

Meeting of The United Reformed Church Wessex Synod

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The
**United
Reformed
Church**

Saturday 13th March 2021

INDEX

<u>PAGE</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>
3	Agenda
4	Listing of Ordinands and Ministerial Changes
5	Minutes of 10 th October 2020 Meeting of Synod
9	Obituary – Graham Long
10	Obituary – Frank Cochrane
12	Synod Executive Report
13	Resolutions 1, 2 and 3
14	Synod Nominations
20	Ministries & Learning Committee Report
22	Silence & Retreats Group
23	URC (Wessex) Trust Ltd Report
27	Ministry & Mission Fund Report
28	Mission & Outreach Committee Report
31	Mission Development Group Report
32	Church & Society Group Report
33	World Church Group Report
34	Children’s & Youth Work Committee Report
35	Safeguarding Reference Group Report
36	Synod Youth Executive Report

AGENDA

09:30	Arrivals - log in and go for a coffee	Voting
09:45	Arrivals - log in and go for a coffee	Non-voting
10:00	Welcome & Synod constituted by the Moderator Introduction to Virtual Meeting	Moderator
10:15	Opening Worship	Synod Exec
10:30	Welcome to Ecumenical Visitors and new members of Synod Ministry and Pastoral News including Jubilee Ministers Apologies Minutes of Synod held on 13 th October 2020 and matters arising Order of business and Announcements	Moderator Clerk
10:50	Synod Executive Report: Resolution 1 - Adoption of Synod Appointments Resolution 2 - General Assembly Representatives	Clerk
11:05	Receiving M&L Reports, & Questions: Ministries and Learning Committee Silence and Retreats	Graham Hoslett
11:15	BREAK	
11:35	M&M	Peter Pay
11:45	Wessex Trust & Pensions	Romilly Micklem
12:10	Synod Day 2022 Synod Youth Executive Children's and Youth Work Committee	John Downing SYE members John Downing
12:35	GA Moderator Nomination (Resolution 3)	Moderator
12:40	Administration and Notices	Clerk
12:45	LUNCH	
14:00	Receive Written Committee Reports, & Questions: Mission and Outreach Mission Development Group World Church Group Church and Society Group Break Out Groups	Ray Stanyon C&S Group
14:45	BREAK	
15:05	Any remaindered business	
15:15	Thanks and Closing worship	Moderator

Next meeting of Synod: Saturday 9th October 2021 at High Cross Church, Camberley

LISTING OF ORDINANDS AND MINISTERIAL CHANGES

Ordinands training for Ministry

	<u>College</u>	<u>Finish Date</u>
Kevin Dudman	Scottish	2022
Linda Pain	Westminster	2022
Ruth Dewis	Westminster	2023
Siobhan Antoniou	Northern	2024
Christopher Noyce	Northern	2024

CRCW in training

	<u>College</u>	<u>Finish Date</u>
Alice Gilbert	Northern	2023

Jubilee Ministers

Ministers who would have been celebrated in March 2020

50 th Anniversary	Nigel Appleton
50 th Anniversary	Elizabeth Nash

Ministers being celebrated in 2021

50 th Anniversary	Barbara Meachin
50 th Anniversary	Colin Thompson

Deaths

13 th January	Betty Williams (to follow)
15 th January	Norman Edsall (to follow)

Movements out of Synod

31 st October	Deborah Scott-Bromley left St Mark's Bordon
1 st November	Eddie Boon moved to Thames North Synod

Church Closures

14 th November	Worplesdon
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Changes before next Synod

31 st March	Barrie Cheetham retires from Bernwode Forest Group and remains in the Synod
31 st March	Bob Almond (Baptist) retires from United Church Ferndown

MINUTES of the meeting of **WESSEX SYNOD** on Saturday 10th October 2020 via Zoom.

The Moderator, the Revd. Clare Downing, welcomed members to the meeting and constituted the Synod which was being held on Zoom for the first time.

The World Church Group led worship, using material from our partners in Zambia and France, including a reflection from Zambia about partnership, "Go and build bridges".

Attendance

31	URC Ministers and CRCWs
37	Church representatives
0	Ministers of other denominations
3	Retired Ministers
3	Ordinands
22	Others holding Synod appointments
1	Visitors
97	Total

20S01 Apologies were received from

4	URC Ministers
12	Church representatives
0	Ministers of other denominations
0	Ordinands
6	Retired Ministers
2	Others
24	Total

20S02 Worship with a global perspective:

The Revd. Ana Gobledale offered a wide-ranging, illustrated presentation about life and mission in Zambia, interspersed with questions which were discussed in breakout rooms.

20S03 Ministry and pastoral news:

- a The Moderator drew attention to the listing of ordinands and ministerial changes, and welcomed three newly inducted ministers, the Revds. Wayne Hawkins (from the Congregational Union via CWM), and Adam Payne (from the Methodist Church in the USA), have come into URC ministry through Certificates of Eligibility. Elize Goddess (Methodist from South Africa) is serving at Drayton United Church along with other Methodist churches.
- b She further welcomed the Revd. Stephen Ansa-Addo, ordained and inducted to Hungerford and Park, Reading URCs.
- c The Moderator noted that the closure of Marsh Gibbon URC has been postponed, while they think further about their future.
- d The Moderator drew attention to the deaths of the Revds. Tom Grant and Graham Long and led in prayer.

20S04 Minutes of the last meeting: The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th October 2019 were taken as read, approved by consensus and signed as a correct record.

20S05 Order of business: The Synod Clerk noted two small changes to the order of business.

20S06 Synod Executive Report: The Synod Clerk presented the written report and brought

Resolution 1:

RESOLUTION 1

Synod welcomes Executive's appointment of Miss Karen Bell as Synod Clerk, and offers Karen its support and encouragement.

The resolution was agreed by consensus and Karen was welcomed unanimously. The Moderator explained that Sue Brown is clerking this meeting, Karen will be inducted at the end of it and will then take over as Synod Clerk.

The Revd. Dr. Romilly Micklem drew attention to the fact that the Moderator's review has been conducted, and felt that Synod should be given the opportunity to express its appreciation of her willingness to serve a further term. As a result of the review the Moderator should be confirmed by Mission Council to serve until August 2026.

20S07 Synod Day: The Revd. John Downing indicated that the organising committee is hard at work but has concluded that it is not practical to hold the event in 2021, because of the uncertainties of coronavirus, so it has been rearranged for 7th May 2022, with the same venue and theme. A video was shown and more information will be available in due course. The Moderator thanked the whole team for their hard work and wisdom in making a difficult decision.

20S08 Synod Youth Executive: Laura Everard presented the report and introduced Resolution 4:

RESOLUTION 4

Wessex Synod:

- Recognises the need, at both local church and Synod level, to use modern communication methods and flexible ways of working, in order to be fully accessible to younger people
- Encourages local churches to recommit to young people's representation and participation in planning groups and committees
- Resolves to pursue young people's representation on Synod committees
- Resolves to form a working party (representative of the diverse demographic in Wessex) to plan future Synod meetings, beginning with the October 2020 Synod meeting.

Following questions the Clerk explained that a working party has already been formed, a decision made by Executive after the cancellation of the last Synod meeting. It was therefore agreed to delete the last phrase of the resolution, which then read as follows:

RESOLUTION 4

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- Encourages local churches to recommit to young people's representation and participation in planning groups and committees
- Resolves to pursue young people's representation on Synod committees
- Resolves to form a working party (representative of the diverse demographic in Wessex) to plan future Synod meetings.

This was passed by consensus and the Moderator invited churches with young people from diverse

backgrounds to encourage them to get involved in Synod Youth Executive.

20S09 Advent Boxes: Mrs. Ruth White spoke about Advent Hope and Joy Boxes which have been developed by Church House via the CYDO Plus Team, to help people to reach out intergenerationally to families around the church. They will be available about early to mid November for £4 each and a link will be sent to churches. Following an enquiry about suitability for SEND people, Mrs. White undertook to pass this question on to the writing group.

The Revd. Nigel Appleton took the chair.

20S10 Ministries and Learning Committee: The Moderator presented the report, drawing attention to the deployment crisis. Following an enquiry about Interim Moderators, the Moderator explained that Pastoral Committees and DSOs are working hard at being in touch with churches, beginning with those in vacancy.

The Moderator resumed the chair.

20S11 Children's and Youth Work Committee: The Revd. John Downing presented the report, which was originally written for the March 2020 Synod. He commended the CYDOs to Synod for all the work they have been doing supporting local churches and youth workers, working online and developing Assembly resources. Much training has also been happening online.

Paddington is nearing the end of his journey round the Synod and Synod Youth Executive was asked to think what they want to do at the end of his journey.

The Faith-Filled Life module from Stepwise has been started online and is being developed in Wessex as an all-age resource. Anyone interested should contact Mrs. Ruth White.

The report was accepted, with particular thanks to CYDOs Ruth White and Phil Ray.

Synod broke for lunch.

20S12 Children and Youth at Assembly level: Phil Ray showed a slide presentation put together by Church House, showcasing various items and events which have been worked on since lockdown. Looking ahead to 2021, the Children's & Youth theme for the year is Heroes and Villains and a book offering different approaches will be sent to all churches, as well as being available through the Synod website and newsletter.

20S13 Wessex Trust: The Revd. Dr. Romilly Micklem presented the report, explaining the system required by the Charity Commission for property disposals and the value the Trust gets for them. He also drew attention to the fact that, for a variety of reasons, money is much shorter than it was and so a lower level is available for grants. He then brought Resolution 2:

RESOLUTION 2

Wessex Synod approves the transfer of £50,000 from the General Fund to the Church Mission Fund of the Wessex Trust.

This was agreed by consensus.

Dr. Micklem also brought Resolution 3:

RESOLUTION 3

Wessex Synod approves a grant of £110,000 from the General Fund of the Wessex Trust to support the URC's Inter-Synod Resource Sharing for 2021.

The resolution was agreed by consensus.

20S14 Ministry and Mission Fund Report: Peter Pay indicated that the latest figures from Church House show an overall shortfall of £373,000 but that Wessex Synod is currently holding up quite well, with a possible shortfall of £35,000-£55,000 on the year. He is very grateful for continued support but has made a reduced offer of £1,950,000 to Church House for 2021, although he would very much like to achieve £2 million.

The Moderator expressed Synod's thanks to Peter Pay, Colin MacBean and to all churches.

20S15 Mission and Outreach: The Revd Ray Stanyon presented the three constituent reports, with Mission Development Group and Church & Society being those from the March 2020 Synod papers. The World Church Group report has been updated because of the Zambian food poverty situation. Although the appeal for money was originally for drought relief, it later became needed for Covid-19 relief for ministers who were not able to be paid. This wider use was endorsed by Synod.

20S16 Breakout Rooms: There was discussion on Zoom for Ministries & Learning, Children's & Youth, Wessex Trust, Mission Development Group and Church & Society.

20S17 Thanks: The Moderator expressed her thanks to everyone for their patience in the new experience of conducting Synod business by Zoom. In particular she thanked Deborah Walker, Chris Copley, those presenting reports and the technical team comprising Roger Clark, Ray Stanyon, John Downing, Tony Brett, Phyllis Williams, Michael Hopkins, Karen Bell and Adam Payne. She then expressed very special thanks to Sue Brown for being a really good colleague to work with as Synod Clerk.

The Revd. Ray Stanyon thanked the Moderator for convening Synod and for all the preparation that went into it.

20S18 Worship and Induction of Synod Clerk: The Moderator led worship, speaking about wisdom, power and knowledge from Jesus. She then inducted Miss Karen Bell as Synod Clerk.

Synod closed at 3.50pm.

The next meeting is on Saturday 13th March 2021 at Avenue St. Andrew's URC, Southampton, though the right is reserved to hold it online if necessary.

OBITUARIES

The following obituary will be part of "Celebrated Lives"
which is a collection of life stories to appear with the 2022 edition of the URC Year Book

Revd Graham Long

8 July 1937 – 12 September 2020

The Reverend Graham Long died peacefully on the 12th September 2020 in Salisbury Hospice, 17 years after first being diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Born in London in 1937, the only son to Jonathan and Lucy, Graham grew up in Enfield before the family moved to Southampton in 1946. He went to school at Peter Symonds College, Winchester. As a member of The Chandlers Ford Congregational Church Youth Club, he met his first wife Sheila, and it was here he felt called to the ministry. Leaving his career as a Chartered Surveyor in the New Forest, he began theological training at New College London in 1958.

Ordained in 1962, his first pastorate was Ash and Sandwich Congregational Churches in Kent. In 1970 he moved to the Channel Islands where one of the many challenges was flying between Jersey and Guernsey on foggy days. In 1983 his ministry moved to Camberley where calm collaboration was required to unite Camberley URC and Methodist churches under one roof as the visionary new High Cross Church, opening in 1990. During this demanding period, he also wrote "Thank God You've Come", a guide for those seeking to offer effective pastoral care. His final pastorate began in 1994 at the Rugby, Newton and Brinklow churches and was again typified by calm encouragement and healing, needed and appreciated by the churches there.

His ministries focused on alliances; using the gifts of the whole congregation to reach out into the wider community. He founded counselling services and support groups. He chaired many local and national committees and published books on topics to aid other ministers, both in their ministries, their self-care and well-being.

In 2002 Graham and Sheila retired to Fordingbridge where in May 2003 they were involved in a car accident killing Sheila and seriously injuring Graham. Further health issues ensued but Graham eventually found solace walking, recording and then writing the New Forest Country Diary for The Guardian newspaper. On many of the walks he was accompanied by Beryl who he married in September 2006. They remained extremely active members of Fordingbridge URC until Beryl's death in September 2019. Graham's cancer progressed and he began to curtail roles such as church secretary and safeguarding officer.

A keen lifelong naturalist, Graham's focus became the overlooked and unloved snail. Whilst in Jersey, under the tutelage of Dr June Chatfield, his hobby was to map Jersey molluscs. From 1974, he was a member of the Conchological Society of Great Britain and Ireland and wrote articles for their Conchologist Magazine. In 2008, he joined June as Hampshire County Mollusc recorder. In 2009 he was a founder and Chairman of Fordingbridge Conservation Volunteer Action Group with a particular mission to protect and restore Bishop's Pond. He loved the New Forest and between 2013 and 2019 he joined the Council of the New Forest Association. Away from his pastoral work, he was happiest in a ditch looking for creatures and understanding their environment.

He is survived by Andrew, Rachel and Tim and four grandchildren, Kirstie, Callum, Abigail and Jonathan.

Written by the Long Family

Revd Frank Cochrane

22 September 1943 to – 9 November 2020

Frank was born on the 22nd September 1943 in the West Highlands of Scotland in the small village of Kinlochleven near to The Glencoe and Ben Nevis, and it was in Kinlochleven that he courted and married his childhood sweetheart Pat in 1966.

He was a just man, honest, firm but fair and these were traits he carried through his life. His morals and ethical standards meant this was a man you could trust.

Frank left school at the age of 14 to serve an apprenticeship in the Scottish British Aluminium Co. He soon decided to spread his wings and became Police Constable Cochrane in the Kent constabulary where his son Robert was born. On transferring to the London Metropolitan Police, a second son Colin was born and Frank was selected to join the Armed Police Special Patrol Group. This became a very stressful period both physically and morally.

His career in the Police spanned 13 years and following his decision to leave, the family headed for Gosport where Frank was employed for ten years by the local council in a variety of roles including Senior Management Services Officer.

Frank and Pat became Christians in 1980 and joined St Columba's URC in Gosport. He soon felt called as a Lay preacher but realizing his walk with the Lord was all or nothing, Frank applied for Non Stipendiary Ministry and later for Stipendiary Ministry.

He trained at Salisbury and Wells Theological College from 1986-89 and Mansfield College Oxford from 1989-90. His internship was at Buckland URC in Portsmouth and St James Psychiatric hospital. During his ministry he also completed training in the healing ministry, pastoral theology, alcohol abuse and drug addiction.

He was ordained into the ministry on the 30th June 1990 in Brighthelm Church and Community Centre in Brighton. In addition to the normal pastoral requirements of ministry there were projects dealing with drug abuse, homelessness, alcohol dependency and poverty. Frank and Pat very quickly became involved, working together as a team and when he moved on after four years he was greatly missed.

His next call from 1994 to 2000 was particularly painful as the two boys elected to remain on the south coast while Frank and Pat moved to St Georges URC in Carlisle. St George's congregation made Frank and Pat feel very much at home, they were part of a very strong Churches together group and Frank found himself very involved in this, leading worship throughout the town including the cathedral.

He also took on the ministry at Wigton URC and Knowe URC in Brewcastle, became Interim Moderator for Whitehaven and Workington URC's and from 1995 to 2000 was Chair of the Management Team of the Windermere Centre.

His next call from 2000 to 2003 was to St Andrews Church in Bournemouth during the beginning of discussions on merging the Church with Richmond Hill URC. He was also Chaplain to Wentworth College which is affiliated to the URC. A role he loved.

From 2003 until retirement in 2008 Frank served at Totton URC/Methodist Church where he also worked with his Methodist colleagues on the local circuit. Pat has described their time together at

Totton as particularly happy with a very willing and open congregation who became great friends. There were many new projects including music in worship, working with disabled children and being very involved in the local schools and community.

On his retirement Frank and Pat moved back to Lee on the Solent to be near their children's families in Worthing and Lee. They adored their 7 grandchildren and would produce photographs and talk about them at the slightest opportunity, they also rejoined St Columba's and renewed many old friendships.

He continued to lead worship in URC and Methodist Churches and became the "go to" minister for funerals with local funeral directors. Every bereaved family received pastoral support and each funeral service he led was made personal to the mourners.

In more recent years he moved to St Faiths C of E in Lee and was very quickly invited to join the ministry team there, leading worship, going into schools with the "Open Book" scheme and being part of the prayer and pastoral team with Pat.

From 1990 to 2020, Frank celebrated thirty years of ministry which provided them both with wonderful memories of great communities, amazing experiences and above all friends.

He loved God, and often said a deep prayer life is essential, that neither Pat nor he could have survived without it. Frank believed to love the Lord and love the people that he loves, is the most important thing of all.

He was a man of great experience and big of heart. His love of God, his honesty, integrity, caring, kindness and ability to listen carried him, Pat, and his friends through life. He would be truly humbled at the hundreds of cards, good will messages and kind words the family received after his sudden and unexpected death.

Frank Mulholland

SYNOD EXECUTIVE REPORT

1. Committees

The Standing Committees continue to report regularly to the Synod.

2. Area Gatherings

The September Area Gatherings were changed to an online format through zoom, and lead by the Mission Development Group on the theme of Mission in the 'New Normal'.

These included 4 different videos of Mission work in different formats, with breakout rooms to answer questions challenged by the video presenter. All were well received.

February Area Gatherings were also on zoom and were a mix of surgery's and discussions.

Church Secretaries Surgery

'Buildings and the Use of them' Surgery

'Children and Youth Friendly Church'

Misconception of Mental Health

The September Area Gatherings will be considering "What happened at General Assembly".

The dates are below. We hope to be holding physical meetings, and will confirm venues nearer the time, offers to host Area Gatherings across the churches in each area are always welcome.

- Monday 6th September
- Tuesday 7th September
- Monday 13th September
- Wednesday 15th September

3. Synod Meetings:

Due to the pandemic our Spring Synod was cancelled, however we held our Autumn Synod on the 13th October 2020 on Zoom. Opening Worship and Workshop breakout groups were led by the World Church Group, after the Committee reports were received, breakout groups with Committee Conveners allowed discussion into the work of the various committees. Closing Worship was led by our Synod Moderator.

Following this first Synod Meeting on Zoom, a low attendance was noted.

Synod Executive reviewed a questionnaire sent out to all Voting and Non-voting members and reviewed this in order to continue making Synod an online format which is as accessible and relevant as possible.

4. Appointments List (Resolution 1)

As usual the Nominations Group brings the updated Synod Appointments List for your approval. Sincere thanks to all who serve. You will see that we still have some vacancies. Please give these some thought and prayer. Could you, or someone at your church, be called to be part of this work?

In particular, the Appointment of a new **Synod Treasurer** is now very urgent. Nominations or any related questions about the role description that has been prepared should in the first instance be addressed to Karen Bell clerk@urcwessex.org.uk and Stuart MacLean trust@urcwessex.org.uk respectively. Please give this your prayerful attention.

5. Representatives to General Assembly (Resolution 2)

A list of proposed representatives is attached for Synod approval.

Karen Bell

clerk@urcwessex.org.uk February 2021

RESOLUTION 1

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

RESOLUTION 2

Wessex Synod approves the list of representatives to General Assembly and allows Synod Officers to appoint replacements should it prove necessary.

General Assembly Representatives

Revd Brian Harley	Mr Edward Burr
Revd Tessa Henry-Robinson	Mr Andrew Gibb
Revd Graham Hoslett	Ms Becca Lees
Revd Romilly Micklem	Miss Karen Bell
Revd Mary Thomas	Mr Clive Snashall
Revd David Downing	Mr Scott Wheeler
Revd Josh Thomas	Mrs Louise Shrubsole
Miss Laura Everard	Miss Naomi Baldwin

RESOLUTION 3

Wessex Synod supports the nominee for General Assembly Moderator 2022-23

SYNOD NOMINATIONS

Appointments for Synod March 2021

The following hold office or are nominated for office in the Synod. The date when the appointment is due to end is recorded in the "end" column and unless otherwise stated is March. This paper is presented to the Synod Meeting for adoption.

*new/renewed appointments for approval of Synod

End

OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES

Synod Clerk	Miss Karen Bell	
Synod Minutes Secretary	Revd Graham Hoslett	2025*
Synod Treasurer	Vacancy	
Development & Support Officer – North	Revd Ray Stanyon	
Development & Support Officer - South	Revd Mary Thomas	
Trust Executive Officer	Mr Stuart MacLean	
Trust Secretary	Mr Ralph Barnes	
Finance & Operations Manager	Mr Ian Bartlett	
Financial Accountant	Mrs Jim Butcher	
Property Officer - North	Mrs Nicola Werro	
Property Officer - South	Mr Graham Barber	
Children and Youth Development Officer ('CYDO') - North	Mr Philip Ray	
Children and Youth Development Officer ('CYDO') - South	Mrs Ruth White	
Synod Safeguarding Officer	Mrs Sharon Barr	
Employment Advisor	Mrs Penny Thatcher	
PA to Moderator and Clerk/Synod Secretary	Mrs Deborah Walker	
Development Team Administrator	Ms Ruth Heine	

APPOINTEES

Technical support to Synod meeting

Convener:	Mr Roger Clark*
Members:	Revd David Downing*
	Revd John Downing*
	Mr Tony Brett*
	Revd Ray Stanyon*

Plus: Synod Moderator, Synod Clerk, Synod Secretary

DSO Line Manager	Vacant	
CYDO and Safeguarding Officer Line Manager	Revd Margaret Evans	2024
Clerk Line Manager	Revd Pauline Main	2025*

COMMITTEES AND GROUPS (members listed exclude all *ex officio* members)

Synod Executive

Convener:	Moderator	
Secretary:	Synod Clerk	
Minute Secretary:	Synod Minutes Secretary	
Members:	NW - Revd Pauline Main	2023
	NE - Mr Robin Gray	2022
	SW - Mr Terry Pearce	2022
	SE Vacancy	

Plus: Conveners from Children & Youth Work, Ministries & Learning and Wessex Trust; Synod Treasurer and the Synod representative to the Assembly Mission Committee.

Nominations Group

Convener: Synod Clerk
Members: Synod Pastoral Committee Conveners
One person from each Area

Mission & Outreach Committee:

Mission Development Group

Convener: Revd David Downing 2024
Secretary: Revd Glyn Millington 2024
Members: Vacancy
Vacancy
Revd Peter Southcombe 2024
Revd Kay Blackwell 2023
Rural Link : Revd Duncan Goldie 2024

Church & Society Group:

Convener: Vacancy
Secretary: Mr David Wrighton 2023
Members: Revd Tim Clarke 2022
Vacancy
Vacancy
Commitment for Life Advocate: Mrs Christine McMillan 2022
Inter-Faith Advocate: Revd Paul O'Connor 2023
Racial Justice Advocate: Mrs Enala Bhebhe 2023
Green Apostle: Revd Mike Shrubsole 2025

World Church Group

Convener: Vacancy
Secretary: Mr Philip Bonnier 2024
European Partner Link Coordinator (France): Revd Helen Everard 2025
Global Partner Link Coordinator (Zambia): Revd Nigel Appleton 2023
CWM Link: Miss Ruth Archer 2023
Members: Miss Georgina Fensom 2024
Revd Ana Gobledale 2023
Vacancy
Methodist Link: Cecil King

Ministries and Learning Committee

Convener: Revd Wayne Hawkins 2025
Secretary: Revd Graham Hoslett 2025
Lay Preaching Commissioner: Mrs Pauline Whately 2025
Synod Ecumenical Officer: Revd Harry Lanham 2023
Plus Pastoral Committee
Conveners

Synod Pastoral Committees:

North East	Convener:		
	Area Lay Preaching Co-ordinator:	Mrs Karen Smith	2025*
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Berkshire:		
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Surrey:	Revd Michael Hopkins	2023
	Members (5):	Vacancy	
		Mrs Eileen MacDonald	2025*
		Revd Graham Hoslett	2024
Revd Michael Hodgson		2024	
Mrs Faith Thomas	2022		
North West	Convener:	Mr Tony Brett	2024
	Area Lay Preaching Co-ordinator:	Vacancy	
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Berkshire:	Vacancy	
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Oxfordshire:	Revd Glyn Millington	2023
	Members (5):	Revd Robert Barthram	2023
		Mrs Cynthia Bartlett	2022
		Mr Roger Clark	2024
		Mrs Fiona Hobson	2024
Mr Clive Snashall		2025*	
South East	Convener:	Revd Sarah Hall	2025*
	Area Preaching Co-ordinator:	Mrs Gill Bailey	2023
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Hampshire:	Revd Harry Lanham	2023
	Members (6):	Mrs Christine Hardwick	2023
		Mr Peter Jolly	2023
		Mrs Sue Sapsard	2023
		Mr David Childs	2024
		Revd Mark Robinson	2024
		Mrs Sue Brown	2025*
South West	Convener:	Dr Richard Hall	2022
	Area Preaching Co-ordinator:	Mrs Mary Chipping	2022
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Dorset:	Revd Peter Clark	2023
	Members (7):	Revd Tod Gobledale	2025*
		Mr Andrew Hirst	2022
		Mrs Margaret Knighton	2022
		Mrs Janet Meachin	2022
		Mrs Linda Pain	2025*
		Revd Peter Southcombe	2022
		Revd James Whately	2025*
Spirituality Group Convener		Revd Alison Toplas	2022
	Health & Healing Link:	Revd Maria Hooper	2025*

URC (Wessex) Trust Limited

Convener:	Revd Romilly Micklem
Trustees:	Revd Nigel Appleton
	Mrs Sue Brown
	Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith**
	Revd Clare Downing
	Mr Ray Dunnett
	Mr Andrew Gibb
	Revd Julian Macro**
	Mr Colin MacBean**
	Mr Peter Pay
	Mr John Sinclair*
	Mr Peter Stevenson
	Revd Anthea Wickens

Note: In accordance with Article 9 of the Articles of Association of the Trust, the trustee(s) standing for election for the first time in 2021, are marked with an asterisk, and the trustee(s) standing for re-election in 2021, one third of them having had to retire by rotation each year and, being eligible, offer themselves for re-election, are marked with two asterisks.

Listed Buildings Advisory Committee

Convener:	Revd Michael Hodgson	2025*
Secretary:	Revd Glyn Millington	2025*
Members:	Mr D Illingworth	
	Mr Gareth Jenkins	
	Revd John Lee	
	Mr Matthew Maier	
	Mr Kevin Morris	
	Mr Gerry Prosser	
	Revd Martyn Needs	2025*
	Mr Graham Barber (co-opted)	
	Mrs Nicola Werro (co-opted)	

Ministry and Mission Fund Secretary

Mr Peter Pay 2024

Children's & Youth Work Committee

Convener:	Revd John Downing	2022
Secretary:	Miss Alison Marshall	2023
CYDOs Line Manager:	Revd Margaret Evans	2025*
Synod Pilot Officer:	Standing vacancy	
Paid Youth Workers' Representative:	Mrs Jo Hopkins	2025*
Camp Planning Convener:	Mrs Louisa Adams	2024
Members:	Revd Josh Thomas	2024
	Revd Andrew Hall	2024
	Mr Derek Dayman	2025*
Synod Youth Executive Representative:	filled by rotation of SYE	

Synod Youth Executive

Convener and Secretary:

Members:

Roles filled by rotation of members

CYDO x2

Miss Kathleen Beaman

Miss Laura Everard

Mr James Jenkins

Miss Maddy Loudon

Miss Emily Meachin

Miss Kailey Milne*

Miss Maya Withall*

Synod Panel for Ministerial Discipline

NE

Mrs Wendy Dunnett

Mrs Jennifer Radford **

NW

Mrs Cynthia Bartlett **

SE

Mr Robert Harding

Mr Owen Collins

Mr Chris Halliwell

Mrs Christine McMillan

Mrs Jane Dowdell **

SW

Mrs Loraine Dougall

Revd Colin Marsh

*** Wessex members of the joint panel shared with the Synods in Wales, South West and West Midlands*

Co-opted Members of Synod (2021)

Mr Graham Barber

Miss Karen Bell*

Mr Tony Brett

Mrs Pauline Whately*

Dr Richard Hall

Mr Peter Pay

Mr Philip Ray

Mr Peter Stevenson

Revd Wendy White

Youth Representatives to Synod

Miss Laura Everard

Miss Emily Meachin

Alternate Chair of Synod Meeting

Revd Nigel Appleton

REPRESENTATIVES TO OTHER GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

Mission Council

Synod Clerk

Revd Graham Hoslett

2022

Mrs Rosie Martin

2021

Revd Tessa Henry-Robinson

2025*

Youth Representative to URC Youth Executive Assembly	Vacant
Assembly Nominations Committee	Synod Clerk
IBEX - Churches Working with the Economy, Board member	Vacancy
Southampton University Chaplaincy – Chair of Support Group	Revd Sarah Hall
Assembly Mission Committee	Revd Ray Stanyon

MINISTRIES & LEARNING COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee Purpose: To support the development and implementation of the Wessex Synod Strategy, especially as it relates to matters of overseeing and enabling/facilitating the development and deployment of the ministries of the Church and their pastoral support in alignment with that strategy.

In particular

1. To coordinate the work of the Synod Pastoral Committees
2. To develop, propose and implement strategies and policies to support those ministries
3. To oversee the Local Mission & Ministry Review (LMMR) process
4. To oversee the Lay Preaching community
5. To oversee the training and development of all God's people within the churches of the URC in the Synod
6. To support ecumenical links and partnerships

Cliff Bembridge standing down as Convener

We are so sad to report that Cliff Bembridge has had to stand down as convener of Ministries & Learning Committee for health reasons. Cliff has served as Convener since March 2019, and the Committee has appreciated his gentle wisdom, experience of ministry, and his heart and concern for all those involved in ministry and leadership in local churches. We all miss his sensitive, quiet but firm, leadership and support especially in these difficult days, and our best wishes and prayers are with him and Daphne.

Lay Preacher Allowances for Training

As previously reported, Lay Preachers can apply for financial help towards training. In 2020, for Assembly Accredited (AA) Lay Preachers (LPs) applying for assistance, Synods could reclaim £200 per year from the national Education and Learning Budget to offset the costs of any grants made. For 2020 Ministries & Learning Committee agreed that this should be topped up by an additional £50 per year by the Synod as we believed that £200 was insufficient to cover the full costs for many courses with travel costs and other expenses taken into account.

But we also believed that this assistance should be extended to our Synod Recognised (SR) LPs as well, and so we have been offering grants of up to £250 per year for training.

However, for 2021 Education and Learning have offered to increase the amount Synods can reclaim for AA LPs by £100 for 2021 to £300. So to encourage Lay Preacher training at a time when we are becoming ever more aware of the role Lay Preachers play in our worship, we have agreed that Synod will continue to offer a "top up" of £50 for AA LPs, so AA LPs can claim up to £350 this year for training (with Synod able to claim back £300 from E&L). We have also agreed that SR LPs should continue to be extended the same financial help towards training by the Synod as AA LPs. As such, all Lay Preachers may apply for up to £350 for help towards training from the Synod in the usual way

Discipleship and Development Fund

The Discipleship Development Fund continues to be available to all lay people across the denomination. The Fund held at an Assembly level, but administered through Synods. An application form and a flier remains on the Synod Website (accessible under "Discipleship Development Fund" in the Document Library tab) with additional information about what the fund can be used for (Lay Preachers can also apply for this in addition to their usual LP grant, provided the help is for personal discipleship development rather than preacher training). A grant of up to £200 is available, and churches can also make application to the Fund for assistance with paying for events offering discipleship development.

Fixed Car Allowance

We reported last year regarding the rules we have in place across the denomination relating to the Fixed Car Allowance for part-time Stipendiary Ministers. The rules have been open to interpretation in two ways: Either, that each part time minister receives a full car allowance, or that they receive a proportion in relation to their scoping. Our report in the March 2020 Synod papers stated that whilst we believe that everyone should receive the full allowance. We had discovered that both interpretations had been used in the past and were still being applied in our Synod.

Following correspondence with Ministries Committee we have been advised that the interpretation of the guidance in the Plan for Partnership for the Fixed Car Allowance for part-time Ministers remains a matter for each Synod to apply themselves. As such we have agreed that part-time Stipendiary Ministers serving in Wessex Synod should receive the full car allowance.

Pastoral Supervision of Ministers and CRCWs

In the past Ministers and CRCWs have been required to take part in a process of Ministerial Accompanied Self Appraisal (MASA). A recommendation of the Past Case Review was that Ministers and CRCWs be required to follow a process of Pastoral Supervision instead of MASA, which Mission Council agreed to in July 2020.

This requirement has now been included in the updated Terms of Settlement templates which are available on the Synod website, and these updated templates are to be used by Interim Moderators and when Ministers and CRCWs are undergoing review.

Ministers and CRCWs have received correspondence concerning Pastoral Supervision and are reminded that it is their responsibility to arrange Pastoral Supervision for themselves. Mission Council recognised that it may take up to three years for Ministers to find suitable supervision, partly as a consequence of a shortage of those certified to offer Pastoral Supervision, but it is a requirement for Ministers and CRCWs to do so.

Deployment of Stipendiary Ministry within the URC.

In our report to the October Synod we focussed on the Deployment issue facing the URC currently and impacting us as a Synod. Each year the URC sets the quota of ministers for the whole church and divides it between the Synods, and we reported in October that Wessex happened to have filled its quota at a time when the number of Stipendiary Ministers available for deployment is falling. Whilst we do not know how many ministers may move out of the Synod in the next couple of years, we reported that we know that there are very few retirements in the immediate pipeline, and that consequently we will remain over our quota for the next few years. Thus, it could be some time before we are able to advertise any of our churches in transition.

A particular concern for us is that whilst most of our pastorates in the NE and NW Pastoral Areas have ministry most of our vacancies are in the SE and SW. Consequently, we reported that the Pastoral Committee Conveners and Development and Support Officers are planning to visit all our churches to discuss their ministry and mission, beginning with the vacant churches in the south.

Sadly the Coronavirus pandemic has impacted our visiting of pastorates to discuss their future Ministry and Mission, but we hope it may be possible to make progress in visiting pastorates over the next few months.

Graham Hoslett
Secretary of Ministries & Learning Committee
graham.hoslett1@outlook.com
February 2021

SILENCE & RETREATS GROUP REPORT

There are many and varied online resources on offer at present and I have listed a few below. I would be delighted to hear of others you think worth signposting to the rest of synod.

1. Some of you may be using 'Walking towards Easter Together' the lent material produced by the URC. Resources can be found online. By the time synod meets we will have walked much of that way but there is still time to build an Easter garden as a reflective activity.
https://urc.org.uk/images/Lent/Easter_Garden.pdf
2. The Centre for Ignatian Spirituality are offering 'a variety of experiences online during this time of uncertainty and change for us all' Details can be found at
<https://www.pathwaystogod.org/ignatian-spirituality-online>

One offering is a guided meditation every other Wednesday - follow the 'imagine' link or go directly to www.pathwaystogod.org/imagine where you will find this invitation:- "Join us for a guided meditation with the imagination: a chance to meet, listen and share with others, and a space of nourishment every two weeks, live on Zoom. Take time to pause, step off the hamster wheel of life for an hour, and tune into what grounds and roots you, into a deeper and wider perspective. In that pause, you might just discover something of who you are, what you deeply desire, and what the world and these times are calling you into.

Everyone is welcome – just bring your openness and curiosity, and of course your imagination!"

Join our live Zoom session every other Wednesday at 8pm (GMT)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83997700895> Meeting ID: 839 9770 0895

3. Engageworship offer Pause/Pray a collection of audio Bible reflections, featuring original music, guided prayers, and themes related to Bible passages and daily life. "We have imagined you putting on your headphones and taking a moment to be with God, wherever you find yourself. That might be as you wake up or go to sleep, on your commute as you go to work or school, or during a coffee break or lunch time. The reflections are of different lengths, so check to see what will work with the time you have available." These can be found at
<https://engageworship.org/pausepray>
4. The retreats association have a long list of resources and links to online quiet days and retreats from its member organisations and various retreat centres <http://www.retreats.org.uk/online-resources.php>

Alison Toplas

atoplas@hotmail.com

February 2021

URC (WESSEX) TRUST LIMITED REPORT

This report updates Synod since the last report and includes a summary of the decisions made at meetings of the Wessex Trust held on 26 November 2020 and 11 February 2021.

1. Trustees

At the Trust meeting on 11 February 2021, we elected Mr John Sinclair of Woking URC to be a Trustee and Director of the URC (Wessex) Trust Limited. We thank John for taking on this responsibility and we look forward to working with him.

As reported to previous Synod meetings, the Trustee body continues to seek new members. We would like to strengthen the Trust board with HR experience, but in general Trustees are not expected to have specialised knowledge: common sense, patience and a willingness to help local congregations are the key attributes.

2. Grants, loans and permissions

Under this heading I would remind Synod that, as reported to it in October of last year, the amount of money available for grants and loans in future will almost certainly be significantly smaller than has been the case for the past several years.

The Trust has made the following grants, loans and other commitments, and given permissions in the following matters. Unless otherwise stated, grants are made from the Church Mission Fund, and loans are made from the Trust's General Fund and are repayable over five years with interest at 3% per year.

- **Abingdon: Trinity Church:** A further grant of £15,000, funded by two annual grants of £7,500, was agreed towards the Trinity Learning project.
- **Commitment for Life:** Grants totalling £24,218.04 were given from the General Fund match funding contributions already made by churches in Wessex from July to December 2020.
- **Dorchester: United Church:** At the request of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, permission was given to improve access to principal loft storage space by the forming of a new internal doorway and fixed staircase to replace a pull down loft ladder, and by adaptations of the loft roof above the new stairs.
- **Gosport: St. Columba:** A grant of up to £18,000, funded by annually reducing grants of up to £7,000, £6,000 and £5,000 respectively, was agreed towards the costs of employing a half-time Children and Families Worker to a new permanent role that supports and extends the current work of the church in those areas.
- **Guildford: Westborough:** At the request of the local church the commencement of the previously agreed grant over 3 years towards the costs of employing a part-time Lay Pastoral / Outreach worker was postponed for a year.
- **Henley-on-Thames: Christ Church:** A grant of up to £3,750 was agreed towards repairs and refurbishment of the wood block floor in the Pither Hall.
- **Inter-Synod Resource Sharing:** In line with Resolution 2 from the Trust's report to the Synod meeting in October of last year, an increase in the grant offer from £100,000 to £110,000 was retrospectively agreed from the General Fund to support the URC's Inter-Synod Resource Sharing for 2021.
- **Minister's Car Allowance:** At the request of the Synod Executive, it was agreed that a minister who had only been receiving a part car allowance should have it backdated as a full allowance, subject to payroll deductions. The grant will be made from the General Fund.
- **Ministry and Mission Fund:** A grant of £20,104 was made from the General Fund to the Ministry and Mission Fund to make up the shortfall to the end of December 2020 against Wessex's offer for the year of £2 million.
- **Mission Development Group:** At the request of the Synod Executive, it was agreed to release grant funding of about £107,786 for a Church Regeneration Pilot Scheme at Oxford, Collinwood Road from the £200,000 previously set aside at the request of Synod in the Special Reserve Fund in a Pioneer Ministry Fund.

- **Retired Ministers' Housing Society (RMHS):** At the invitation of the RMHS, it was agreed to donate from the General Fund to the RMHS the Trust's incongruous 7.27% share (recently valued at £10,687) in a property in Preston, Lancashire currently occupied by a retired minister.
- **Southampton: Isaac Watts:** Permission was given for the replacement of a window on the east elevation of the church with a fire exit door to improve emergency evacuation.
- **South Western Area Ministry:** It was retrospectively agreed to pay 25% of Revd Peter Southcombe's stipend, allowances and expenses from the General Fund from the commencement of his area ministry to the date of the meeting on 26 November 2020 and until he retires or his Terms of Settlement are changed.
- **Swanage:** A grant of up to £32,250 and a loan of up to £19,500 was agreed towards the costs of improvements to the worship area and kitchen.

3. Other property matters

- **Extraordinary provision of retirement housing:** The purchase of a property for £185,000 was exchanged and completed on 16 December 2020 and following the completion of some agreed refurbishment works, the management of the property will be handed over to the Retired Ministers' Housing Society for a one-off extraordinary provision of retirement housing.
- **Listed Buildings Advisory Committee (LBAC):** In order to foster good communications and improve shared understanding of how each body works, Stuart MacLean now attends LBAC meetings.
- **Manses:** One manse has been prepared for occupation by a minister at 7 High Tree Drive, Reading. Four manses have been let at: 3 St. Cecalias Gardens, Bridport; 16 St. Martins Drive, Weybridge; 17 Burnham Wood, Fareham; and, 31 Paddock Garden, Lymington.
- **Registration of church buildings for same-sex marriage:** The General Register Office has now concluded the delayed registration of Maidenhead.
- **Property disposals:**
- **Marsh Gibbon:** The church had decided to close but is now reflecting further on its future.

4. Finance

- **2019 and 2020 Audits:** The 2019 audit process was painful and protracted, only completing in November 2020. This was not because of any underlying concerns or problems about our finances, but because of procedural and reporting issues. These are being addressed, and we have some reason to hope that they will be largely or completely resolved before the 2020 audit starts in mid-April.
- **Annual presentations by investment managers:** The annual presentations in November by the Trust's two principal investment managers and their respective question and answer sessions were also attended by Revd Tim Clarke on behalf of the Church and Society Group. Our Investment Committee continues to keep the underlying performance of all funds under regular review and is currently reviewing the Trust's Investment Policy with a view to bringing proposals to our next meeting in April.
- **Church Mission and Special Reserve Funds:** After the grant offers made since the last meeting of Synod detailed above and following the expiry and withdrawal of some other grant offers as applicable, and after the transfer of £50,000 from the General Fund to the Church Mission Fund as agreed by Synod at its October 2020 meeting, the Church Mission Fund stands at £34,415 and the Special Reserve Fund is at £712,100 (of which £92,214 is set aside for the Mission Development Group).
- **COVID-19 loss of income claims under Congregational Church Choice policies incepted or renewed before 1 September 2020 (please note that claims will not be considered for policies incepted or renewed after this date unless Exclusion 8. – Communicable Disease is not present):** There have been a number of recent media reports following the Supreme Court delivering its judgement in the Financial Conduct Authority's business interruption insurance test case. The ruling confirmed that some COVID-19 related loss of income claims should be

considered and potentially met by insurers, dependent on the wording of the policy cover. The supreme court judgement has provided a framework by which Congregational Insurance can now begin to look to meet these claims and Congregational Insurance have appointed Williams Pitt Loss Adjusters, a specialist firm, to handle these claims on their behalf. Please obtain further information on making a claim from Stuart MacLean trust@urcwessex.org.uk

- **COVID-19 response:** Take-up of emergency financial support for churches has not been significant since I reported to the October Synod. However, it is clear from conversations with churches that there is likely to be more demand for support in the coming months. I would like to reassure Synod that the emergency funding scheme is still open, the application process is simple, and decisions can be made quickly by Trust Officers. Please contact the Deputy Convener, Ray Dunnett trustdeconvener@urcwessex.org.uk or me if your church is considering applying for support.

The emergency funding takes the form of loans in the first instance. These loans will remain interest- and repayment-free until at least July 2021 - and they may in the future be converted to grants. That decision has not yet been taken, but I would like to emphasise to Synod that it is not the intention of the Trust to burden churches with debt when they are already under financial stress.

- **Inter-Synod Resource Sharing:** As in previous years, we anticipate bringing a resolution to the Autumn meeting of Synod in respect of Wessex's contribution to Inter-Synod Resource Sharing for 2022.
- **Financial outlook:** The Trust's investment income has so far proved more resilient than we had feared, but we face continued uncertainties over the impact of COVID-19 on the Ministry and Mission Fund, both for Wessex and for the whole of the URC. The other significant factor in our financial outlook is the URC Ministers' Pension Fund deficit reduction process. I refer Synod to my presentation on this matter.
- **United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund deficit funding:** I will brief Synod separately on this item, with a short presentation.

5. Other matters

- **Appointment of a new Synod Treasurer:** Peter Stevenson is due to be standing down at this Synod meeting from his extended term of office as Synod Treasurer. We are extremely grateful to Peter for the extra year he has so generously given us - but we now *very urgently* need to find his successor. Nominations or any related questions about the role description that has been prepared should in the first instance be addressed to Karen Bell clerk@urcwessex.org.uk and Stuart MacLean trust@urcwessex.org.uk respectively. Please give this your prayerful attention.
- **Church Accounts / Charitable status of churches:** The government department responsible for dealing with the Charity Commission (DCMS) has indicated that it will be extending the temporary regulations under which most of our churches have charitable status without being registered as charities.¹ Whilst the new extension means that the final deadline will be March 2031, the Charity Commission and DCMS will work with the URC and other denominations to produce a plan to register churches in a phased manner over the course of this ten-year period - not all at the last minute.

For charitable registration and subsequently as registered charities, churches will need to produce and file annual accounts in a form approved by the Charity Commission. **In this connection I would remind all churches in the Synod that they should already be forwarding a copy of their accounts each year to the Synod and Trust offices. In preparation for meeting the legal requirements of**

¹ The Charities (Exception from Registration) Regulations 1996 gave a temporary exception of certain religious charities from the duty to be registered under section 3(2) of the Charities Act 1993. This temporary exception has been extended on a number of occasions and under the provisions of subsequent Charities Acts, most recently in 2014 in a Statutory Instrument (UKSI 2014.242) which expires on 31st March 2021.

the Charity Commission, churches are strongly encouraged to get into the habit of sending us their accounts every year. Template accounts are available.

- **Grants, loans and permissions application process:** My work on the reshaping of our procedures into an overall policy for grants, loans and permissions has remained on hold due to a lack of capacity.
- **Trust Office:** Mrs Jim Butcher and Mr Ralph Barnes have successfully completed their six-month probationary periods. We are very grateful to them both for their engagement and commitment, especially given the difficulties imposed by COVID-secure measures and lockdowns.

All staff have continued to show resilience and commitment, as working patterns have continued to evolve and adjust in response to the COVID situation. I would like to invite Synod to join me in putting our appreciation and thanks on record.

Romilly Micklem, Convener

trustconvener@urcwessex.org.uk

February 2021

MINISTRY & MISSION FUND REPORT

2020 outturn

Wessex Synod ended the year contributing £2,006,320.88 so more or less on-target. The final actual top-up from Wessex Trust to achieve this outcome was £20,104. We give grateful thanks to all our churches who continued to give priority to their M&M contribution despite the very challenging circumstances of the pandemic.

Total receipts from all Synods were £568,413 below promise. 4 Synods fully met their promise and 3 others only marginally missed it.

Where churches find they are forced reduce their payments, we normally obtain a copy of their accounts and current calculations in order to agree this. Only one church has failed to do so which may imply their finances are not in good order.

2021

Our offer is £1,950,000 (2020 £2,000,000) The Trust has indicated a willingness to again guarantee this figure. A total of 14 churches have increased their offer by 2% for 2021.

January contributions were in line with expectations. Clearly much will depend on how the situation develops during the year. We continue to be available to advise and support churches when requested.

Deployment review

We will be included in discussions as work develops. Any changes to scopings will undoubtedly have a significant impact on future M&M and may require a review of the current Synod formula.

P Pay

C MacBean

mm@urcwessex.org.uk

February 2021

MISSION AND OUTREACH REPORT

There follow notes of business items from the meeting of the Assembly Mission Committee from 4th to 5th February and individual reports from our three Synod Mission groups. The hope is that this will combine to highlight both our involvement in denomination-wide work and also the more local Synod Focus. Please do let me, and/or the three Synod report-writers have any questions or comments in advance of the meeting Synod if at all possible to ensure that we can offer a researched reply

Feedback items from the General Assembly Mission Committee

The Assembly Mission Committee is made up of representatives from each Synod, together with the staff members from our Mission Department. It was a privilege to attend this meeting on your behalf and I will gladly take any questions or comments back to the committee from Wessex. As ever, our meeting covered a very wide range of matters, a summary of which are noted below.

Please contact me with any queries or comments on dso-n@urcwessex.org.uk

Nuclear ban treaty: On 22 January 2021, the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) came into force, making nuclear weapons illegal in international law. However, the UK and other nuclear states still refuse to engage with the process. A [new short video statement from multiple faith leaders](#) celebrates this significant milestone in the campaign against nuclear weapons, of which the URC has been a strong supporter over many years. People are encouraged to take this opportunity to ask their banks and pensions providers to [stop financing nuclear weapons](#).

Reset the Debt: We continue to highlight the crisis facing millions of families in Britain who have been forced into unavoidable debt as a result of Covid-19, and to call for a 'jubilee' debt write-off to be part of the solution. Find out more and join the call at www.resetthedebt.uk.

International aid budget: Following the government's decision to renege on the UK's commitment to devote 0.7% of national income to addressing global poverty and the [emergency resolution on this subject at the November Mission Council](#), ecumenical briefing materials are being prepared to help church members to raise the matter with MPs. They will be available shortly [here](#).

Climate Sunday: The UN Climate Summit being hosted in Glasgow in November 2021 offers a major opportunity for action on the climate emergency – locally, nationally and internationally. The URC supports and commends [Climate Sunday](#), an ecumenical initiative which is resourcing local churches to hold a 'Climate Sunday' service between now and September, commit to action, and speak up for a cleaner, greener, fairer future.

Please pray for everyone working towards a more peaceful and just society and for those experiencing hardship and distress as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rural Mission

Covid-19 has changed and will continue to affect churches. Mission Committee was pleased to hear that in the third 'lockdown' many rural churches have risen to the challenge and have adapted to the new situation. Services have taken place online where possible, by phone in some cases and service outlines have been delivered through people's letterboxes. Innovative ways have been found to support communities in terms of isolation and with practical help through food banks etc. If you have information to share on how your church is coping during the pandemic, then please contact the URC's National Rural Officer, the [Revd Elizabeth Clark](#).

Access to broadband is a continuing problem in some rural areas and this has been underlined during the lockdowns. Improved access to good reliable broadband is essential for rural businesses. It can also be key in helping people stay in touch especially in isolated areas.

The Arthur Rank Centre has been involved in a project around isolation and loneliness and now offers a comprehensive list of resources, including a table talk resource to enable discussions and a dedicated [page on their website](#).

Please pray for those experiencing isolation and loneliness and those working to combat these issues.

Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations

The toolkit to accompany 'A Flexible Framework for Local Unity in Mission' was launched in October. This guide to lighter touch ecumenical engagement can be accessed [here](#).

We now have updated model constitutions available for Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs). Anyone wanting to know more about the new model constitutions, please contact your Synod ecumenical officer and if additional help is required then please email [Philip Brooks](#).

Free Churches Group (FCG) has just launched its report, [The Church and Social Cohesion](#). It looks at the churches' grass roots contribution to social cohesion, offering several practical recommendations for how churches can maximize their potential to foster social cohesion in the community.

We are working on a joint publication with the Congregational Federation recognising 50 years since the formation of both our churches in 1972. We will be appealing to local churches for contributions of reflections, stories and hopes for the future to compile this booklet. If you have something to share, please contact [Philip Brooks](#).

The Faith and Order committee, working with URC Communications, has launched a series of ten short and easy to read booklets entitled *What do we believe about...*. The topics cover: *The Church, God, Jesus, The Holy Spirit, The Future, Holy Communion, Baptism, Salvation, Creation, Being Human*.

These can be downloaded [here](#).

Walking the Way: living the life of Jesus today

New resources for Lent: if your church has worked with the Holy Habits book, you may be interested in the Bible Reading Fellowship's new [Holy Habits: Following Jesus](#) resource. This can be used at any time of the year but is particularly useful for Lent. Together with children's and youth work, education and learning and others to produce [Walking towards Lent together](#), an intergenerational pack of resources to support households and families on their Lent journey.

The steering group is organising a series of online events to bring together groups and individuals from across the denomination with previous involvement or experience in the field of online church and discipleship development to build up a network for sharing wisdom and good practice. It is hoped that this, in turn, will help the Church to address wider questions about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, and what that looks like in online environments.

Global and Intercultural Ministries

Legacies of Slavery (LoS): Autumn 2020 saw the successful launch of the [LoS webpage](#) with materials geared towards Black History Month (October). The page will shortly be revamped, featured resources being placed under the headings originally agreed for the task group's work – Apology, Reparations/Restorative Justice, White Privilege, plus Anti-Racist Living – emphasising the commitment made by Mission Council in November 2020. The task group has devised a new initiative proposed to be launched in February – [Black History Monthly](#) will aim to keep issues on the agenda throughout the year, rather than having an October focus only.

Please pray for past and present victims of slavery and for those trying to discern remedies and solutions to all inequalities.

Partners in Mission: Please continue to pray for our Partners in Mission: Alison Gibbs working in Zambia, Yufen Chen (Lumen, London), So Young Jung (Kingston and New Malden, London), plus Selena Tai (Manchester).

CWM resource: CWM has produced a new prayer resource for 2021, called Sundays with CWM. You can download a digital copy [here](#). For a printed copy, please contact [Carole Sired](#).

Commitment for Life

Though there were concerns that lockdown might have seriously affected Commitment for Life income, Commitment for Life congregations still managed to raise over 75% of the income of the previous year. On behalf of our partners in Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, Palestine and Central America thank you.

Thinking of becoming a Commitment for Life church and offering regular prayer and other support to Christian Aid partners in Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, Israel-Palestine or Central America? Then look out for new events planned by Kevin Snyman and Suzanne Pearson. These include a Zoom-to-Zimbabwe event on 9 March 2021, and a Zoom meet-up with Helen Howe (National Church Liaison Officer at Christian Aid) for all URC members with an interest in Christian Aid. For more information contact [Suzanne](#).

Please can I add my prayer request for all of the Mission department staff and all who serve us in wider roles. They, like us, are living and working in very testing times.

Ray Stanyon
Wessex Synod's Mission Committee Representative
dso-n@urcwessex.org.uk
February 2021

MISSION DEVELOPMENT GROUP

On-going discussions

There is no doubt that lockdown has hindered development in some of the work that we are involved in, but that doesn't mean that it's not on our agenda, not that it's not frustrating. Not as much progress has been made as we had hoped in the projects concerning Welborne Garden Village (here there are government delays in decision making regarding the motorway junction), Mission House Poole, and Hedge End regeneration.

Good to hear

We are looking to see if we can build a 'good news' bank of stories for churches to use as a resource. This isn't a place where we say 'our church did very well to keep going in lockdown', but possibly a place on the Synod website where churches could go to get resources for their church life, maybe online resources that they have created that other churches could use.

This is to help give churches the ability to think about how it can continue to be missional in an online way, and in a virtual and /physical way in the future.

We will keep you posted!

Synod Remit agreement

As requested by the Synod Clerk, we are reviewing our remit. We are reflecting on clarifying some of this, which currently stands as

Mission Development Group

The responsibilities of the Mission Development Group are:

- *To take a broad view of the Synod and identify new mission opportunities;*
- *To monitor indicators of congregational health and growth;*
- *To suggest mission strategies to the Synod Meeting;*
- *To support the Synod in 'growing the church';*
- *To enable development of new mission projects;*
- *To identify and support new church plants;*
- *To give support to local churches in their mission;*
- *To support and encourage Fresh Expressions of church;*
- *To support the development of Pioneer ministries;*
- *To administer and encourage the Small Grants Scheme for mission initiatives.*

Collinwood Road Synod Post

We are delighted that the work here has been progressed to the point that the Wessex Trust has approved Synod Executive's request to release some of the Pioneer Church Planting Fund to appoint a full time worker for three years based at Oxford Collinwood Road. The Mission Development Group are continuing to work hard with the church and the Synod Employment Advisor to ensure a good appointment to be made at the most effective time.

Synod YouTube channel

We are also aware that there have been many good online discussions and talks that have really found a place in church life. Some of these talks have been used for personal use, but we are looking to see if we can have a Synod Mission YouTube page where talks could be shared, and then churches could use them for Elders meetings, church away days etc. Again, we will keep you informed! This does not mean that our work will be solely online.

Wrap up

We know that there have been good stories about churches being missional through worship, and through connections in their communities over the last year. There is great encouragement here: the church of God is not locked-down!

Thanks be to God!

David Downing, Convener
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CHURCH & SOCIETY GROUP REPORT

The work of the Group and its members continues despite the Pandemic, but we have also been thinking about how better to address what we need to do.

Seeking the Views of the Synod

The Group has carried out a survey to gauge what is of concern to people and where they get their information. This was done knowing well that many individuals and churches are already actively engaged in the issues important to them, and there will be lots of common ground in what people care about, and so we are looking to share information as well. We are greatly indebted to Karen and Deborah in the Synod office for taking the efforts of the group and making the questionnaire a reality, and also for putting together a summary of the responses, which have still to be worked on. Thank you too to all those who have thoughtfully responded. This does all seem to provide a very useful snapshot of just where we are at the moment and we will be sharing the results, once they are digested, very soon. One aspect which we will be addressing is the surprising number of people who are not aware of the JPIT (Joint Public Issues Team) and the excellent work it does.

<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=Joint+Public+Issues+Team>

Ongoing work

There is work going on within the Synod to encourage the use of electric cars, thinking about the practicalities of putting electric car charging points on Church premises or encouraging people in other ways to “go electric” – this as part of concerted efforts to promote the whole Green agenda through the Synod. We continue to hear of efforts towards becoming a Fairtrade Synod, checking on the Fairtrade status of individual Churches. A recent article from the group on ethical investment has got people thinking. We hear there are encouraging things going on about Racial Justice. We talk about Foodbanks and Universal Credit and how to make our world a better world.

How We Meet our Objectives, And What Do We Need to Do This Better.

But the group also experiences frustration, never sure how much people take in of what we are doing and highlighting. Our recent Zoom meetings have addressed this, asking ourselves whether we are just a group of interested parties coming together to share our own interests. That would not be a fair criticism, but we did wonder whether we would be more effective if we concentrated on specific topics or issues to which a variety of our “specialisms” can be applied? We concluded that this could be based around the six Hopes of the JPIT – Joint Public Issues Team, which cover adequately everything that we are about. They are:

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

David Wrighton

Secretary

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WORLD CHURCH GROUP REPORT

The World Church Group reported to the October 2020 Synod. That report included an update on the relief funds raised to support the work of our partners in Lusaka Presbytery, the cancellation of the 2020 *Le Weekend* due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the visit to the Synod and to Westminster College of Deaconess Albertina Muwowo Mwambazi, amongst other matters.

The current report will therefore concentrate on activities since October. The Group is responsible for maintaining the Synod's two international partnerships, with the Lusaka Presbytery of the United Church of Zambia, and with the Nord Normandy region of the Église Protestante Unie de France. In addition, the Group maintains links with the Council for World Mission.

Zambia

A total of around £31,000 was sent to support the work of Lusaka Presbytery. The funds were used to support the ministerial fund of the United Church of Zambia. The finances of the United Church had been very badly affected by the pandemic, and this support was very much appreciated by our Zambian partners.

Churches have now reopened in Zambia, so the situation there has now largely returned to normal.

Bishop Rodwell Chomba, with whom we have had a very strong relationship, has now completed his term as Presbytery Bishop, and has returned to local ministry. His successor as Bishop is Lordwell Siame, who has previously participated in the exchange programme with Wessex.

Given the position with Covid-19, exchange visits between the UK and Zambia are not possible, but there are opportunities to participate in Zambian worship on-line. Details of how to access these have been published in the February Synod Newsletter.

The Group is looking at how the link with Zambia should be developed in the future once travel resumes, perhaps creating exchange opportunities for lay people as well as ministers.

France

With the Covid-19 pandemic, a combination of travel restrictions and the very tight restrictions on meetings in France make it impossible to consider any visits in the short-term. There will therefore not be any *Le Weekend* visit this spring. However, discussions are underway about whether some kind of event may be possible later in the year, either physically if restrictions are eased or on-line.

CWM

The CWM Prayer Handbook for 2021 is now available on-line at https://issuu.com/cwmission/docs/sundays_with_cwm_2021/4 . For each Sunday it includes reflections on the lectionary and requests for prayer from our partner churches in CWM around the world.

Convener

Unfortunately, Revd. Ana Gobledale has had to stand down as convener of the World Church Group, though she remains an active member of the Group. The Group will therefore need to find a new convener.

Philip Bonnier

Secretary: World Church Group: secretary@urccollinwood.org.uk

CHILDREN'S & YOUTH WORK COMMITTEE REPORT

Continuing in lockdown

CYDOs continue their sterling work during lockdown to support local churches and their workers with children, young people and families. They have contributed heavily to the resources available to churches nationally during this period.

Training activities continue online. One of the benefits of this style of delivery is a reduced need for travel by participants. Once restrictions ease, online events will continue to be part of the mix of training opportunities offered.

Synod Day 2022

Synod Day (May 7th 2022. Theme: URC 50th Jubilee) is still being planned. The organising group hopes to make a site visit to the venue after Easter this year. Keep it in your diaries!

Children and Youth Friendly Church Scheme

The URC's revised Children and Youth Friendly Church Scheme (note the wider scope!) has been launched and CYDOs ran a launch at an area gathering in February. A number of churches are due to renew their accreditation, and the CYDOs will accompany them on this journey. We encourage all churches to consider undertaking the new scheme, which is more engaging than a mere tick-box exercise. Even those (perhaps especially those) churches with few or no children and youth contacts can benefit. We recognise the importance of keeping the Children and Youth Friendly Synod scheme on our agenda for further work at Synod level.

Faith development in the home

We are partnering with the Bible Reading Fellowship to provide support for churches working with parents and enabling faith development in the home. Watch out for further announcements.

Other 2021 priorities

- Preparing churches for reopening/relaunching (revision, relaunch, and recruit volunteers)
- Partnership working (Promote projects, build ongoing strategic relationships)
- Discipleship and intergenerational ministry
- Young Carers as part of the heroes and villain's theme

John Downing, Convener
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SAFEGUARDING REFERENCE GROUP REPORT

Developments

Sharon Barr continues in the role of Synod Safeguarding Officer, she covers all areas of the synod, working part time. She case holds all referral from local churches and supports the safeguarding coordinators in churches to manage these. Support and advice has adapted quickly this year to ensure that the restrictions and risks from the pandemic has not impacted the churches response to safeguarding. Support being offered for offender management, allegations in churches, concerns for adults at risks to safer recruitment concerns has continued.

Good Practice 5 continues to be the safeguarding guidance document for the denomination with additional appendix and documents being added this year to reflect the change in safeguarding due to the pandemic. All guidance can be found on this link. <https://urc.org.uk/clergy-and-office-holders/safeguarding.html> Please take time to read these documents and ask yourselves 'As a church are we as safe as we possibly can be?'

The URC Safeguarding Strategic Plan was officially launched this year with a symposium in October 2020. The event brought together those who oversee and lead safeguarding arrangements in local churches and synods to discuss how the plan will affect the life of the Church. The event and Strategic Plan can be found on the Wessex website and via this link. <https://urc.org.uk/safeguarding-symposium>

Training

The CYDO's, Phil Ray and Ruth White along with Sharon Barr have continued to offer Safeguarding training via Zoom. This has been a great alternative when face to face courses have not been possible. This year 185 people have attended safeguarding related courses.

The new Training Framework paper which is going to Mission Council this year should see the development of further training to enhance that already being delivered in the synod including advanced training and specialist course in area such as Domestic Abuse and Offender Management.

Safeguarding Reference Group

This year has seen a change in the membership of the SRG with 2 new members being welcomed onto the group. We now have the Synod Moderator as a core member along with an experienced safeguarding professional who is independent to any safeguarding role within the church or synod, who can be a critical friend to our practice and implementation of policy within the synod and local churches.

The group met quarterly with the purpose of having oversight of the safeguarding issues within the Synod, the team also update policy, share news from the National Safeguarding Advisory group and plan the roll out of changes across the Synod. They have begun to look at the implementation of the Denominations Safeguarding Strategic Plan across the Synod.

Sharon Barr
Safeguarding Officer
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SYNOD YOUTH EXECUTIVE REPORT

We would like to start our report by introducing our two newest members of the SYE Kailey and Maya (who is now our Youth Executive Rep). They joined us this year after being voted on at our November event.

This year we have managed to run four events over zoom two being SYE weekends and another two separate events, one on Pentecost and the other on Diwali the Indian festival of light. We have noticed over the past year an increase in attendance by young people to our events as holding them online makes it more convenient for people to join as there is no restriction on travelling.

At the beginning of each year in our February meeting we like to plan our events for the whole year ahead of time so that we are prepared and know exactly what we need to do in advance so that everything can run smoothly. We've got three events coming up this year, the first is our open weekend on the 22nd May. We are hoping that this will be in person and we are planning on having some Makaton training and exploring our time over lockdown and how we can reconnect with each other and ourselves. Our second event will be in November, we have decided to focus on the theme of celebration, as we're hoping that we will be back to a sense of normality and can see each other in person and celebrate the new normal together.

Unfortunately, last year we could not run our trip to Greenbelt. We had planned to offer the opportunity for 18+ youth in the church to come along to Greenbelt with us. They would have the freedom to do as they pleased but we would be there as a support network and for someone that they could talk to. We had also planned on having breakfast with each other every day so that we could touch base and make sure everyone was okay. We are hoping that Greenbelt will happen this summer, if in the unfortunate situation it is cancelled again, we are hoping to host either a day event if we are allowed in person gatherings or another online event to give these young people the opportunity to meet and share their faith together.

On the theme of events and having to convert to being online this year, Youth Assembly could not go ahead, instead we had youth disassembled. This was an online event on the Saturday and Sunday evenings. On the Saturday we had a comedian and a band do half an hour slots, we also had breakout rooms so that we were still able to talk to the young people from across the country. On the Sunday evening we had a live worship which was also broadcasted live on Facebook. During this it was announced to us that the moderator and moderator elect of Youth Assembly would carry on to the next year as we were unable to hold nominations for the next moderator elect. We then went out into breakout rooms where you could either do craft together, have a Bible study, or have discussions. This was a clever and thoughtful alternative rather than just cancelling the event altogether.

We have learned over the past year that online participation and communication is becoming a vital part of society. We would love that when everything starts to go back to normal and we can start having in person events again, we keep the online participation available to people who cannot make it to the live event. One way that we have seen online events being beneficial to the URC, is for the isolated members (this may be students or anyone that has moved away from their hometown) still being able to be a part of their church. One of our members was away at uni at the beginning of the first lockdown last year, but with online services they felt that they were still a part of the community back home in church. **Therefore we urge Synod to continue these online availabilities so that we can keep in touch with the people that cannot be with us physically.**

We are also wishing to extend our online persona and social media communication more. We have an Instagram set up and we also have a Facebook page of which our communications officer James oversees.

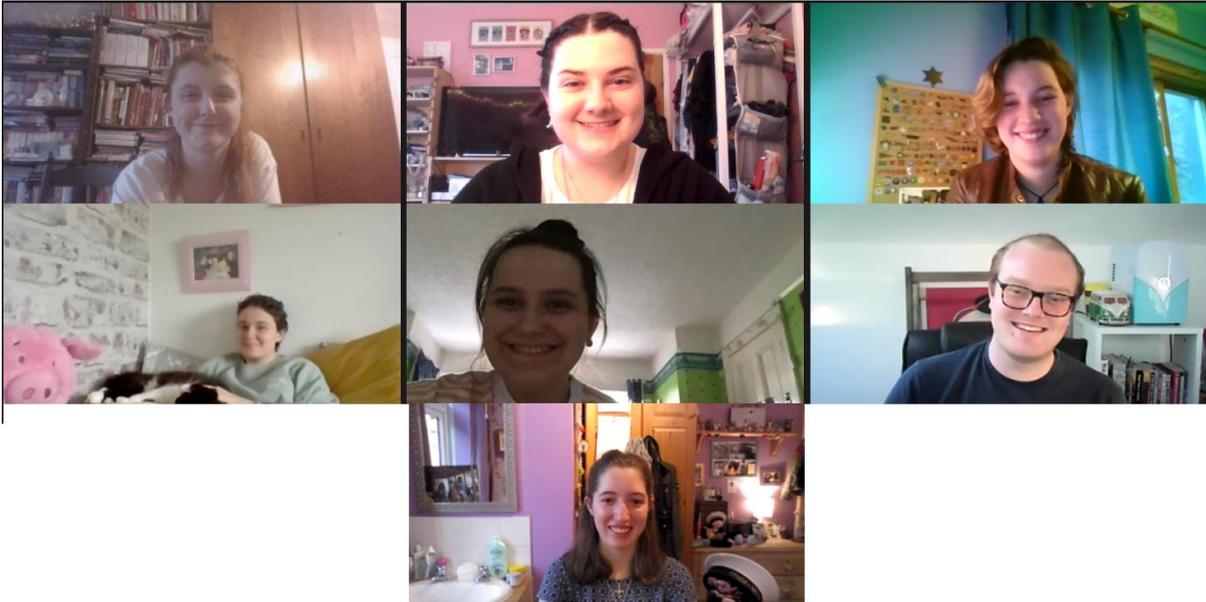
Thank you for reading.

The Wessex Synod Youth Exec

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Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/Wessex-URC-Youth-1033310330104539>

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