

Meeting of The United Reformed Church Wessex Synod

United Church Winchester
Jewry Street
Winchester
SO23 8RZ



The
**United
Reformed
Church**

Saturday 12th October 2024

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The Wessex Trust Report will be a separate document available on Wednesday 2nd October.

AGENDA

09:45	Arrivals Entrance to the Hall - book into Synod and choose your Workshop	
	Coffee available in the Main Hall	
10:30	Welcome	Moderator
	Synod constituted by the Moderator	Moderator
	Local Church Announcements	Winchester
10:40	Opening Worship including the Celebration of Jubilee ministers and Communion	Moderator
11:30	Welcome to ecumenical visitors and new members of Synod	Moderator
	Pastoral News	Moderator
	Apologies	Clerk
	Minutes of Synod held on the 24 th April 2024	Clerk
	Matters Arising	Clerk
	Order of business and Announcements	Clerk
11:45	Wessex Trust	Romilly Micklem
	Resolutions	
12:20	Synod Executive Report	Clerk
12:40	IBEX - Church and the Community	Esther Ridsdale
12:50	Good News Story Army Chaplaincy	Stuart Turner
13:00	Lunch - Main Hall	
13:00	Safeguarding Surgery, Buildings Surgery	
14:00	Commitment for Life - Faith Wills	Video
14:10	Ministries and Learning Committee	Wayne Hawkins
14:25	Stepwise - Being a Mentor	Video
14:30	Workshops	
	Taking Action on Poverty	Roo Stewart
	Wellbeing Created Church	Esther Ridsdale
	Stepwise Faith Filled Life	Mary Thomas & Ruth White
15:40	Stepwise 2025 - Faith Filled Environment	Video
15:45	Remaindered business	
16:00	Thank Yous	Moderator
	Closing Worship	
16:30	Tea and Departure	

Next meeting of Synod: Online on 27th February 2025

UPDATE ON ORDINANDS, MINISTERIAL AND CHURCH CHANGES

Ordinands and CRCWs training for Ministry

Name	College	Ministry Category	Finish Date
Simon Peters	Northern	Stipendiary Ministry	June 2026
Abigail Perrow	Westminster	Stipendiary Ministry	June 2026
Sue Nichols	Northern	Non-Stipendiary Ministry – Model 4	June 2028

Ministerial Changes

- 27th April David Masters (Baptist) was inducted at Peachcroft Christian Centre, Abingdon.
- 15th July David Downing left Maidenhead, Marlow, Windsor and Bracknell to become South Western Synod's Moderator.
- 31st July Wilbert Sayimani left Richmond Hill St Andrew's, Bournemouth and moved to Thames North Synod.
- 31st July Kay Blackwell moved to Holy Island in Northern Synod.
- 1st September Georgina Bondzi-Simpson (Methodist) was inducted to Trinity Church, Abingdon.
- 7th September Siobhan Antoniou was Ordained and Inducted to North Downs Surrey Pastorate in Southern Synod.
- 6th October Sarah McClelland (CofE) left Chandler's Ford, Valley Park St Francis.

Church Closures

- 31st May Liss URC closed

Ministerial Retirements

- 4th May Alison Toplas Retired from Beacon Hill and remains in the Synod

Ministerial Deaths

- 17th May Barbara Meachin

Changes before next Synod

- 13th December Thanksgiving Service at Waterside, Emsworth as it closes.
- 31st December Fordingbridge URC closes

MINUTES

MINUTES of the meeting of WESSEX SYNOD on Wednesday, 24th April 2024 held on Zoom at 6.30pm.

The Moderator constituted the meeting and welcomed all to the meeting. The Moderator invited Philip Woods joining from the USA to introduce himself. Philip is a URC Minister serving with the Presbyterian Church USA in Louisville, Kentucky.

The Moderator led Opening Devotions, reading verses from 1 Corinthians 15 referring to three gardens; Adam in the Garden of Eden, Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Garden of Joseph of Arimathea's and the rock tomb. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

The Moderator reminded Synod of the guidance for the conduct of the meeting on Zoom, following which a test poll was launched. Co-hosts were unable to participate in the poll and a resolution of this will be sought prior to the next meeting of Synod on Zoom.

Attendance

24	URC Ministers and CRCWs
39	Church representatives
1	Ministers of other denominations
1	Retired Ministers/CRCWs
2	Ordinands
17	Others holding Synod appointments
2	Visitors
86	Total

24S16 Apologies: Apologies had been received as listed below. The Clerk reported that 180 should be present in total and that 84 were present in the meeting at that point. The Moderator suggested the low attendance at the meeting should be a matter for consideration.

5	URC Ministers
11	Church Representatives
2	Ministers of other denominations
0	Ordinands
16	Retired Ministers
2	Others
36	Total

24S17 Minutes of the last meeting: The Clerk advised that there had not been any notice of amendments to be made to the Minutes of the last meeting as published in the Synod papers and the Minutes of the meeting were agreed unanimously.

24S18 Matters Arising: None.

The Clerk reported a change of name for a presentation appearing on the agenda and Mary Thomas not Ruth White would present the Mission House proposal.

24S19 Pastoral News: The Moderator thanked everyone involved in the Induction Service and reported that the retiring collection had raised at least £573 for relief work in Zambia. The Moderator referred to the update on ordinands, ministerial and church changes:

- i. David Masters will be inducted to Peachcroft Christian Centre, Abingdon on Saturday, 27th April 2024.
- ii. Alison Toplas retires from her ministry at Beacon Hill and remains in the Synod.
- iii. Kay Blackwell moves to Holy Island in Northern Synod on 31st July.
- iv. Subsequent to the papers being prepared David Downing has been appointed to be Moderator of South Western Synod. The Moderator asked Synod to remember the churches at Bracknell, Windsor, Maidenhead, and Marlow in prayer.
- v. The Moderator mentioned others who would welcome prayer and referred to those ministers named in the papers celebrating Jubilee. These shall be invited to the October Synod to receive certificates. Alternatively, certificates will be presented in their local church, or in person at their homes as appropriate.

24S20 Synod Executive: The Clerk presented the report:

- i. The Clerk thanked all those involved in the Moderator's Induction Service.
- ii. The Clerk reminded Synod of the Big Day Out, stating that Hollycombe Steam in the Country is now fully open. The programme and map will be emailed to those who have booked tickets by the middle of the week following Synod. Any who know they are attending are asked to volunteer for an hour of their time, to please email the Clerk.

24S21 Nominations: Resolution 1: The Moderator invited the Clerk to speak to Resolution 1.

The Clerk thanked all who have served in the past year in the various roles and offices and also thanked all continuing in those duties.

Synod Executive will be meeting with the committee conveners and Synod Youth Executive at the all day meeting on 18th May to consider how the committees function and relate to each other and understand their meeting and work as committees within the Synod Strategy.

Noting the vacancies identified in the Nominations paper the Clerk invited anyone wishing to volunteer or with any nominations to make contact.

The Clerk brought resolution 1:

RESOLUTION 1

Wessex Synod approves the list of Appointments submitted by Nominations Group.

This was agreed unanimously.

The Moderator thanked the Synod Executive for all their hard work.

24S22 Safeguarding: The Clerk presented the report, thanking Phil Ray and Ruth White for assisting Sharon Barr in its preparation. The Clerk thanked all involved in Safeguarding and in particular those putting on the safeguarding training.

24S23 Trust Report: Romilly Micklem brought the report.

- i. Romilly Micklem thanked John Sinclair for his service on the Trust, which is drawing to a close and he was thanked for his wisdom and service as a trustee.
- ii. The Energy Crisis Fund has received a request on the day of Synod which will be considered but the Fund will now close. Churches facing difficulty coming off previous energy contracts are encouraged to speak to Romilly Micklem or Ray Dunnett. The Trust will seek to put emphasis on the Synod's goal of moving to net zero when considering applications from churches related to heating matters.
- iii. Churches are reminded not to use the Wessex Trust charity number and of the link in the reports to a letter written by the Charity Commission that can be sent to those

organisations requesting a charity number. An alternative for churches not registered is to seek to use their HMRC Gift Aid registration number.

- iv. Churches are reminded that it is a requirement to produce annual accounts and have them independently inspected and sent to Romilly Micklem or David North to be filed with Synod Office.

The Moderator thanked Romilly Micklem, the trustees and the staff of the Trust for all their hard work.

24S24 Mission House Proposal: Resolution 2:

Mary Thomas referred to the material in the Synod papers. Other Synods are also developing Mission Houses separately.

The Moderator invited matters for clarification:

- i. Romilly Micklem referred to the effort taken to indicate the most accurate financial information as possible in the report but wished to encourage Synod to regard the figures as budgetary figures. The cost over the three years should be expected to be closer to the final figure indicated than that for the start-up costs.
- ii. Other sources of funding will be sought but in agreeing the proposal Synod will be agreeing to underwrite the proposal.
- iii. The proposal is targeted towards those in the 18-30 age group but application from others will be considered.
- iv. It is envisaged there will be two or three people on the team.
- v. The supervision and pastoral support and management supervision of the projects and the placement within the church will be through a 50/50 split between Synod officers and elders within the church. The pastoral care of team members will come primarily from within the church but also from the CYDO if the team member is a young adult and from the DSO otherwise.
- vi. The financial numbers in the report are predicated on three team members. If two people were in post this would increase the cost to the Synod but not greatly.
- vii. There has not been a consideration of anyone outside the UK being appointed at this stage. The primary thought is that successful candidates would come from within the Synod but then also from the wider networks across the URC and amongst ecumenical partners in the UK.
- viii. A concern was raised that early career people may need more intensive support to be able to fulfil their potential. This has been worked on and is taken seriously.
- ix. A fixed term with a minimum of two years is envisaged although anyone studying while they are working would be supported. The two year minimum appointment will allow team members to be full members of the community in which they serve.
- x. As part of the interview process there will be an exploration of why the candidates wish to embark on such an exploration ministry. Some who had been part of the conversations previously had indicated that formal training would not be appropriate for them. A catalogue of opportunities for education will be compiled. There is a list of mandatory training that successful candidates would be required to complete as part of their induction.
- xi. The apprenticeship model had not been considered. Such a model can be borne in mind. The Moderator suggested that Gordon Woods who had raised the question could contact Mary Thomas with further information should he wish.

Mary Thomas brought resolution 2:

RESOLUTION 2:

Wessex Synod approve the commencement of a Mission House Pilot Project in Poole from September 2025.

Including:

- Asking Wessex Trust to underwrite the set-up costs of establishing the mission house in the Broadstone Manse.

Approving the annual expenditure of the project.

This was agreed unanimously.

Synod took a break at 7.26pm.

Synod reconvened at 7.45pm.

24S25 Stepwise Presentation: Mary Thomas gave the presentation reminding Synod that Stepwise is progressing. At the beginning of Stepwise the graphics produced were of seemingly ordered stepping stones but discipleship and the journey together can be much more disordered with little chance to reflect on where we are going. Opportunity to do so is offered by Stepwise:

- i. One question in Stepwise is regularly asked: Where have you seen God this week? The discipline of looking out for the answer to this question in an intentional way opens up more aspects of our faith and how we see it in our ordinary lives.
- ii. Stepwise is making a difference. People have been engaging in Faith-filled life then seeing where this leads. This has often led people to see how they are serving God in their area and to see this service differently. Some have been led to consider their calling and to serve on the Advocacy Group or as a Facilitator.
- iii. More Stepwise streams are planned for this year in the Synod, namely Faith filled life in person on the Isle of Wight and faith filled worship online to be run across several Synods. Forward planning is taking place towards offering Faith filled community, faith fuelled leadership or faith filled confidence.
- iv. There is an avenue to become a locally recognised Worship leader through Stepwise. But God may be calling you to work with children and young families or with the elderly, or carers. The agenda of the Stepwise Advocacy Group is simply to open doors.

Please let the Advocacy Group know if you would like a Stepwise group to meet in your area. Mary Thomas asked the question: If other streams were planned after Faith filled life, which would be your priority?

24S26 M&M Fund Report and Resolution 3: David North presented the report, beginning by reading Mark 12:41-44, the widow's offering:

- i. The Task Group had received responses from churches and listened to the suggestions presented at the February Synod. If those emailing hadn't yet received response this would be forthcoming and the draft proposal has been adjusted for decision at this meeting of Synod.
- ii. Accounts had not been received from all the churches and so the levy on church reserves had not been included in the proposal before Synod at this stage.

- iii. The proposal includes that the changes in M&M for local churches will be phased in over the next three years, with a base figure and an ideal figure given to each church.
- iv. David North reminded Synod that requests for M&M to churches are requests not demands representing a gift from the churches to the denomination to cover the costs of mission and ministry and churches should consider their giving prayerfully before the Lord.
- v. The total requested from Synod towards M&M will remain irrespective of the policy for M&M requests from churches adopted by Synod.

The Moderator invited questions of clarification after stating that the intention in discussing resolution 3 was for Synod to seek to agree the principle about the Synod formula for M&M rather than to discuss specific situations:

- vi. What will be the stance taken toward churches with a deficit budget and to what extent are churches being asked to run down their reserves to meet M&M? David North asked churches to contact him as Synod treasurer when worried about deficit situations.
- vii. In the existing M&M formula there is recognition of scoping or ministry that is being provided to the local church which is excluded in the proposed policy. If a reduced M&M were permitted thus might enable churches to consider employing a lay pastoral worker. David North replied that the denomination relies upon local congregations contributing towards M&M regardless of ministry received. All four Synod Pastoral Committees are looking at deployment models beyond scoping. Churches with a forward-looking plan would more likely receive sympathetic hearings from Synod and other grant funders when making applications for assistance.
- viii. LEPs are not included in the proposal at this stage but an inflationary increase on the existing M&M will be applied. The letter to churches will include a comment to LEPs inviting LEPs to prayerfully consider offering more than indicated by an inflationary increase alone and also to contact him should such an increase be problematical.
- ix. There has been an historical difference between LEPs on the contributions made to each of the partner denominations. In general, where there has been alternating ministry the “minister element” has tended to go to whichever denomination is providing the minister in post, the membership element being split between the denominations.

Discussion followed:

- x. That there is a flat rate across each band rather than graduation was questioned, as churches that increase in membership could face large increases. David North explained that the flat rate makes the M&M requests simpler to identify but that there is room for discretion for those churches at such a boundary. The letter to be sent to church treasurers regarding the M&M requests going forward will reinforce the intention that those churches with concern should communicate these.

David North brought Resolution 3:

RESOLUTION 3

Synod Meeting agrees to adopt the formula outlined in the Report from the Ministry and Mission Task Group, with phasing in of the changes over three years and tasks the Ministry and Mission task group to review after the first year’s numbers have been agreed.

Agreed overwhelmingly, with none against.

The Moderator took the opportunity to reassure Synod that conversation and communication will be vital and that the implementation of the new process would be gradual and with consultation. The Moderator thanked the Task Group for their work and particularly David North for leading through the presentation of the resolution.

24S27 Any Remaindered Business: The Moderator apologised for failing to include in Pastoral News the sad news of the deaths of Colin Ferguson and David Meacher, two Lay Preachers who had also served the Synod in a variety of roles. He asked Synod to remember them and pray for their families.

24S28 Thank You: The Moderator thanked everyone who had made the meeting of Synod possible: The Clerk, Deborah Walker, the Tech team, the staff and Trust staff and the committee and Task Group convenors, and Alison Toplas for leading the closing worship.

The business was finished and the Moderator adjourned Synod at 20.34 to meet again at 10.30am on Saturday 12th October 2024 at United Church Winchester or at such other time and place as may be necessary.

OBITUARY

The following obituary will be edited and form part of “Celebrated Lives”; a collection of life stories which will appear in the 2025 edition of the URC Year Book

Barbara Meachin

15 June 1930 – 17 May 2024

Reverend Barbara Meachin’s early life was shaped by the realities of WW2. She passed the 11+ but, due to social norms and family decisions was not able to go to grammar school attending Briarfield Road School in Manchester. Secretarial college led to office work for Colonial and Mutual Insurance Society, then as secretary to Howard Stanley, the Secretary and Moderator of the Lancashire Congregational Union.

She was active in her local church as a teenager and young adult serving as a Deacon, lay preacher and Sunday School Superintendent at Parris Wood Road Congregational Church.

She married Charles after he completed his ministerial training, and they moved to St Helens. At a time when access to family planning was not widespread, she teamed up with health professionals from the St Helens congregation to start a family planning clinic.

A move to Hanover Chapel in Peckham followed. At this lively church she began an art club and was very involved in experimental forms of Sunday morning worship which sought to include and develop contributions by the church fellowship, especially the young people.

Her interest in religion, philosophy and cultures lead to her studying for a Bachelor’s Degree in Humanities with the Open University in one of its, earliest cohorts of students.

Following this she trained for the Congregational ministry studying for the Roll of Ministers examinations. Barbara was ordained as one of the earliest female Congregational Ministers.

Serving initially as one of the assistant ministers at The City Temple she set up a ‘stress centre’ at which people could access confidential support. Moving then to become the minister at Edith Grove URC in Chelsea she led a busy church which engaged with the community in a variety of ways, including hospital chaplaincy.

Barbara became a member of the British Council of Churches committee which promoted the ordination of women and served on the URC assessment board.

Charles moved to St Paul’s URC Croydon, where Barbara became ‘Brown Owl’, opened the ‘Women’s Guild’ to all renaming it ‘The Guild’. She taught RE at Croham Hurst School where her pastoral experience proved helpful to a number of pupils.

In retirement, for eighteen years, she was a volunteer room steward at Kingston Lacey House (National Trust), became Mayoress of Poole when Charles was elected Mayor, a role to which she brought a dynamic visibility. Typical of this were the regular Mayor’s Parlour lunch parties to thank local people who had made community contributions as well as supporting a number of local charities.

India held a special place in her life and her heart. Co-leading organised visits and travelling with friends as well as family; she fell in love with its culture publishing a well-received book of poems, making many friends and responding to needs especially of those on the margins.

She supported and encouraged several young people into Christian ministry and service.

Barbara was a loved wife to Charles, mother to Timothy and Michael (all URC ministers), grandmother, great grandmother and friend to many.

Written by Timothy Meachin

SYNOD EXECUTIVE REPORT

Synod Executive have met twice since our April Synod Meeting, once in person and once on zoom, in May and September.

Our all-day meeting in May was in Winchester using one of the conference rooms of Winchester Cathedral and included the conveners of the pastoral committees. As well as some time in worship and sharing communion, led by our Moderator, our main discussion was around the questions:

What is going well in the Synod?

What is going less well or badly in the Synod?

Comments made were grouped under the headings Order, Governance, and Support and further work around this is being done by a small task group who will bring this back to Synod Executive. We will keep you updated.

Employment

I reported in April that an appointment had been made with the Southampton Methodist District. Unfortunately the person decided that the role was not for them and has now left. The Advert will be going out shortly and it is hoped that this role will be filled as soon as possible. In the meantime, please continue to use ACAS to look at contract and employment issues. If you are unsure of who to contact, email the Clerk at clerk@urcwessex.org.uk.

Big Day Out

A big Thank You to the organising group for this wonderful day for all the family of Wessex Synod. A fuller summary is included at the end of this report. We are looking for a site for the next Big Day Out as well as a team to organise. Please contact the Clerk if you have any ideas or are willing to help support this wonderful mission opportunity.

Nominations

We still have some vacancies we need to fill in many of our committees. If you know of anyone who may be suitable, please contact the Clerk. The vacancies include:

Deputy Treasurer

Rural Link (Mission & Outreach)

Racial Justice Advocate (Mission & Outreach)

Synod Pastoral Committee members

Trustees

With the retirement of Nigel Appleton, we have a vacancy for the role of Zambia link lead. Please contact the Clerk for further details. This is a vital role that manages our work with the Lusaka Presbytery.

Nigel also acted as Deputy Convener of Synod Meetings and Synod Executive bring the Revd Mike Thomason to you, who has agreed to serve in this role whilst nominations look to fill this role with a lay member of Synod.

RESOLUTION 1

Wessex Synod approves the Appointment of the Revd Mike Thomason as Deputy Convener of Synod Meetings

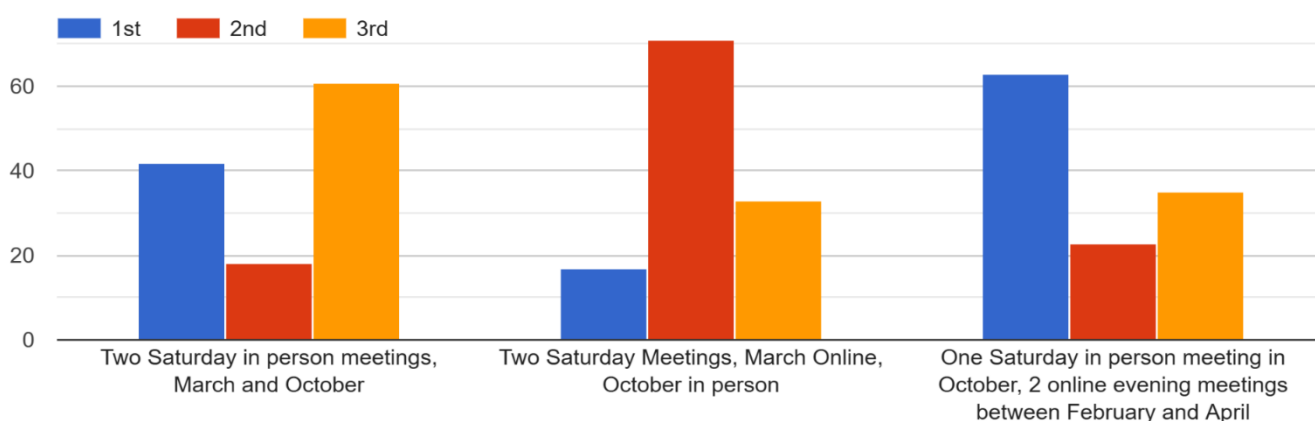
Synod Meetings

In accordance with Resolution 4 passed at our March 2022 Synod Meeting, we have continued to review the Synod Meeting format following the agreed change to two spring evening online Synod Meetings and one all-day in person Synod Meeting normally in October.

A short online survey was sent to all members of Synod Meeting, as well as other attendees. This was also sent by post to those who do not have online facilities. The results below show that the first choice for the majority of those completing the survey was a wish to continue with the current structure of the Synod Meeting, therefore Synod Executive are not bringing any resolutions to change this. We will continue to review every couple of years.

Included in the survey were some questions around the content of the Synod Meeting and Synod Executive will review these at their November meeting.

Please rank your preference for meeting formats



General Assembly

General Assembly took place from the 12th to 15th July and was held at the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick, Derby. Wessex Synod was fully represented and some comments from those attending are included at the end of this report. All papers can be found following the link below, including the General Assembly 2024 Business Digest for those who would like a summary.

Link: [General Assembly papers - United Reformed Church](#)

There were many papers and resolutions that are relevant to us as a Church and Synod level, and all resolutions can be found at the back of the book of reports. Some of these will be brought to our Spring Synod Meetings for discussion.

In 2025 General Assembly will meet twice, in July as normal, also in November for Church Life Review. If you would like to represent Wessex Synod, please let me know by the end of December, as names for nomination will be needed in January.

There were **two constitutional resolutions** which have been referred to Synods for consideration:

Whilst it is not a requirement to discuss these, if anyone has any reasons to object, then please email the clerk@urcwessex.org.uk by the 10th October.

If as a Synod, it is felt that we have any objections to either resolution we will need to pass a resolution that they 'be not proceeded with'.

Resolution 26 relates to paper H6, the link to this paper is included below, resolution 28 relates to paragraph 24 of the basis of union and is the changes are shown in the resolution.

Link: [The-Basis-of-the-Union.pdf \(urc.org.uk\)](#)

Resolution 26

General Assembly adopts the changes to Schedule A of The Manual with regards to Ministry in the United Reformed Church (paragraphs 19-24).

Link: [H6-GA2024-Basis-of-Union-Paragraphs-19-25-Ministry-in-the-URC.pdf](#)

Resolution 28

General Assembly amends the **Basis of Union paragraph 24 to read (new words in blue):**

24. All other ministries recognised by the uniting churches at the date of unification (as defined by the United Reformed Church Act 1981) shall continue to be exercised in the United Reformed Church without further commissioning, subject always to the decisions of the General Assembly. The URC shall determine from time to time what other ministries may be required and which of them should be recognised as ministries in the whole church. It shall decide how those who are to exercise them shall be set apart. **The affirmations in Schedule B (adapted for the particular ministry) shall be made by those entering upon all such ministries within the life of the church.**

Karen Bell

clerk@urcwessex.org.uk

September 2024

General Assembly from the Representatives viewpoint

Sorrel Eyres

The biggest takeaway from this year's General Assembly for me was how challenging and enriching it is to encounter and engage with the breadth of thought and opinion within the URC on many different topics. Attending and voting in General Assembly means processing and using a lot of information in a short space of time, and the youth What Do You Think event beforehand was very useful in breaking down the papers. I will be using the techniques of summarising and discussing important papers before GA when I attend again after I age out of youth events. It seemed significant that everybody had the opportunity to voice concerns or thoughts about the paper in question, and personally I found being able to speak to Assembly slightly nerve-wracking but also empowering, as I felt that my presence was valuable. It was also useful to hear from individuals from across the URC when making decisions.

In particular, I was able to learn more about the structure and business of the URC (see particularly reports from the Ministries Committee and the Church Life Review); and what the URC is doing in the wider world (see particularly the papers on Legacies of Slavery, Environmental topics, and the Gaza Crisis).

Margie Larkin

I absolutely loved being at my first GA. This helped me understand a lot about how the United Reformed Church ticks. Not perfect in anyway, but what Church is? I enjoyed how decisions were made, especially Palestine/Israel and Minister's accommodation.

Big Day Out – Story, Story, Story



The Big Day Out on the 4th May was welcomed by a bright sunny day for over 700 people attending our exciting all age programmes.

Many churches provided the banners that decorated the site, and all enjoyed both site and Synod activities. A video and photos of some of the banners are on our website and the link is at the bottom of this report. Several photos of our day are below.

The day started and ended with worship. We enjoyed the steam rides, trains and funfair. There were displays from Commitment for Life, Eco Church and local churches shared their news. The Church House bookstall was there with some memorabilia especially for the day. Quizzes and speakers were in the Marquee, and Forest and Eco Church ran activities across the site.

We look forward to meeting you all at the next Big Day Out, if you would like to be part of the team organising this, then please contact the Clerk at clerk@urcwessex.org.uk





Link to photos: [Big Day Out 2024 | URC Wessex Synod](#)

MINISTRIES & LEARNING COMMITTEE REPORT

This Ministries and Learning report covers the period since the February 2024 synod until the current meeting. During the period there have been two meetings of Ministries and Learning including an all-day meeting.

1.1 Deployment of Ministers and Word and Sacraments

A revision in the number of ministers available to Wessex synod has increased so that for 2027-28 we have an allocation of 29 ministers. Ministries and Learning have determined how the allocation will be determined across the synod.

North East Pastoral Committee – 6
North West Pastoral Committee – 5
South East Pastoral Committee – 8
South West Pastoral Committee – 8
Development and Support Officers - 2

Each Synod Pastoral Committee will be working with churches to see how best to deploy ministers strategically across the area, taking into account the usual questions and processes that support churches develop their pastoral profile. Clearly some Pastoral Committees will be bringing forward pastoral profiles to call ministers in the coming months. Ministries and Learning is conscious where there are several profiles to be developed that this will need to be managed in such a way as to identify interim moderators, manage introductions, and support ministers being called into the synod to serve.

1.2 Active Retired Ministers

Within the Synod we are fortunate to have a number of retired ministers who continue to offer regular ministry to local churches each Sunday. Ministries and Learning will be considering ways to offer support and encouragement to such, initially through invitation to the ministers' summer school.

1.3 Elders in Local Leadership

General Assembly has produced information to support local churches who are seeking to invite Elders into local leadership positions within their church. Ministers and Learning would like to explore the possibilities of Elders in Local Leadership but recognise that there is a need to consider how this is implemented in the Synod. A small working group will be formed to work through questions of appointment, duration, review etc and report to Ministries and Learning with a view to Elders in Local Leadership being another way of developing leadership within the Synod.

2. Synod Pastoral Committees

The four Synod Pastoral Committees have continued to meet throughout the period, with designated "link people" seeking to maintain links with specific congregations. Synod Pastoral Committees hear news of encouragement and challenge from local congregations and much of their work is confidential. They also work with churches to develop pastoral profiles and in this last period have been consulting with churches over deployment plans.

Some highlights from the Synod Pastoral Committees include:

2.1 South East Synod Pastoral Committee

- The use of transitional ministries has been appreciated by two pastorates.
- Havant & Emsworth Church Meeting has agreed to end the use of their site at Waterside.
- A candidate for the Solent cluster was introduced but not called, the profile remains on the list of pastorates seeking ministry.
- The new Southern Fellowship cluster (around Southampton) is beginning to develop.

2.2 South West Synod Pastoral Committee

- A number of significant issues have either been dealt with or are nearing resolution
- The deployment plan was sent out for consultation and has been well received. The next stage is firming up the plan and, subject to agreement to propose declaring a number of vacancies based on agreed Clusters. Some flexibility into the future will be expected.
- Fordingbridge URC heading towards definitive decision to close
- There is a need to recruit new members to service on the Synod Pastoral Committee.

2.3 North East Synod Pastoral Committee

- The North East area is pleased that a vacancy has been declared for one full time post to serve the churches of Maidenhead, Marlow, Bracknell and Windsor.
- Sue Nichols has begun training with Northern College for NSM Model 4.

2.4 North West Synod Pastoral Committee

- There was an introduction ongoing of a CRCW to Blackbird Leys.
- The deployment plan of working in clusters was under consideration and would be further developed.
- Ministers and Learning agreed at its latest meeting that NW Synod Pastoral Committee could develop a piece of work to apply for one of the Ecumenical Ministry posts agreed by General Assembly. More detailed work would be needed but the post would be based around providing URC ministry and support to Oxfordshire LEP's.

3. Ministry and Mission Fund

The M&M working group has continued to meet and collate responses from churches and take forward the decisions of Synod.

4. Candidating Secretary

Synod currently has three candidates for Ministry of Word and Sacraments either currently in training or about to commence training. One candidate is completing training for NSM4 and will be considered at an Assessment Conference taking place in due course.

5. Development and Support Officers

- Safe Space Training has been taking place throughout the Synod.
- Leading Your Church into Growth is a process of supporting churches thinking about growth, with the first sessions taking place in September.

- Spring School for ministers was well received and plans are in place for 2025.
- Stepwise is beginning on the Isle of Wight. The course ran in Guildford with two people moving on having been accepted for Assembly Accredited Lay Preacher training.
- Elders Conference and Lay Preacher's gathering have taken place and received positive feedback. Plans are in taking shape for 2025.

Revd Ray Stanyon (DSO for mission development) has been certified unable to work but will be returning to a phased return from the beginning October.

6. Spirituality Group

Revd Alison Toplas retired during 2024 and it was decided that the future of the Spirituality Group would be part of a wider review of synod structures due to take place in the coming months.

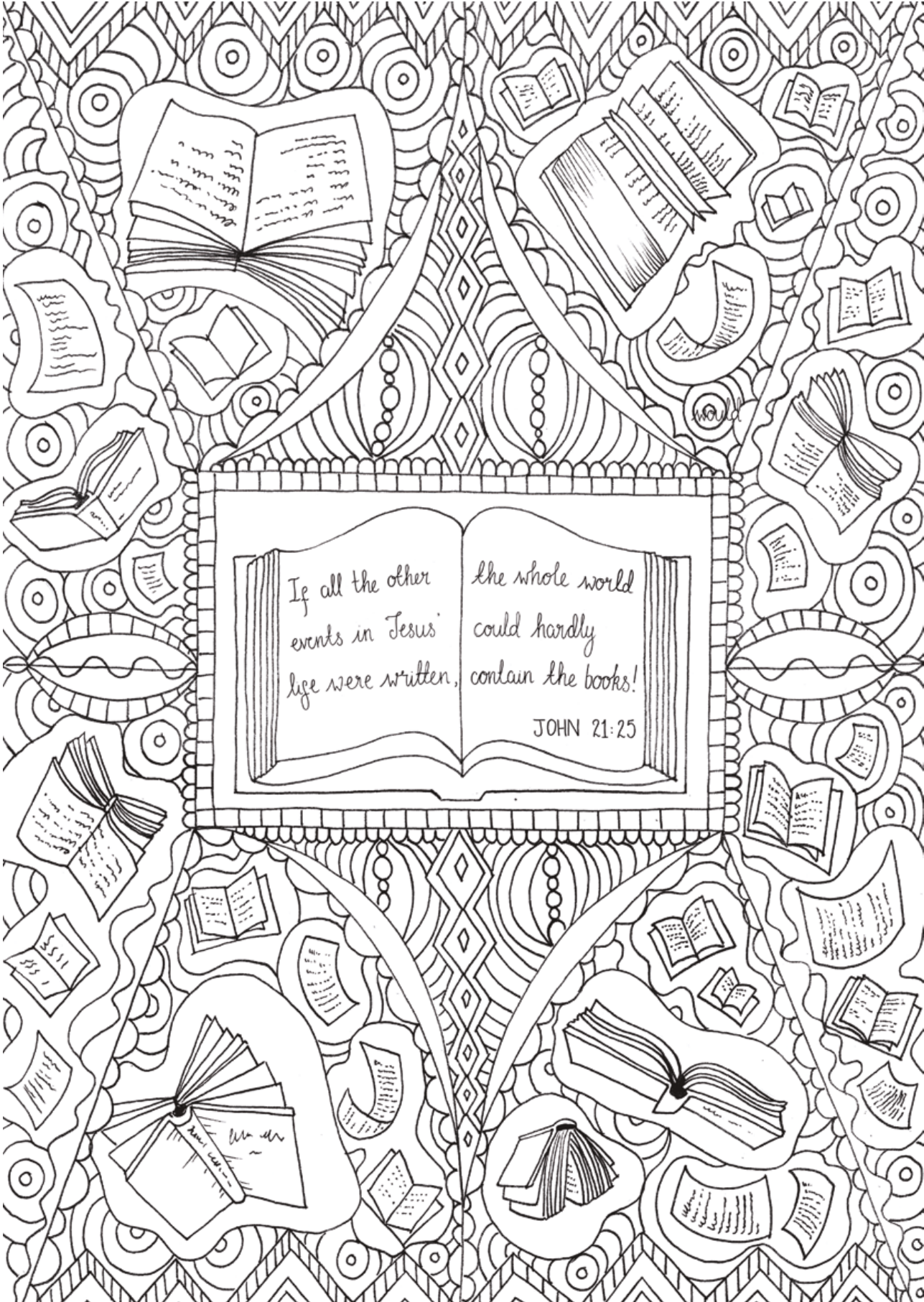
7. Lay Preaching

Synod continues to offer support and encouragement to the ministry Lay Preachers undertake in local churches. The Lay Preaching Advocate is intending to present a paper to Ministries and Learning to further develop the support offered to Lay Preachers.

Finally, a word of appreciation and thanks to all those involved in the work of Ministries and Learning.

Revd Wayne Hawkins
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September 2024

Doodle Page



Notes

WORKSHOPS

Creating Wellbeing in Church and Community

Led by Esther Ridsdale from IBEX - Churches working with the economy.
(previously Director of The Civil Society Forum)

This workshop will look at seven focus areas to develop church and community structures that make people's lives better - to enhance and support people's physical, emotional, spiritual and practical health and wellbeing. Esther will also explore the vision for churches becoming champions of community wellbeing

Stepwise Faith Filled Life

Led by Mary Thomas & Ruth White

This is a come and see workshop on Stepwise faith filled life, experience a faith filled life session and ask questions on what Stepwise entails.

Taking Action on Poverty

Led by Roo Stewart

Look at what you and your church can do to act against Poverty, and the support that is provided for your church and the community you are a part of.