a lot of pressure having been without a Trust Officer for 12 months, and we are very aware of losing Helen’s knowledge and experience at the end of March.

Richard Knott drew attention to closure of churches and sale of buildings, asking whether consideration could be given to alternative uses for church buildings. Steve responded that closure of churches was discussed in other areas including Ministry Development Committee; RCC and Trust get involved at the end of the process. He also highlighted the legal constraints of disposing of charitable assets of the United Reformed Church. The Moderator affirmed Steve’s response while sympathising with the wish to find new ways to put money to good use. Steve also recalled that he has said before that it is not the job of Synod to accumulate money.

Ann Tempest, Church Treasurer at South Aston, said that her church had a letter from the Synod reducing the M&M payments which was later corrected. Steve, as a Church Treasurer, said that whilst there was an admin glitch in letters, the right money was taken – if that was not the case, let him know.

23/02 RESOLUTION 1: This report be received – agreed unanimously.

23/11 VOCATIONS AND VOLUNTEERS

Stuart Scott, Synod Training and Development Officer led this item. A paper to Assembly Executive noted “In all areas of the life of the United Reformed Church there is a desire for people to find faith, have opportunities to learn more and grow in faith, to live that faith, to bring and be God’s kingdom ‘on earth as it is in heaven’ – and to encourage this as widely as possible.”

Stuart encouraged all to consider call and vocation in the widest sense – in all the ways we respond to God in our lives and live out our Christian discipleship. We are called to relationship, to relate to God and to each other. We are called to be part of God’s creation. We are called to belong to Christ’s body and to become i.e., not to remain static, but to be begin a journey of faith. We are called to serve, using our particular gifts. He summarised, that we are called

- By God
- To be
- To belong
- To become
- To serve

Stuart advocated use of call and vocation, rather than use of the word ‘volunteer’. A video was shown to illustrate call and vocation in everyday life – You Tube, LICC ‘Life on the Frontline: Meet Ann’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVKbvE-HQeI>

Synod was asked to use buzz groups to consider: -

- Where and how is God calling you? How do you live out your faith every day?
- Why do you do what you do? Do you see what you do day by day as your calling?
- Can you identify one activity in the church and one outside the church where your faith is expressed explicitly?
- How might you enable these conversations to continue in your church?

To conclude, Stuart quoted Frederick Buechner “Vocation is where our deepest gladness meets the world’s greatest need.”

23/12 MARKS OF MINISTRY OF AN ELDER

Stuart Scott drew attention to the report to Assembly Executive in November 2022 <https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Marks-of-Ministry-of-an-Elder-2022-H3-AE-.pdf> which set out the Marks of Ministry for an Elder, in short, as:

- A faithful disciple of Jesus Christ
- A person of integrity and prayer
- A person who cares for others
- A person of accountability

He also detailed the Marks of Ministry for an Elders’ Meeting – The Elders’ Meeting collectively should include the following Marks of Ministry:

- Pastorally caring for others
- A ministry of oversight for the Church
- A focus upon mission and evangelism
- A participation in the councils of the Church
- A commitment to the Church always being renewed

Stuart emphasised that how each individual Elder and how each Elders’ Meeting operate will vary according to their individual gifts and context. He highlighted training available, online through Synod and, also through with the URC Learning Hub, when registered, which can be done by emailing via <https://urc.org.uk/new-learning-hub-launched/>

23/11 SYNOD MISSION EXECUTIVE REPORT

The Clerk spoke to the report, highlighting the proposed External Review of Synod Operations.

- Aim, in short, “to better serve the needs of our churches”
- Terms of Reference in Book of Reports – comments welcome to synodclerk@urcwestmidlands.org.uk
- All churches to be contacted as part of the process
- Starting March 2023, target to report to October Synod

Nominations Resolutions

The following resolutions were submitted for approval and agreed unanimously: -

23/03 Resolution 2: Synod gives thanks for the work of all those who have served, and who continue to serve, on its committees.

23/03 Resolution 3: Synod welcomes and concurs with the appointment of The Revd Kathryn Louch as Convenor of the Ministry Development Committee for an initial term of 1 year from January 2023 to January 2024, as agreed by Synod Executive.

23/03 Resolution 4: The following be re-appointed from October 2022 to October 2025:

Synod Mission Fund Panel: The Revd Ken Martin

Vision4Mission Group: The Revd Simon Helme

23/03 Resolution 5: Alan Eaton be appointed Convenor of Resources & Compliance Committee from March 2023 to March 2026.

23/03 Resolution 6: Claire Kerrigan be appointed Synod Youth Representative for the West Midlands Synod and ex-officio member of Synod Executive from March 2023 to March 2026.

23/03 Resolution 7: The Revd Debbie Brown be put forward to Assembly Nominations Committee for appointment as West Midlands Representative to Assembly Mission Committee from July 2023 to July 2027.

23/03 Resolution 8: The following be re-appointed from March 2023:

Synod Treasurer, Trust Board & co-opted member of Synod: Steve Powell for 3 years

Lay Preaching Commissioner & Candidating Secretary: Margaret Marshall for 3 years

Green Apostle: John Davey for 3 years

Trust Board: Margaret Marshall for 3 years and The Revd David Walton for 1 year

Synod Mission Fund Panel: (for 3 years) Peter Horrocks (Convenor), The Revd Chris Dowd and Kirsty-Ann Mabbott

23/03 Resolution 9: The following be appointed as West Midlands Synod Representatives for the July 2023 General Assembly:

The Revd Steve Faber

Rachel Wakeman

Steve Powell

The Revd Ash Barker

The Revd Debbie Brown

John Fletcher

The Revd James Hamilton

Kati Haynes

Julie Jeffries

Kirsty-Ann Mabbott

The Revd Andrew Mann-Ray

The Revd Graham Sweeney

And Synod Executive be authorised to agree additions and substitutions as necessary to complete our allocation of 16 places.

N.B. Must send two Under-26 Representatives, and encouraged to send at least one BAME Representative.

Nominations for those categories especially welcome & urgent to synodclerk@urcwestmidlands.org.uk

23/12 MINUTES FROM 15TH OCTOBER 2022

The Minutes from the Synod Meeting held on 15th October 2022 were taken as a correct record for signature by the Moderator.

23/13 THANKS

The Moderator expressed thanks and appreciation to all those who helped facilitate the Synod meeting.

23/14 Lay Preachers closed the meeting of Synod with worship

CLOSE at 3.15 pm

**NEXT SYNODS TO BE HELD ON
FRIDAY 13TH & SATURDAY 14TH OCTOBER 2023 at the Holiday Inn, Birmingham Airport
SATURDAY 16TH MARCH 2024 online**



The
**United
Reformed
Church
West Midlands
Synod**

United Reformed Church West Midlands Synod Office
Digbeth-in-the-Field URC
Moat Lane
Yardley
Birmingham B26 1TW
Email: admin@urcwestmidlands.org.uk
Tel: 0121 783 1177

Phone lines open 9am-4pm
Office Hours: Monday–Thursday. 9am-5pm