



United Reformed Church

East Midlands Synod

Profile



Our vision is of a Synod, through sharing resources, experience and expertise, that will encourage, equip and enable local churches to be engaged in God's mission, to proclaim the Gospel of reconciliation through Jesus Christ, to create a new world of love, justice and peace, that reflects the Kingdom of God.

***East Midlands Synod Mission Strategy
2009 – 2014***

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1. INTRODUCTION

The East Midlands Synod covers the five counties of Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire and the part of Buckinghamshire which encompasses Milton Keynes.

Since 2007, when District Councils were abolished, the Synod Officers, staff, Conveners and Consultants, have worked hard to maintain effective contact with our local churches.

In 2009 a task group undertook a review of the new structure and three themes emerged: communication (particularly improving the link with local churches), effective and clear strategies and use of the voluntary sector workforce to best effect.

This is on-going work and needs to feature in our planned development.

Synod meets twice a year (normally March and November) using local churches as venues. Business is planned as necessary and we focus on key issues by inviting guest speakers. We occasionally have a third Synod in a year but this follows a workshop format with no formal business and a number of inspiring and effective workshop leaders.

There are a good number of ecumenical partnerships resulting in some LEPs in all Counties. Good working relationships exist with our Anglican, Methodist and Baptists colleagues.

2. WHAT ARE WE HERE FOR?

An updated Synod Mission Strategy has been approved by the Synod and is available as one of the attachments to the profile.

We recognise that the Synod exists to support the local churches in perceiving and working towards God's mission for them. This support can be given in various ways and we are actively assisting churches to review their Pastorate profile on a regular basis and to think of their mission in their local communities. The work of our ministers, Elders, church members, Pastoral Consultants and Mission Enablers, Synod staff and officers is aimed at perceiving God's Mission for our local churches.

3. **STAFF**



Synod Officers/Team:

Deborah Anderson, Robert White, Colin Udall, Duncan Smith, Richard Turnbull

Synod Support Staff:

Chris Willis, Hannah Willey, Donna Varley, Michelle Cropper

- Synod Moderator mod@urc5.org.uk

- Synod Clerk Mr Duncan Smith
In post from 2007
clerk@urc5.org.uk

- Training & Development Officer Revd Deborah Anderson
In post from 2009
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- Synod Treasurer Revd Richard Turnbull
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- Property & Trust Officer Mr Robert White
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- Children's Youth & Development Officer
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In post from 2001
cydo@urc5.org.uk
- Synod Office Manager & Administrator
PA CYDO
Mrs Chris Willis
In post from 2005
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- Moderator's Personal Assistant
Mrs Hannah Willey
In post from 2002
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- TDO Personal Assistant
Mrs Michelle Cropper
In post from 2008
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- Bookkeeper
Mrs Donna Varley
In post from 2007
Bookkeeper@urc5.org.uk

Other resource people are listed in the Synod Handbook and on the synod website.

4. SYNOD OFFICE

The Synod Office is a well equipped small office located above Sherwood United Reformed Church on Edwards Lane in Sherwood which is about two miles north of central Nottingham. Edwards Lane runs from the Mansfield Road (A60) to Valley Road (Nottingham Ring Road A6514) and on into the northern heights of the city.

The office is well served by rail services.

There is a car park at the side of the church and on the road parking is also available nearby.

There are three offices for staff, and a large office/meeting room for the Moderator. We also have access to a small meeting room downstairs in the church.

5. **MANSE**

The Moderator's manse is on Leabrook Close, Clifton Village, Nottingham. It is well maintained and is located in a central position for the Synod and is about 20 minutes drive from the office.



6. SYNOD WEBSITE

The website - www.urch5.org.uk - gives a good taste of the Synod and its life, as well as a great deal of useful information.

We are working to make it serve as: Synod Diary, advertising future meetings and events; Synod Newspaper, reporting on recent events; Synod Newspaper, with interesting articles; Synod Archive, holding past e-letters; and Synod Reference Manual, storing information and application forms.

It is worth exploring the website in full, but your attention is particularly drawn to the page entitled **Resources**. The materials contained on that page have been drawn together because they have been deemed to be essential reading.

The site is powered by an Open-source Content Management System which makes the site easily customisable, and allows many users to log on and contribute. We are continually developing the website to make it more usable and useful.

7. STATISTICS

The Synod consists of 139 churches of which 43 are Local Ecumenical Partnerships. 11 churches have membership over 100 and 57 have 30 or fewer. (the membership figures do not include the Milton Keynes area as most of the churches here are LEP's who only produce group figures). Some of those churches have been established for many years, others have been born within the last ten years. There are those with long years of tradition behind them and others still exploring life and worship together as Local Ecumenical Partnerships. There is also one mission project.

The Synod has a membership of 5052 (not including Milton Keynes) and there are 50 serving ministers of whom 41 are URC stipendiary and 9 non stipendiary. We have 2 serving CRCW's. There are 34 ministers from other denominations (Methodist, Anglican etc.). There are currently 37 churches in vacancy.

We also have 3 Local Church Leaders, 43 Assembly accredited lay preachers and 26 locally recognised preachers. There are currently 2 ordinands. There are also 79 (as at 21.7.10) retired ministers and 26 (as at 21.7.10) minister's widows(ers) and 8 ordained ministers (4 Stipendiary and 4 Non Stipendiary) not in pastoral charge.

8. LINKS

Ecumenical Links

The Synod relates to the following Ecumenical bodies:

Churches Together in Derbyshire

Churches Together in Nottinghamshire

The future working pattern of these two bodies is under discussion.

The Church leaders of these counties meet together twice a year, they include: The RC Bishop of Hallam, the Rt Rev John Rawsthorne; The RC Bishop of Nottingham, the Rt Rev Malcolm McMahon; the Bishop of Southwell & Nottingham, the Rt Rev Paul Butler; the Bishop of Sherwood, the Rt Rev Tony Porter; The Bishop of Derby, the Rt Rev Alastair Redfern; the Bishop of Repton, the Rt Rev Humphrey Southern; The Methodist Chair of Sheffield District, the Revd Vernon Marsh; the Methodist Chair of Nottingham and Derby District, the Revd Loraine Mellor; the East Midlands Regional Baptist Minister, the Revd Dianne Tidball; The East Midlands Divisional Commander of the Salvation Army, the Lieutenant-Colonel Mike Caffull. The previous joint Ecumenical Development Officer post has ended and discussions are taking place about the future working of these two bodies.

Churches Together in All Lincolnshire - www.ctal.org.uk

The significant feature of this body is the involvement of the Ground Level network of Churches. One of the leaders acts as the current lead President - Mr Pete Atkins. He works closely with Mr Simon Dean the CTAL Facilitator. Fresh Expression collaboration is very strong in Lincolnshire where the training course Mission Shaped Ministry originated. The members of the Church Leaders Group are: Rt Rev Malcolm McMahon RC Bishop of Nottingham; Rt Revd John Saxbee, Bishop of Lincoln; Rt Rev David Rosedale Bishop of Grimsby; Rt Rev Tim Ellis, Bishop of Grantham; Revd David Perry Methodist Chair of Lincoln & Grimsby District, Revd David Rogerson, Baptist Regional Minister; Pastor Stuart Bell, Ground Level; Wendy Gwatkin, Religious Society of Friends.

Churches Together in Leicestershire

The county Ecumenical Development Officer is Mr Vic Allsop, who co-ordinates the work of the Executive Group and serves the Church Leaders Meeting. The church Leaders are: the Bishop of Leicester, the Rt Rev Tim Stevens; the RC Bishop of Nottingham, the Rt Rev Malcolm McMahon; the Methodist Chair of Northampton District the Revd Peter Hancock; the Baptist Regional Minister, the Revd Dianne Tidball, the Divisional Commander of the Salvation Army, Lieutenant-Colonel Mike Caffull; Mr Michael Hockaday, Congregational Federation.

Churches Together in Shire & Soke

This is the name of Churches Together in Northamptonshire and Peterborough. Ms Teresa Brown is the County Ecumenical Development Officer. The Church Leaders meet twice a year usual at the home of the RC Bishop of Northampton, the Rt Revd Peter Doyle. The other church leaders are: The Rt Rev Donald Allister, Bishop of Peterborough; the Rt Rev Frank White, Bishop of Brixworth; the Revd Peter Hancock, Methodist Chair of Northampton District, Revd Helen Wordsworth Baptist Regional Minister (Central Association), Lieutenant-Colonel Mike Caffull, Divisional Commander of the Salvation Army.

9. COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Synod Enabling Group

Functions:

- To act on behalf of the Synod between Synod meetings, in overseeing the work of the Synod
- To plan the business of Synod meetings and to ensure decisions are implemented

Membership:

Synod Moderator, Synod Clerk, Synod Treasurer, Conveners of each Synod group, Four members appointed by Synod and two youth representatives (normally for terms of three years). The Group should ensure that the membership of the Synod Executive reflects the equal opportunities policy, and, where possible, represents the interests of children and young people, smaller churches and churches with significant ecumenical involvement.

Current Priorities:

An important focus for the Synod Enabling Group is finding effective ways of communicating across the Synod. To this end we are planning our second round of Synod Road shows in 2011.

Over the coming meetings we will be looking carefully into the resources the Synod provides, the best way of delivering those resources, how we ensure that communication is two-way and how we make the most productive and rewarding use of staff, ministers and church members.

Sub-groups of the Synod Enabling Group:

Finance and Property Group

The Group oversees the management of the Synod's resources which it seeks to do in the context of mission. It meets four times a year and has the support of the Synod Property Officer, who is its secretary, and the Treasurer.

The Group agrees the annual budget for presentation to Synod and reviews the accounts. A key responsibility is raising M and M. The current priority is transferring the method of local church assessment to one based on income by 2012. Another priority is to reduce East Midlands Synod's dependence on contributions from other Synods through Resource Sharing. F & P has created a Mission Fund to which local churches can apply for grants towards mission projects. It is planned to increase the amount in the Mission Fund as part of a wider review of financial strategy which F & P is conducting in partnership with the Mission Development and Pastoral Groups.

F & P is also responsible for the management of the Synod's property, particularly church buildings and manses. The bulk of the work is undertaken by the Synod Property Officer, which is a paid post, but he seeks advice from the Group on

contentious issues and those involving substantial expenditure. The Group seeks to be mindful of the mission purpose of church buildings in its decision-making.

Two current priorities are:

- the future of Crossways at Yardley Hastings
- the engagement of One Church One Hundred Uses to work with a few local churches on development projects.

County-based Finance Networkers and Property Networkers are available to advise local churches and the Group.

Listed Buildings Advisory Group

A statutory group, responsible for matters related to listed buildings and buildings and conservation areas.

Membership:

Convener, Listed Buildings Secretary together with professional and specialist appointees.

Synod Pastoral Group

Synod Pastoral Group meets five times a year, alternating between day time and late afternoon/evening meetings. The overall remit for the group is "to express our love and care for each other and respond to pastoral needs".

Alongside the regular work of giving pastoral care to local churches, Ministers and CRCW's, we have developed a Deployment Policy for the Synod, worked on the introduction of Local Ministry and Mission Reviews (in parallel with Ministerial Accompanied Self-appraisal) and on guidelines for care of churches and Ministers/CRCWs during a suspension.

Whilst having a clear remit, we work across boundaries with other Synod Groups where appropriate, for example where Pastoral Consultants work with Mission Enablers, or where training needs are highlighted within our agenda. We have also contributed to the Financial Strategy Task Group.

Current priorities include:

- implementation of LMMR/MASA across the Synod
- implementation of the Deployment Policy, both in regard to churches in vacancy and others where appropriate
- working on a policy regarding lay presidency at the sacraments
- encouraging the exploration of new ministries - CRCWs and SCMs for example
- supporting the exploration of ecumenical possibilities in a variety of situations

Search Group

Brings nominations to Synod for the filling of all Synod appointments and the elected membership of all Synod committees and groups, and forwards names to the Assembly Nominations Committee through the Synod's representative on that committee.

Membership:

Synod Moderator, Synod Clerk, Convenor, Secretary and four additional members.

Ministries Group

Remit: *to support and develop those serving in recognized ministries of the church; to recruit, consider applications for and support through training candidates for the ministry of Word and Sacraments and Church Related Community Work and other recognized ministries.*

Functions:

- to encourage vocations to Christian service
- to receive and decide upon applications of recognition as candidates for the ministry and Church Related Community Workers
- to give support, care and oversight to candidates for the ministry or any form of full-time service in the Church at home and abroad, and, in the case of candidates for the ministry, determine their eligibility for a call
- to receive and forward to General Assembly recommendations concerning applications for admission into the URC for ministers or congregations
- to accredit and provide support and training for lay preachers and worship leaders
- [to enable the ministerial development and review process][Ministers' Accompanied Self-Appraisal, now lies with Synod Pastoral Group who are also responsible for Local Mission and Ministry Review]

Membership: Convenor; Secretary, Moderator; Synod Clerk; Synod Training & Development Officer; Synod Lay Preaching Commissioner; Synod 'Training for Learning and Service' organiser; [Minister's Development and Review Organiser,] synod elected representatives (four).

Meeting: Twice a year, January and July, and when needed.

Although in recent years the group has rightly been largely occupied with the selection of, and care for candidates for the ministry, from first enquiry to ordination or taking up their first post, additionally, the Group monitors ministers' progress to the end of EM2, takes responsibility for Lay Preaching matters and TLS, and takes a pastoral interest in various Chaplains and Synod Advisors on, for example, Prayer and Spirituality, and Health and Healing.

Youth & Children's Work

Aims

- Support and encourage youth and children's work throughout the Synod
- Develop policies for the Synod, which take into account of national and local policies
- Support and direct sub-groups, such as the youth event group
- Support and oversee the work of the CYDO
- Support young people, youth and children's workers in the Synod, encourage networking.
- Being responsible for Synod's youth and children's work budget
- Report to the Synod Executive Group

Over the last eight years we have tried to follow these aims. Our last major piece of work was taking the National Youth & Children's Work Committee vision paper, presented to General Assembly in 2008 and look at how we, in the East Midlands, could adopt this into practice. We had a time out to discuss the paper and prioritise our future work with the young people of our Synod and presented a paper to our Synod for adoption.

We are also at the beginning of planning a youth exchange with our Global partners in Botswana. 6, including 4 young people, went to Botswana in March/ April of this year to start planning and developing this project. The discussions are ongoing.

We meet four times a year prior to the SEG meetings. The Convenor and CYDO meet approximately every 4-6 weeks face to face and keep in contact by e mail and phone on a more frequent basis.

There is also a separate youth and children's events sub-group

Office Management and Personnel Group

This group, formally a sub-group of Finance and Property but now reporting direct to the Synod Enabling Group, consists of the three Synod Officers (Moderator, Clerk and Treasurer), the Office Administrator, two Ministers and two lay persons. It meets three times a year and considers matters relating to the organisation of the Synod Office and the well-being of the staff (Moderator, Property Officer, Training Officer, Children and Youth Development Officer, Office Administrator, three Secretaries, the Book-keeper and the cleaner).

Annually it prepares recommendations to the Enabling Group on staff salaries. It also considers all matters relating to the Health, Safety and Welfare of our staff.

The Group receives reports from the staff on the office equipment required to ensure the Office has the resources it needs, in particular an annual review on computer management and resources.

The Synod Clerk convenes and chairs the group.

Mission Development Group

MDG is the newest group in the Synod structure, having been formed at the March 2010 Synod meeting. Its remit is:

- to develop and co-ordinate the implementation of the mission strategy of the Synod;
- to be responsible for the work of the Training Team, Mission Enablers and Church Developers, in particular for the Training and Development Officer
- to have a concern for mission funding, and in particular be responsible for the Outreach Fund.

The Training Team, headed by the TDO, delivers training to groups of individuals and churches in a wide range of subjects. The Church Developers are volunteers from local churches who have managed church renovation and refurbishment projects, and are willing to share their experience.

The Outreach Fund is a source of small grants (up to a maximum of £1000 and 50% of the project cost, whichever is the smaller) to enable specific outreach work by a local church. Upon receipt of an application form, decisions are usually made by email within a week.

Mission Fund Panel

The Convenors of the Finance & Property, Mission Development and Pastoral Groups, plus a Church Developer meet twice a year to consider applications for larger grants (up to £50,000 subject to available funds, and a maximum of 50% of the project cost) to enable a congregation to develop their mission. Projects are assessed against published criteria before a decision is made. Grants have been made towards projects including major building redevelopment, staff salaries, and new furniture.

Training

The Synod places great emphasis on training and development. To this end, it employs a full-time Training and development Officer with responsibility for facilitating EM2 and EM3, and lay training within the Synod with an appropriate budget, which includes TLS, but for which it is not responsible. This position has excellent dedicated PA support and office space. There is also a training team offering varied specialisms to help in the delivery of training throughout the Synod. The team is made up of lay and ordained, including some Mission Enablers which allows broader input and ideas of training needs.

Training is responsible for the development of the newly formed *Growing in Faith* pages on the Synod website, which presently includes articles, and the advertising of courses - ecumenical, interfaith, as well as URC - both local and national. The Synod is also responsible for the delivery of national and ecumenical courses such as *CLP*, and is involved in working ecumenically through the *Regional Training Partnership*, and *Lincoln School of Theology*.

The Training Office is responsible for organising Minister's Summer School, and for facilitating relevant courses throughout the Synod using both local and national expertise. This includes enabling and encouraging the growing awareness, and use made of, the expertise of the Synod's Health and Healing Advisor, Prayer and Spirituality Advisor, and the Interfaith Advisor, who also work nationally.

If there is noise in the Synod Office, you can guarantee it comes from Training - but it's productive, honest!

The Synod Trust Company

The Synod Trust Company is a registered charity and regulates finance and property through the Trust, as well as providing general guidance. The directors are appointed at the Annual General Meeting and do not draw any fees. They are also trustees of the Charity.

The Memorandum and Articles of Association provide the Trust with wide powers, within the objects of the United Reformed Church. The Directors meet three times a year and as necessary. The Trust and the Synod Finance and Property Group have responsibility for all finance and property matters.

The Trust's objectives are to advance the Christian religion in accordance with the Basis of Union and to conduct ancillary and charitable work in the region of the East Midlands Synod. The Trust, through the Synod, encourages, equips and enables churches to carry out mission in the East Midlands region including a very wide range of social work in the community for the benefit of the public.

The Trust manages investments on behalf of many of churches and issues both Class A and B Association Units, which are valued every three months and for which a dividend is declared and paid at the end of each year.

The Trust is presently seeking the services of a new Trust Treasurer following the retirement of the last incumbent and is taking steps to appoint, in addition, an Investment Adviser to offer either advisory or discretionary advice.

10. INTER - FAITH AND HEALING

Interfaith Policy

This synod has an interfaith advocate to pursue interfaith matters. The aim is to encourage greater understanding among church members about non-Christian faiths, and to promote respect towards believers who belong to these faiths. Education in this aspect is very important to our synod, as there are a number of areas with high Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Jain and Jewish populations. Leicester and Nottingham are two examples.

It is noticeable that some Christian groups from a conservative tradition hold a very negative view of non-Christian faiths - especially Islam, and misrepresent these faiths in a manner that is sometimes quite vicious, and lacking in any understanding. We consider this something to be opposed most strongly by offering information and training to local churches.

Networks are being formed both within and outside the synod, and all the interfaith advocates in URC Synods that have such a post are in contact with one another both by e-mail and by meeting together. Wherever possible, we try to ensure that the synod is represented at interfaith events and meetings, and that dialogue takes place with members of non-Christian faiths wherever that is possible. We are working towards a policy that holds dialogue as being superior to attempts at conversion.

Health and Healing

This synod has a health and healing advisor. Our aim is to advise and educate members of local churches in pastoral care, healing prayer, and collaboration with health care providers in each locality. Care providers are regaining an understanding of the need for a holistic approach to a person that includes spiritual as well as mental and physical care. The use being made of Burrswood Christian hospital as a training ground by the NHS is just one example of this understanding. Reformed churches have been slow to reacquire what was, historically very much a central part of Christian ministry, and we see a need to reverse that trend through the provision of information and training at a local level.

When talking to local churches about healing ministry, there is often a rightly held suspicion of healing ministry because of the inappropriate performances that have been seen in the past when carried out by pastors from some of the more extreme churches. One somewhat controversial area of healing is deliverance ministry. This comes under the remit of the healing advisor, and we have formulated guidelines in this synod that are now displayed on the national URC website to prevent possible problems due to lack of understanding of the sensitivity needed in this ministry.

Our advisor works closely with healing advisers from other URC synods, who endeavour to meet together biennially to exchange news and other relevant information. The URC has a national healing co-ordinator attached to Mission Committee, and the ensuing networking has proved very effective across all our synods.

11. COUNTIES



Derbyshire

There is a great deal happening in the URC in the county of Derbyshire. A reorganisation of the churches in Derby is almost complete, 6 Churches in the centre of Derby have formed the Derby Group of Churches and the induction of the two ministers will take place on 4 September 2010. An association of churches in Derby includes the Derby Group, Melbourne and Little Eaton and four LEPs. Derby has a street pastor scheme that has its base at Derby Central.

In the north of the county there is an informal association of churches which includes the churches in the High Peak, (Buxton and Tideswell) and the four churches in Chesterfield and the church at Wirksworth.

The Fountain Square Church in Tideswell is a recently formed URC/Methodist LEP having united in 2010 and has become a growing church."

"Buxton URC is a church that has come from near closure 16 years ago to be an active and lively congregation engaged in mission to its community and is celebrating its bicentenary in 2010."

Wirksworth URC is working with the other denominations in the town and a Youth Worker has recently been appointed by the churches.

The four churches in Chesterfield are being encouraged to work towards team ministry. A new ecumenical grouping has emerged from Hope 2008 and most of the churches within the town have joined Christians together for Chesterfield. Setting up a Street Pastor scheme in the town centre is being investigated

In the Erewash Valley work is underway to review the future of two small churches Westwood and Selston. Selston has agreed to work towards a merger with two local Methodist churches.

Number of Churches - 29

Number of Members - 1238 (those with over 100 - 4)



Leicestershire

Churches meeting the needs of Gods people where ever they are, a mixture of churches in City centre, Urban, Sub urban and rural communities.

The county is centred on Leicester a truly multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious city. The population was declared in 2009 to be a first and only city in the UK where no ethnic community is in the majority. Leicester is home to all the world religions including the 3 Abrahamic faiths and in the main they live together in mutual respect.

The URC is involved in the St Philips Centre, an ecumenical and well respected centre of learning, enabling Christians to learn more about other religions and how to communicate with them.

The various groupings of local congregations offer a wide range of styles and theological out looks. There is involvement through chaplaincy work at Leicester's Hospitals; Young Offenders Institution; Education colleges; Universities and through the Community of Grace's long term work with men who have experienced homelessness and unemployment.

Our Church in Loughborough is involved in the evolving and growing Chaplaincy at Loughborough University.

Many of our church work closely with other denominations, some working very closely in LEP's and other groupings.

We have churches who exploring the ministry of CRCWs and SCM as part of their out reach ministry. We have over the past year experienced a change in Ministers and many of our churches have experienced a significant period in transition, some experiencing growth but there is also a need for long term pastoral care, heart searching discussion and prayer about the future.

Number of churches - 24

Number of members 753 (those with over 100 - 0)



Lincolnshire

Lincolnshire is a very widespread area, stretching from Scunthorpe in the north to Peterborough in the south, from Gainsborough in the west to Grimsby in the east. In consequence of this the grouping of some of the churches is very difficult.

However, ecumenical relationships are good and four churches have linked up with the Methodists. The central Methodist church in Grantham has recently joined with the URC to become ChristChurch and there is a hope that it may be possible, after the sale of existing buildings, to build a new church.

In Lincoln three churches are grouped together, one of which, St. Columba's, is URC, Anglican and Methodist.

In the Peterborough area there are four churches, two of which are URC, Methodist, and one, Christ Church, is URC, Anglican and Methodist.

Eastgate Union in Louth has quite an historic foundation as URC/Baptist.

The Gainsborough church has very large buildings and is now working with the organisation One Church and 100 Uses to find a way in which the hall and side rooms can be put to good use. Two Social Enterprise organisations are interested.

For the past four years the Grade 11 listed church at Wisbech has been working to restore the large undercroft and then to offer it to the local community as 'The Sugar Tub Community Centre'.

The adjoining Sunday school building was sold to raise funds. Later Long Sutton church merged with Wisbech to form Castle Square church. After all the permissions had been given, work started earlier this year. From a place of damp and dereliction have emerged two fine function rooms and a smaller meeting room, a fully fitted kitchen, toilets and wheel chair lift. All the rooms have external windows giving ventilation and some natural light. It is hoped that the Community Centre will be opened in the autumn.

The little church at Boston has had the joy of being able to give the upstairs rooms as a flat to a couple and their small child who had come from Zimbabwe and had been made homeless.

Number of Churches 18

Number of members 1090 (those with over 100 - 2)



Northamptonshire

Northamptonshire is an exciting place to be, and that's not just because we have Silverstone at one end, and Wicksteed Park at the other! This county, with the greatest number of adjoining counties, has many areas of significant housing growth: some recently finished, others just off the stocks, others in the pipeline.

The 27 URC churches of the county are grouped in 15 pastorates, of which 10 are newly-filled in the last 4 years. They are situated around the A5 to the West, through Northampton town itself, to Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough in

the East. Many of these pastorates serve rural communities. Rural, however, does not mean rustic! Many of the residents are commuters to Northampton, Milton Keynes or Leicester via the good motorway links plus the A45 and A14 running West to East. Others commute to London with ease, by train.

Though history echoes round this Civil War county, feeding an Independency that goes back that far and farther, we live in the present reality and look forward to our ministry as part of God's 21st century church. For example, one new venture is an LEP with a Baptist minister living in a URC-funded manse, one of the very first houses built on a brand-new housing estate in Corby. Crossways Centre, the home of Yardley Hastings congregation, has amongst others a mission to church and secular groups wanting time away at "A Touching Place", and to primary schools wanting to explore the natural world, and the link between food and farming. The Yardley church and the Centre, along with their Anglican friends, are at the heart of an increasingly active community life.

Extending the churches' mission to those living in the new housing areas is planned increasingly with our ecumenical partners both at a county and a local level.

Northamptonshire - "Rose of the Shires" or "A place to let yourself grow", choose which road sign you prefer! - is an exciting place to be.

Number of churches - 27

Number of members - 1023 (those with membership over 100 - 3)



Nottinghamshire

Nottinghamshire is the county of Robin Hood and the symbol for Nottinghamshire on the Synod banner is the Major Oak tree. The trunk of the tree supports many branches and is full of diverse forms of life. Likewise the Synod, the trunk of our area, supports a vast variety of church life, and Nottinghamshire is one of the branches supporting many diverse people and thrilling events.

Nottinghamshire is made up of 15 Churches of which 2 are LEPs. They vary in size from a large city centre Church to small village ones. There are 9 pastorates in the area each one with a unique membership and activities. The most northerly one, in Worksop, is The Crossing Church and Centre, a URC/Methodist LEP. Four years ago the newly built Church was dedicated and opened and now the buildings are used by a wide variety of people. In contrast one of the smaller Churches in the suburbs of Nottingham has just closed but exciting developments are taking place there. This is a Mission Project in partnership with Hope Nottingham who manage the premises on behalf of the project. Existing Church groups under the leadership of a TLS trained volunteer will continue to meet as they seek to explore new ways of being church!

The Synod has encouraged the members and friends at Sutton-in-Ashfield Church, a large old building with a small number of members to become involved with One Church 100 Uses and already things are beginning to happen there.

Two of our Churches have thriving and well-known drop in centres catering for people from all walks of life. Others run smaller ones aimed at specific people, e.g. children under 5 with their parents or carers. All fulfil an important role in the life of the Church.

All in all Nottinghamshire, the home of the Synod Office, has a stimulating and rewarding Church life.

Number of churches - 15

Number of members 948 (those with membership over 100 - 2)



Milton Keynes

A city described as being different with a surprising past and an inspiring future. A city with the confidence to think and do things differently. It is a city of contrasts where 21st Century efficiency works alongside history and tradition. Over forty years of planning, designing and building have resulted in new jobs, new homes, new architecture and infrastructure which makes Milton Keynes a city that people choose to work in, live in and visit.

At the beginning there were United Reformed Churches in Wolverton and Newport Pagnell. The scale of the development encouraged ecumenical cooperation and the denominations have successfully formed five local ecumenical partnerships in which the URC is a full participant. Over the years Special Category Ministers have been involved in the development of new outreach work. Currently there is one SCM serving as a part-time chaplain to an ecumenical junior school and also sharing in an LEP team ministry. Another stipendiary minister serves in the first ecumenical partnership formed when house building started. Within the Borough of Milton Keynes there is a stipendiary minister at Newport Pagnell and the Wolverton congregation is now part of a partnership with Methodists which aims to have a rotational ministry. In the remaining three ecumenical partnerships ministry is currently provided by other denominations.

Historically Milton Keynes has had a District Council which has also included an LEP in Buckingham together with two village churches in Northamptonshire and a church plant at Brackley. The District Council still exists but consultations on forming a United Area with the Milton Keynes Methodist Circuit are in progress. This has been necessary to accommodate changes proposed in the functions of the Mission Partnership and a review of the role of the Ecumenical Moderator. Oversight of the MK Christian Council is given by the Presidency comprising the five denominational church leaders and the Ecumenical Moderator.

Having indicated that Milton Keynes is different there is a sector ministry which functions within the Milton Keynes Christian Foundation. This sector team explores what it means to have "faith in community". It seeks to engage with those who would be difficult to reach by individual congregations. This work is supported by the URC with a full-time CRCW and a part-time scoping of the minister at Newport Pagnell. For many years there has been a generous allocation of ministry funded by the Oxford Diocese and the URC has also made a significant contribution to staffing and new projects. This has been gradually reduced and is encouraging a greater involvement of lay ministry. The initial plan included a worship centre in every new area of housing development and Milton Keynes has almost reached the original total population as originally planned.

The challenge for the future is that Milton Keynes is planning to grow even in the current economic climate with new major projects planned for the next five years. These developments have focussed the Mission Partnership in their mission responsibilities as well as activity related to environmental and social enterprise projects. There has been a desire to become more involved with the independent, charismatic and black led churches and this has resulted from changes in the ethnic

groupings. It is no longer a strategy to build worship centres in every new area and this has encouraged interest in the development of fresh expressions alongside conversations about pioneer ministry in Milton Keynes.

The opportunity to form links with other faith communities is a joy and a project group will more formally resource and enable local congregations to better understand and engage with people of other faiths.

Number of churches 26 (of these 19 work within 3 LEP's)

12. WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

The successful candidate should be able to show clear evidence of having worked effectively in a number of different church situations and demonstrate s/he has exercised an innovative approach to church life and worship. Ideally s/he should have some "hands-on" experience of working in the wider church, certainly at Synod level and ideally at national level.

Further the person appointed should be able to demonstrate s/he is a good team player with a consultative leadership style who is an efficient administrator but above all has a strong pastoral heart. The new Moderator should be someone whose priority would be to support and encourage ministers and churches and when necessary challenge them to look at the bigger picture.

Additionally the person appointed, while acknowledging we live in difficult times that require radical change, nevertheless needs to have a vision for the future that acknowledges that God has not yet finished with the United Reformed Church.

The Synod recently approved a Job Description and person profile for the Moderator with Church House. In addition, we have conducted a survey to identify the qualities the Ministers, churches and staff would look for. These have identified as the top priorities:

- Inspirational and visionary leadership
- Pastoral sensitivity
- Effective 2-way communication
- Ability to manage a complex workload

We recognise that at present, there is only one female Moderator in the URC. Should the preferred candidate be a woman, the Synod would be very happy to appoint her.

13. THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

We are blessed with a wide range of churches many of which are doing exciting things. There are many talented people who are serving God in our communities, the Synod and the wider church. East Midlands Synod is indeed fortunate to have the contribution of so many able and helpful people. We believe that our Synod strategy will provide a helpful basis for forward planning.

The Synod however faces some very significant challenges:

- a. We need to find ways to deploy and support ever scarcer ordained ministry in a more coherent and integrated manner. In doing so we need to find ways more effectively to draw on and integrate the lay ministries with which we are blessed.
- b. We also need to build and develop more effective links and relationships between local churches and also with Synod and the wider church so that all may be enriched and enabled by such links.
- c. We believe there are significant opportunities to build further on our ecumenical relationships in imaginative and positive ways.
- d. Whilst there is some excellent work being done with young people and children, we are sure there is much more that can and must be done.
- e. We have many saints who are struggling to serve but who need to find inspiration and renewed energy in their service to Christ.
- f. We believe God has much more that He wishes to achieve through us and eagerly await His call.

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14. JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE :	Moderator of East Midlands Synod of the United Reformed Church
RESPONSIBLE TO:	General Assembly through the General Secretary
SALARY:	Ministers Stipend will apply
JOB SUMMARY: To provide leadership and pastoral oversight to the East Midlands Synod, within its mission partnerships and local churches.	

Responsibilities and duties

To lead, enable and encourage the work of the United Reformed Church within the Synod

- To play a key role in realising the Synod’s vision and strategy
- To lead the Synod in discerning how to use resources wisely in the service of God
- To encourage and enable local churches and Mission Partnerships (in collaboration with Synod Mission Executive) to engage in strategies that will lead to renewal and growth.
- To suggest names of ministers to vacant pastorates, in conjunction with interim moderators of local churches
- To preside (except where a deputy is appointed) at all ordinations and/or inductions of ministers within the Synod
- To oversee the administration of the Synod.
- To chair Synod meetings.
- To work closely with Synod Officers and Synod Committees and to offer support when appropriate.

To exercise pastoral care

- To be a ‘minister to the ministers’ and to their families.
- To encourage ministers in spiritual growth and development.
- To be available, in particular, to new ministers.
- To visit and lead worship at churches within the Synod.

- To listen to, respect and offer leadership to those who have different theological views.
- To get to know and encourage congregations of the churches and help realise the church's potential.

To represent the East Midlands Synod within the wider United Reformed Church

- To attend Moderators' meetings.
- To represent the Synod on Mission Council
- To contribute to the work of the General Assembly

To be involved in and to encourage Christian unity within the Synod, and to work for peace between the faith communities

- To be in regular contact with other church leaders within the Region
- To participate actively in ecumenical structures at a regional level, and where appropriate represent the Synod at ecumenical events
- To be involved in interfaith work

Health and Safety at Work:

You are required to take reasonable care of the health and safety of yourself and others persons who may be affected by your acts or omissions at work and to co-operate with the United Reformed Church in adhering to statutory safety regulations.

Equal Opportunities:

The Church will behave as an equal opportunity organisation and not discriminate on the grounds of race, gender, disability or age.

This list is an indication of the main tasks to be performed. It is not an exhaustive list of duties and responsibilities and may be subject to amendments to take account of changing circumstances.

15. **PERSON SPECIFICATION**

JOB TITLE: Moderator of East Midlands Synod

REQUIREMENTS	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	MEASUREMENT
Education and qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educated to diploma level standard or equivalent in theology. Ordained to the ministry of the United Reformed Church. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of keeping abreast with current theological literature A lively awareness of new ways of being church in our changing culture. 	Applicant's details/Interviews
Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experience of leadership and working in close collaboration with other colleagues. Experience of working as a minister in a local pastorate. Experience of chairing meetings. Experience of managing difficult situations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interest in and experience of interfaith work Experience of urban/rural mix. Experience of working in an ecumenical situation. 	Applicant's details/Interview
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A deep understanding of the role of the church in its mission to the world. Possess a vision for a growing church and a clear perception of the ministerial needs of local churches. A sound grasp of theological issues. Wisdom and skills to deal with the diversity of churches in the Synod. 		Applicant's details/Interview
Skills and Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed pastoral skills that include and indicate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lively interest in people of all ages and backgrounds. An understanding of the importance of a multicultural church. Empathy with ministers as they begin and develop their ministries. Ability to enable, affirm and encourage all those who serve An ability to think theologically and live that theology. An ability to think strategically and encourage others to do the same Sound time management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to delegate work and responsibilities. Ability to make time for personal study and to relax. Ability to develop personal gifts. Ability to interact comfortably in a wide variety of contexts Personal faith and discipline Ability to manage staff Ability to manage conflict Willingness to challenge others 	Applicant's details/Interview/ test

APPENDIX 1 - MISSION STRATEGY DOCUMENT

United Reformed Church East Midlands Synod



Mission Strategy to 2014

*Our vision is
to engage in God's mission
in the name of Jesus Christ
and in the power of the Holy Spirit*

Vision for the next five years

In July 2007 the Synod's new Structure included this Vision:

Our vision is of a Synod, through sharing resources, experience and expertise, that will encourage, equip and enable local churches to be engaged in God's mission, to proclaim the Gospel of reconciliation through Jesus Christ, to create a new world of love, justice and peace, that reflects the Kingdom of God.

This remains our vision and connects with the thinking of the whole United Reformed Church as expressed in Vision 2020.

Hope

We all share the hope that our church will be renewed to be more Christ-like. We believe that renewal will come from God through the Spirit working within and among us. Our engaging with the Bible, our prayers and worship together will all help us be the people God wants us to be. We are all engaged in God's mission through our local church. How we do mission is the challenge. We need to examine prayerfully together what God is calling us to and then put it into practice with all the resources that God gives us.

Our objectives are:

1. To be confident Churches with clear mission plans

To achieve this each church will be helped to have an up-to-date pastorate profile. Each 'mission profile' will have been produced by the ministers, elders and members, including young people, who will have access to a Synod Mission Enabler or Pastoral Consultant. It will contain mission pledges or goals to be pursued over the next two years. Each Church will be encouraged to send copies to the

Synod office. We aim to reach a target of 60 by the end of 2010, and all by the end of 2011. LEPs will be asked to undertake this or a similar exercise drawing on other denomination's resources. (Vision 2020 statements 1 and 4)

2. To be committed to faith development as individuals and as local churches

To achieve this we will value each other's gifts and support and build each other up in our faith. We all share in the ministry of God's people so we will encourage one another by praying for each other. We will encourage local churches to use learning resources such as Alpha, TLS and TLS Lite etc. We will share examples of good practice through the E-Letter and web-site, and share stories of our spiritual journeys in other ways too. (Vision 2020 statements 2 and 5)

3. To have ministers who are affirmed and confident in their ministries

To achieve this we will work more collaboratively in teams of ministers, CRCWs, Lay Preachers, Local Church Leaders, elders and members. All ministers will be encouraged to engage with Ministerial Accompanied Self Appraisal and Education for Ministry (EM2 or EM3). They will be invited to ministers' gatherings twice a year which provide opportunities to share their views and feelings with colleagues and be up-to-date with the thinking and planning of the whole church. They will also be encouraged to be part of a team or have nearby colleagues to meet with regularly. We will also encourage vocations to all recognised ministries.

4. To have a growing church membership

To achieve this, the Mission Development Group will work through the Training Team, Mission Enablers and Church Developers network. The TDO and CYDO will work with local churches on request and offer opportunities to link with Vision4Life, particularly in the third year 2010-2011), which focuses on evangelism. We want to focus on encouraging young people to feel thoroughly part of the church. We will seek to appoint a Synod Evangelist to connect with those who are not members of any denomination, and work with local churches to encourage greater understanding and practice of evangelism. (Vision 2020 statements 6 and 7)

5. To make our buildings fit for purpose

To achieve this we will use Synod Mission Fund and Outreach Funds to help churches to make more of their building and site. New notice-boards and alterations to make rooms more accessible and suitable for community groups will be encouraged. The resources of 1C100U (One Church One Hundred Uses) and our own network of Church Developers will be made available across the Synod.

6. To strengthen the engagement of the Synod with the wider Church and the World

To achieve this we will restructure and strengthen our networks of justice and peace, healing ministry, ecumenical, inter-faith, racial justice and world church relationships. We will build better relationships with URC officers and networks in these areas. (Vision 2020 statements 3, 8, 9 & 10)

Resources

Funding—There will be £100,000 each year for five years through the Mission Funds for applications based on mission plans. There will be £5,000 each year for five years for smaller evangelistic projects planned by local churches.

Expertise—Building expertise will continue to be available through the Property & Trust officer and also through 1C100U, and the church developers network. Mission Enablers and Pastoral Consultants and an Evangelist will also be throughout the Synod. Training and Development expertise will be available through the Training and Development Officer and the training team. Youth and Children's work expertise will be available through the CYDO and young people in the Synod.

APPENDIX 2 - DEPLOYMENT DOCUMENT

United Reformed Church East Midlands Synod



Deployment Policy and Strategy 2009

The Challenge and our Response

The challenge we face is that there are fewer serving ministers going to be available, because about 25% are due to retire over the next five years, and there are fewer members with a higher age profile in about the same number of congregations. The consultation about our deployment of ministers among local churches produced a clear response that we need more ministers and lay preachers. But we also have to change the way we think about ministry and how we best use our ministers. The responses showed an overall reluctance to close churches and some support for ministry teams in associations of churches. We must emphasise that it is not the intention to seek the closure of any church but to challenge all our churches to face up to our mission calling and to develop ways to use our resources to the best of our ability. Sometimes that may be best achieved by merging with another congregation, either URC or one of our ecumenical partners. Small and large churches can make a difference to their community. It is not size but mission focus that is the key.

Our Deployment Policy

We have to create a different way of making the most of our ministers alongside our Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs), Elders, Lay Preachers, Local Church Leaders, and members. We value the ministry of all members and respect their sense of vocation. In particular we re-iterate the importance of ministers and elders working together as a team.

P.1 Our policy is to create effective teams - not only within pastorates but within associations of local churches and to try to ensure that all ministries are fulfilling for those who exercise them. These teams could include Lay Preachers as well as Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Church Related Community Workers, Local Church Leaders, Church Secretaries and Elders with special responsibilities.

P.2 Our policy is to encourage people to consider the call to be a Minister of Word and Sacrament (stipendiary or non-stipendiary), Church Related Community Worker, Elder, Lay Preacher or Local Church Leader.

P.3 Our policy is to create pastorates within Associations of Churches so that there can be mutual support and sharing of resources of ministry in local mission plans. Each Association will be different according to local circumstances. Within the Association not everything has to be done together, each local church needs to operate in its own community. However, Associations need to be aware of the demands on Ministers and Elders when meetings are being organised. Different arrangements should be considered to cut down on the number of meetings.

P.4 Our policy is to work collaboratively and in consultation so that pastorates are agreed by all concerned, under the general direction of the Synod Pastoral Group. In other words we will work in a transparent, understandable and fair way to share ministers.

P.5 Our policy is to respect the agreement between all Synods to share ministers and so we will endeavour always to keep close to the quota of ministers allocated to our Synod.

P.6 Our policy is to use a deployment formula which is understood by all and applied in a fair and transparent way.

P.7 Our policy is to have some ministers who will act as resource for local churches across the Synod. Some ministers will be part-time mission enablers helping churches with mission plans and pastorate profiles. Some ministers will be part-time pastoral consultants, who together with the Moderator, will help local churches to create and adapt the shape of their pastorates and respond to pastoral difficulties.

P.8 Our policy is to encourage all local churches to develop local leadership within the elders meeting. Some elders may take on special responsibility for worship, or administration or charring meetings. There will also be opportunities for appointing Local Church Leaders to be part of the team of ministers and elders. Not all Local Church Leaders will have the same responsibilities. Each will have a job description and their appointment will be for three years with a possible extension for a further three years before they have a mandatory year break. Local Church Leaders - in partnership with Ministers and Church Secretary - may have a role charring Elders and Church Meetings; may lead worship; may carry a representative role for their local church; may lead in pastoral care of members, or in administration. This is not a one size fits all, but particular ministry for particular situations and recognised and approved by the wider Church.

P.9 Our policy is to put resources into frontier and pioneering ministries, such as new churches and chaplaincies up to ten percent of ministers within the Synod.

P.10 Synod posts will be kept to a minimum but are useful for providing expertise to help local churches with financial, legal and property matters, training for the varieties of ministries, and work with children and young people. Where possible, posts will be open to lay appointment.

Our Strategy

S.1 We will offer opportunities for Lay Preachers, Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Church Related Community Workers, Local Church Leaders, Church Secretaries and Elders with special responsibilities to develop team work through the Training Team and the Training and Development Officer.

S.2 We will be active in putting before our members the call to ministry. We will prepare and implement a vocations initiative to encourage members to explore the call to become a Minister of Word and Sacraments, or Church Related Community Worker, or Elder, or Lay Preacher - and to consider whether they could become a Local Church Leader. We know that the demands of training for ministry can deter some and so will always try to provide accessible ways into ministry for those who feel the call of God to serve.

S.3 The most common opportunity for change is when a minister moves from the pastorate. This is when the Moderator and Pastoral Consultants meet with the elders and begin the process of thinking about the mission of the churches, the shape of the pastorate and the need for future ministry in teams. There is consultation between churches, including those in the area who might become part of the Association of Churches and ecumenical partners, until agreement is reached. Mission Enablers are commended to help with the creation of the Pastorate Profile/Mission Plan. Interim Moderators are appointed to liaise between the pastorate, the Moderator and a candidate for the ministry post. The formula for deployment will be used as a guide to determine the amount and kind of ministry most appropriate. We want pastorates to have the ministry they need, and to enable our ministers to

have fulfilling ministries. But we must share our ministers in a fair and transparent way across the whole church.

S.4 We are also encouraging all churches and ministers to review regularly their mission plan (Pastorate Profile) and their priorities for mission and ministry. We have volunteers to help ministers through the Ministerial Accompanied Self-Appraisal process (MASA). We have adopted the Local Ministry and Mission Review agreed by General Assembly which means a cycle of reviewing pastorate profiles and mission plans every four years. Mission Enablers are available to help if requested.

S.5 The strategy will be to achieve the target quota of ministers and church related community workers, who are given a stipend from the Ministry and Mission Fund, which is set by the whole Church, by creating the appropriate number of pastorates. The method will be to use the deployment formula, which will consist of four elements: mission potential, membership, number of churches in the pastorate and the geographical spread of the churches.

S.6 A) Mission Potential can add up to 30% to the scoping of a pastorate. This is assessed on the Pastorate Profile/Mission Plan. If the judgement of the Pastoral Group is that the pastorate has not demonstrated mission potential then the pastorate will be encouraged either to revise its Profile with the help of a Mission Enabler or accept that less ministry will be offered.

B) Membership of the churches in the pastorate will be the second element. Though there was a suggestion that adherents should be included it is the Synod's view that we want to encourage new members so that churches are growing.

C) The number of churches in the pastorate is the third element. This is because the minister has to move between different communities and work with several elders, church meetings and programme of church life. It is vital that when a minister is working with more than two churches that a different approach to ministry is adopted. Ideally there will be a team ministry working together to serve all the churches. So one full time minister of Word and Sacraments will be deployed if a single church pastorate has at least 160 members; a two church pastorate has at least 125 members; a three church pastorate has at least 105 members or a four or more church pastorate has at least 80 members. If a pastorate has less than the required members then a part-time ministry post can be created. For example a single congregation pastorate with 80 members could have a half-time minister. If a multi-church pastorate has more than the minimum number of members, then more than one full-time minister can be deployed, e.g. a four congregation pastorate with 160 members would have two full-time ministers.

D) Geography is the final element, as we recognise that a large distance between churches affects the way in which a minister can work within a pastorate. We will use as a guide a distance of ten miles or over as a factor to be considered with a possible addition of 5% to the scoping of the post.

S.7 A) Mission Enablers may be ministers or not. They will work collaboratively and offer advice and guidance to any church preparing a Pastorate Profile/Mission Plan. Some will have special insights in using property for mission, or in ways to develop service in the community, or in evangelism etc. Their service will be free to local churches. Mission Enablers who are ministers may be scoped at up to 25% as part of their ministry as they will be working with local churches across the Synod.

B) Pastoral Consultants will normally work in pairs, one minister and one elder, along with the Moderator. All Pastoral Consultants will be members of the Synod Pastoral Group and so local knowledge will always inform the discussions and decisions of the Synod. Pastoral Consultants who are ministers may be scoped at up to 10% as part of their ministry as they will be working with local churches in the area.

S.8 Elders will be encouraged to take on special responsibilities within the Elders Meeting. Local Church Leaders will be recruited to serve in their own congregation or in another. They will always work within the Elders meeting and alongside ministers of Word and Sacrament. They may be nominated by a local church or apply themselves for recognition by Synod Ministries Group. Each Local Church Leader will have to be invited by a local church and be trained. A job description will be agreed and approved by Synod Pastoral Group and they will serve for a term of three years, which may be extended by agreement for a further period of three years. All Local Church Leaders will be expected to stand down for a year after six years service. Further service may be negotiated and agreed either in the same local church or another - if invited.

S.9 Special situations call for special ministries and pastorates will be encouraged to develop a case for Special Category Ministry posts. Each post requires approval by the Assembly Accreditation Sub-Committee and is for a period of five years, with a possible extension for a further five years.

S.10 The Synod will offer support and expertise to local churches and will employ staff to offer advice in areas of finance and property, training and development, youth and children's work and communication and administration. The Synod Clerk through the Office Management Group oversees the work of the Synod Office.

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APPENDIX 3 - REVIEW OF THE EAST MIDLANDS SYNOD STRUCTURES

Report from the group set up to Review the East Midlands Synod Structures

Members of the Group – Mrs Daphne Beale, Rev Cecil Macaulay, Mrs Val Morrison (Convener)

The Remit and Terms of Reference

Remit: To review the current structure of the Synod after two years in operation by considering how effective it has been in living up to its vision, achieving its aims and operating by its principles, with a view to preparing a report for the Enabling Group on 1st October and presenting findings to the Synod meeting on 7th November 2009.

Terms of Reference:-

1. To review the groups who meet as part of the structure looking at their workload and responsibilities.
2. To review the work of the Convenors and the support they receive.
3. To review the work of the Synod Officers in relation to servicing the Synod and groups.
4. To review the pattern of meetings throughout the year.
5. To review the interaction of the groups with the Synod Enabling Group and the Synod meetings.
6. To review the networks, the ways in which they are supported, integrated and effective.
7. To review communications between different groups within the Synod, between the local churches and the Synod, and between the Synod and other parts of the United Reformed Church.
8. * To review how the Synod is listening and responding to the needs of local churches encouraging, equipping and enabling them for mission.

* Added to the remit by the review group at the first meeting and agreed with the Moderator and Clerk

Process

1. The review group were provided with minutes of Synod meetings and sample minutes of a range of Synod committees.
2. The review group met 3 times. 18th May 2009, 17th July 2009 and 1st September 2009.
3. 18th May 2009.
 - a. We met with the Moderator and Clerk and heard their reflections on the current structures.
 - b. The Review Group discussed how we should proceed and agreed to devise a questionnaire and seek written responses from Synod Officers, the Synod Team, Committee Conveners. A separate questionnaire would be sent to Networkers. Sample questionnaires are attached.
 - c. We also agreed to invite comments about the new structures from churches or individuals via the e-letter.
 - d. Questionnaires were sent out late in May to be returned by the end of June
 - e. We received
 - i. 10 responses to the questionnaire
 - ii. 4 email responses
 - iii. 2 verbal responses

4. 17th July
 - a. We had read all the responses and discussed the findings
 - b. We agreed to seek conversations with a further 4 people to help us complete the picture
 - c. The Convener agreed to produce a first draft of the report.
5. 1st September
 - a. We looked at the first draft of the report and agreed some amendments.
 - b. The Convener agreed to amend the report
 - c. We felt that the final version of the report could be completed by an email conversation

Observations and Conclusions of the Task Group

General observations related to the context of what we were being told

- a. It is early days yet and time needs to be given for the structures to settle down.
- b. Some have memories of District Councils which worked well and they are finding the changes difficult to work with and understand.
- c. There are issues relating to ministry - pressures of work, new ways of working, changing expectations - which are related but alongside the structural issues.
- d. There is a history of Congregationalism and Churches of Christ in the area as a whole and this may colour some views
- e. Some of the comments which we report because they seem significant, represent the views of only one person.

Overall conclusions

1. The new structures are working well for those who are at the centre and therefore 'in the know'. There is a real feeling of distance between the local church and the Synod.
2. Synod meetings are a place to share thoughts but many don't engage with the process because of the size and formality
3. The Pastoral Committee needs additional resources to enable them to be pro-active rather than only reactive and to maintain more effective links with churches.
4. Networkers and enablers are crucial but there are not enough of them, their roles are not always clear and they have insufficient links to the structures.
5. Communication is an ever present concern. There is criticism of the distance between the local church and the Synod but communication has to be two way.
6. Things which are working well include;
 - the fact that some new people have been brought into new roles.
 - the Ministries Committee
 - the Training Team
 - one person talked about the success of local clusters
7. Concerns were raised
 - for ministers, CRCW's and churches where there is a real danger of isolation.
 - for local ecumenical work and County based appointments where people seem to be expected to 'just continue to do the work' unsupported and unrecognized.
 - that more will be done by ministers because they are 'known' and finding lay people to fulfill tasks will become more difficult.

Specific conclusions relating to each of the Terms of Reference points.

To review:

1. The workload and responsibilities of the groups who meet as part of the structure.

On the whole groups had clearly defined roles and were aiming to fulfil them.

The Pastoral Group had very wide responsibilities and although they appear to be coping with the crises caused by so many ministers leaving there was an awareness that they were not able to have an ongoing relationship with all the churches. To some on the receiving end it appeared that there was not enough consultation with churches over their concerns. There is also the concern with the gaps in the membership, e.g. there is no pastoral consultant for Leicestershire. There were also concerns about how to involve more lay people. The Pastoral Panel does not appear to be working.

How will the Local Mission and Ministry Review (LMMR) interact with this work?

The Finance and Property Group is well focussed and seems to be working effectively though the F&P networkers who responded felt themselves a bit isolated and unsure of their roles with regard to their areas.

The Ministries Group seems to be fulfilling its function well but has found the widened remit challenging.

Youth and Children's Work seems to be working well.

The Mission Enabling Group appears to be finding it difficult to get responses from the churches. There was only one response from a Mission Enabler and the need for effective communication with the churches was mentioned so that they know what resources are available and how to use them.

There appear to be two sub groups of SEG

The Crossways Sub group has a very clear focus but the role of the convener and the remit of the group may need to be more clearly defined. The present remit appears to be for Crossways not for the group.

The Search Sub group has several concerns. Again the focus is clear but the roles of the members may need to be better defined. The remit is a difficult one and needs really close communication with churches but this is not happening. "We have lost touch with the 'grass roots' of church membership by not meeting regularly with local church contacts". This is another group where there are vacancies in the membership which means some areas do not have direct contact with the group. It is not clear how this sub group relates to SEG.

2. The work of the Convenors and the support they receive.

Most of those conveners who responded felt well supported but one convener felt that it would be good for conveners to meet to support each other occasionally.

Most found their roles challenging and only one felt the task was becoming too difficult to fulfil.

3. The work of the Synod Officers in relation to servicing the Synod and groups.

In general groups felt that they received the support they needed from Synod Officers. We did not specifically ask a question relating to Synod meetings though observed that these were less well attended than in the past - except where the agenda included contentious issues for discussion.

4. The pattern of meetings throughout the year.

Most felt the pattern was working but there was some concern about the volume of necessary work and the consequent length of agendas.

5. The interaction of the groups with the Synod Enabling Group and the Synod meetings.

- a. The Synod Enabling Group seems to be good at structuring the Synod meeting agendas.
- b. The development of networking structures has largely not happened
- c. In the New Synod Proposals March 2007 page 5 it is suggested that networkers would be invited to meetings of the Synod Enabling Group 'when the wider vision and strategic issues will be discussed'. We did not see evidence that this had happened.
- d. The minutes give the feel of a business meeting and we asked how the strategy was developed.
- e. Where strategies are put in place they seem not to be well communicated to the churches.

6. The networks, the ways in which they are supported, integrated and effective.

We had some real concerns about this element of the structure;

- a. Finance Networkers - there seems to be some confusion about whether they are geographical and their relationship to the committee both in regard to Property and Finance.
- b. Apart from the Church and Society networker this group of people seem to be left to their own devices.
- c. There is confusion about roles and how those roles connect with anything/anyone else.

7. Communications between different groups within the Synod, between the local churches and the Synod, and between the Synod and other parts of the United Reformed Church.

- a. We received mixed messages about the e-letter which seems to be working in its own way.
 - i. Most churches do not make use of it to communicate their news (maybe have not realised they can).
 - ii. For some there is too much information and we felt that key information should appear first with training information being given after this.
 - iii. Concerns were that it is produced too frequently with the pressure this puts on staff
 - iv. Greater timescales may make church contributions more possible
 - v. Could hot news be shared through the website

- b. Person to person communication is still important in a constituency where many do not have access to new technology but this is not functioning well at the moment.
8. How the Synod is listening and responding to the needs of local churches encouraging, equipping and enabling them for mission.
- a. The Mission Enabling aspect is not working because the structure seems not to be right. There is a need for pro-active work telling churches about resources but communication is difficult.
 - b. Mission Enablers should come from the spectrum of theological perspectives and be offered across the Synod rather than geographically.
 - c. The Pastoral Committee should be introducing Mission Enablers at the beginning of a vacancy and offering their ongoing support.
 - d. Unless there is a crisis it is not happening.

Appendix 1

A collation of comments received from individuals and churches

Using the remit headings:

To review:

1. The workload and responsibilities of the groups who meet as part of the structure.

- e. Smaller group meetings in Finance and Property is positive
- f. Groups with clear remits e.g. Finance and Property, Ministries appear to function better
- g. There are less meetings which is good
- h. There are too many meetings overall but not enough time for strategy
- i. The Search Group seems to be struggling
- j. MEG seems not to have got to grips with the whole area of mission
- k. The Pastoral Committee has addressed some of the problems of work load with additional members but this seems to be the most 'powerful' group which needs to meet with groups of churches and will have a heavy work load and sometimes hard messages to convey.
- l. One Synod Pastoral Consultant observed that some more regular contact with the Moderator would be helpful.
- m. The Mission Enabling Group appears to be doing rather than enabling. It may need a more clearly defined role

9. The work of the Convenors and the support they receive.

- a. There is good support but this is based on longstanding relationships.
- b. There is a feeling that groups are set off to undertake a task and left to get on with it unsupported

10. The work of the Synod Officers in relation to servicing the Synod and groups.

- a. Synod Officers generally felt well supported in practical and spiritual terms.
- b. There was specific mention of the need for additional technical support (finance).
- c. There was a recognition of the need to continue to find ways to support local churches appropriately.

11. The pattern of meetings throughout the year.
 - a. Generally these were felt to be satisfactory though the length of the agendas can be a problem
 - b. There was a suggestion that there should be more meetings with shorter agendas

12. The interaction of the groups with the Synod Enabling Group and the Synod meetings.
 - a. There were no comments about interaction with the Synod Enabling Group but Synod meetings were felt to be too business focussed leaving little time for inspiration/challenge.
 - b. There needs to be a review of how business at Synod is managed

13. The networks, the ways in which they are supported, integrated and effective.
 - a. Most networks seem not to be working
 - b. Networkers feel isolated and do not fit into any specific committee.
 - c. The Church and Society Networker has found it easier when there were specific events to organise and a reason for contacting churches.
 - d. Practical support has been available for the Church and Society Networker from the synod office as well as support from the Moderator

14. Communications between different groups within the Synod, between the local churches and the Synod, and between the Synod and other parts of the United Reformed Church.
 - a. Officers report that communication with churches is more difficult since Districts have gone. There is a lack of volunteers to convey the information and churches do not feel able to raise issues.
 - b. Time for debates at synod meetings was felt to be limited.
 - c. The e-letter is a good resource (for some!) and there were varying views about whether churches responded and provided information for inclusion. One comment was that the e-letter is too frequent, too unfocussed
 - d. Good communications remain a challenge
 - e. Communication is patchy depending on who is in place - there is a need for more networkers to relate to local churches
 - f. One new comer to the Synod felt that they had not been welcomed and enabled to use the expertise they offered.
 - g. Responses to information given at Synod (both written and in the form of announcements) gets little response except from established network members. It was observed that this may mean that there is not much to come back or that churches are happy with what they are doing.
 - h. Churches miss the 'local sharing' and mutual support which they got from District meetings

15. How the Synod is listening and responding to the needs of local churches encouraging, equipping and enabling them for mission.
 - a. We do well on the reactive but less well on the pro-active
 - b. Finding time for regular support and encouragement of churches is hard
 - c. There is a potential for churches and ministers to feel isolated
 - d. We have lost touch with grass roots.

Some Suggestions for the Future (some large and some small - in no particular order!)

- a. There needs to be a space to discuss strategy
- b. If the new deployment papers are put into action this should get over some of the isolation issues
- c. Networks need people with the time and no other responsibilities
- d. The Synod needs to look for ways in which local churches can contribute to the decision making processes of the Pastoral Group
- e. Churches should be encouraged to suggest names to the Search Group
- f. Consider nominating a minister in each former District to act for the Moderator when appropriate and to get to know the churches
- g. Provide dedicated training for Enablers and Networkers
- h. Form groups for pastoral consultation in each county area where the Pastoral Consultant can be kept informed and share local concerns. This could come out of, or contribute to, the suggested Pastoral Panel which appears not to exist at the moment.
- i. Look urgently at all the original District appointments to local bodies and decide how they are best filled in future. This may need calling together the last people who were District secretaries to make sure all is covered.
- j. Set up, from Synod, annual or biannual meetings within the county areas to do important business (it must be important or people will not come) such as looking at deployment or even finance.
- k. Review the Synod/Central Church agenda - it currently feels top down rather than bottom up
- l. Some Synod -wide action is needed on e.g. climate change issues. The networker suggested all churches reporting annually on energy usage.
- m. LMMR and MASA is a huge area of work and may need a group of its own to deal with the work seriously.
- n. All churches would benefit from a definitive and regularly maintained set of handbooks produced nationally, covering e.g. property, insurance, sources of grant funding
- o. Each local church could have a named contact person nominated by Synod to be their 'mentor'/contact point and to help, particularly small churches, establish priorities in relation to national initiatives.
- p. Synod should be more directive in its leadership.