

# Downing Place URC, Cambridge



**Saturday 9th March 2024**

**10.30am – 4.00pm**



## Synod Papers



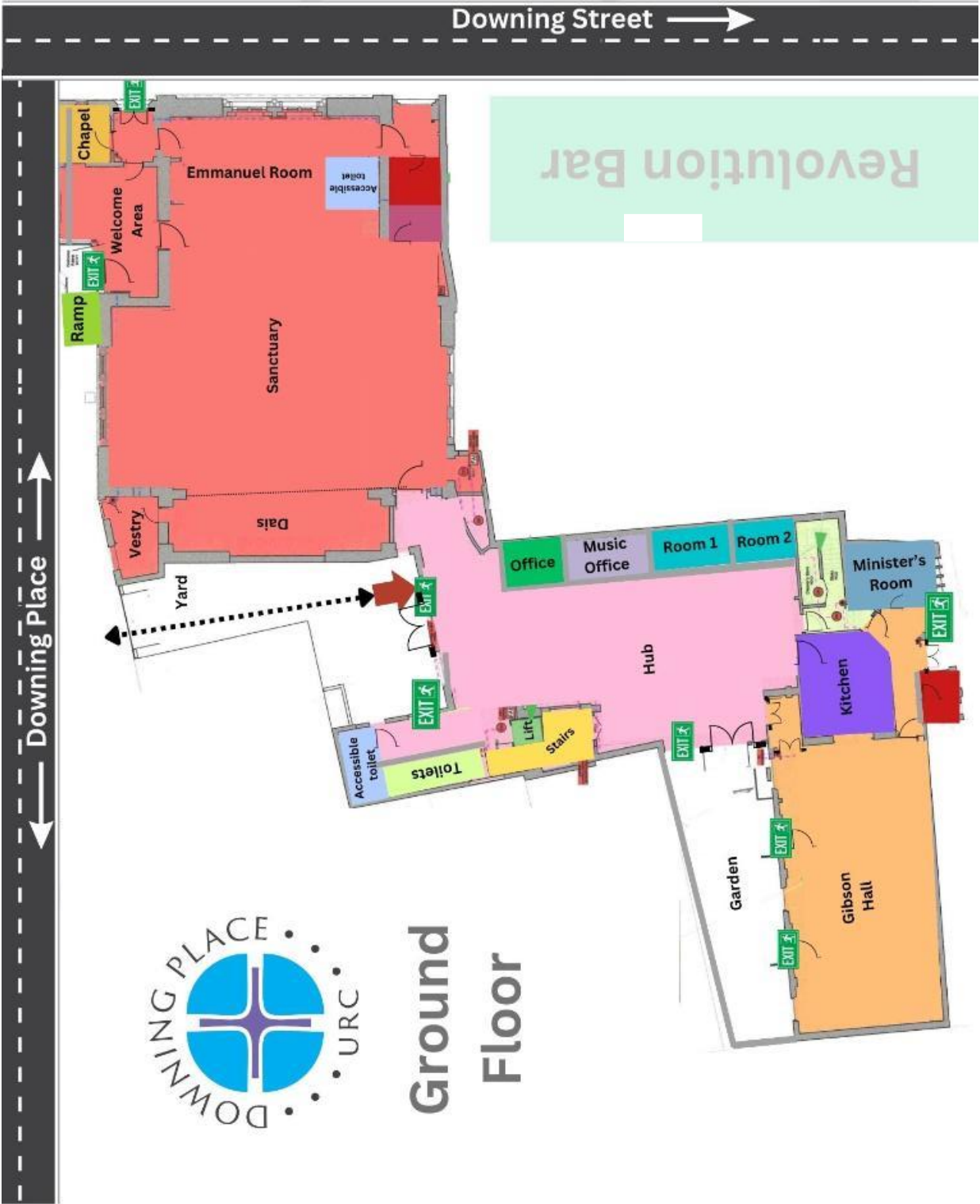
The  
United  
Reformed  
Church

Eastern Synod



**[www.urceastern.org.uk](http://www.urceastern.org.uk)**

# John Lewis



## Contents

<b>Agenda</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Welcome Letter</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Clerk Report</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Eastern Synod Appointments .....	6
Synod Treasurer .....	7
United Reformed Church (Eastern Province) Trust .....	9
Environmental Policy – Implementation Plan.....	10
Church Closure Process .....	14
<b>Mission &amp; Discipleship Committee Report</b> .....	<b>24</b>
Faith in Action Forum - UPDATE .....	25
<b>Pastoral Committee Report</b> .....	<b>27</b>
Principles of Mission Partnership – amendment.....	27
Lay Presidency at the Sacraments .....	28
Northstowe Church Network.....	30
Consultations .....	31
Synod Accredited Local Leaders.....	31
Mission Partnership Call Process.....	31
<b>Resources Committee Report</b> .....	<b>32</b>
Synod Administration Fund.....	35
Church Life and Mission Fund .....	36
Property Policy.....	37
Synod Manse Scheme.....	41
<b>The URC Eastern Synod Meeting - Minutes</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<b>Directions to Downing Place URC, Cambridge, CB2 3EL</b> .....	<b>54</b>

The following resolutions are placed before Synod for discussion and decision:

<b>Resolution 1</b> Synod appoints the following and encourages names to be offered for the vacant posts. ....	6
<b>Resolution 2</b> Synod confirms the following as directors of the Synod Trust.....	9
<b>Resolution 3</b> Synod adopts the implementation plan for our Environmental Policy. ....	9
<b>Resolution 4</b> Synod adopts the Church Closure Process and commends it to local churches.....	9
<b>Resolution 5</b> Synod agrees to amend our Principles of Mission Partnership accordingly. ....	28
<b>Resolution 6</b> Synod adopts the Lay Presidency at the Sacraments policy. ....	30
<b>Resolution 7</b> Synod gives thanks for the creation of the Northstowe Church Network and instructs the Clerk to prepare a General Assembly resolution to receive Northstowe Church Network (LEP) as a local church of the United Reformed Church. ....	30
<b>Resolution 8</b> Synod receives the Synod Administration Fund and the Church Life and Mission Fund reports.....	32
<b>Resolution 9</b> Synod adopts the revised Property Policy .....	32
<b>Resolution 10</b> Synod adopts the Synod Manse Scheme .....	33

## Agenda

- 10.00 am *Refreshments in the Hall*
- 10.30 am Constitution of Synod  
Opening Worship led by Downing Place URC
- 10.50 am New Members, including newly accredited lay preachers and commissioned local leaders.  
Apologies for Absence and other Notices  
Appointment of Tellers  
Minutes of Synod meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023  
Matters Arising, if any
- 11.00 am Mission & Discipleship Committee Report – Trevor Hahn
- 11.15am Helen Stephens, A Rocha Church Relations Manager: Eco-Church
- 11.45 am Roo Stewart, URC Programme Officer for Church and Society: Reaching Net Zero – steps to success.
- 12.15pm Environmental Policy – Implementation Plan – Synod Clerk
- 12.30pm Clerk Report – David Coaker
- 12.45pm Eco Church (local example)
- 12.50 pm Notices before lunch
- Lunch served in the Gibson Hall. Bookstall in Rooms 1 and 2 off the Hub.  
Expenses from the Registration Hatch in the Hub **between 1 - 1.30pm.***
- 2.00 pm Youth and Children Update - Nicola Grieves  
Pastoral Committee Report – Anne Sardeson  
Eco Church (local example)  
Resources Committee Report – Faith Paulding
- 3.30 pm Closing Worship led by the Moderator, Revd Lythan Nevard
- 4.00 pm *Close, Refreshments and Depart*

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein

Psalm 24:1 ESV

## Welcome Letter

Dear Member of Synod,

This mailing contains the papers for the next Synod Meeting, which takes place at Downing Place URC on Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2024.



The meeting will be livestreamed on Youtube and can be found on the Downing Place site: <https://youtube.com/live/iUB00luuJB4>

A floor plan is on page 2, and directions to the church are set out on the final page.

The Synod will commence at **10.30am**, with refreshments served from 10am. Lunch will be from 1 to 2pm. Closing worship (led by the Moderator) will be at 3.30pm and Synod will adjourn for tea at 4pm.

The words for the hymns to be used will be projected and large print sheets will also be available. Please speak to one of the stewards when you arrive if you would prefer to use the sheets.

We thank the minister, Revd Nigel Uden, and members at Downing Place for their welcome to us and for their assistance in the preparation for the day.

The focus of our agenda is the Environment.

We will hear from Helen Stephens, A Rocha Church Relations Manager about Eco-Church and Roo Stewart, URC Programme Officer for Church and Society about Reaching Net Zero – steps to success; and gather for fellowship, worship and the business of our Synod.

As always, the Synod Committee Convenors and I will present our reports and be available to answer questions, but to ensure that our meeting progresses with reasonable speed, **please table any questions to them in advance** of the Synod Meeting. To facilitate this, their contact details are at the foot of their reports.

Most of you will be receiving these papers via email. Those who have specifically asked for copies to be posted will receive them, and a limited number of paper copies will be available to collect on the day.

Also, **as you arrive**, please collect your 'Record of Attendance and Expenses Claim' and voting cards from the **Welcome Area**.

You will be able to claim your **expenses** between 1.00-1.30pm during the lunch break in the **Registration Hatch** of the Office in the Hub. (See p.2)

Please bring a name badge with you. (If you forget there will be some blank self-adhesive labels available on the day.)

All Synod Sessions will take place in the Worship Space.

Refreshments will be served in the Gibson Hall from 10am; lunchtime soup and drinks, but please remember to bring your packed lunch; and tea from 4pm.

"You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you. Nehemiah 9:6 ESV

The **Bookshop** is again being offered by Soham Christian Bookshop. They will be located in **Rooms 1 and 2** off the Hub. We are grateful to them for offering this facility and request that you take the opportunity to support them. They are willing to attend local church or Area Partnership events – please have a word with them if you are planning an event.

There will be adequate signs within the building and a number of stewards on duty. Fire exits are clearly signed.

**First Aiders** have been identified for this venue.

No crèche facilities have been requested for this Synod meeting.

Future Synod Meeting dates for your diaries are:

Witham URC on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2024,

Plume Avenue URC, Colchester 8<sup>th</sup> March 2025

and Christ Church URC, Chelmsford on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2025.

We look forward to welcoming you to Downing Place URC on Saturday, 9<sup>th</sup> March.

David Coaker, Eastern Synod Clerk      01223 632999      [clerk@urceastern.org.uk](mailto:clerk@urceastern.org.uk)

## Clerk Report

### Eastern Synod Appointments

**The Synod Officers wish to place the following names before Synod.**

Any vacancies are in **bold** type. If you feel called to any of the vacant posts, please talk to the Clerk.

Our thanks to all those that serve and support us through the Synod structure.

**Resolution 1** Synod appoints the following and encourages names to be offered for the vacant posts.

**Synod Treasurer** **Vacant**

**Mission and Discipleship Committee**

Secretary - Mrs Margaret Smith (2024-2027)

Revd Gillian Thomson (2024-2027)

**Faith in Action Forum**

Rural Life & Ministry Advocate –

Commitment for Life Advocate -

Racial Justice and Multicultural Co-ordinator -

**Vacant**

**Vacant**

**Vacant**

**Pastoral Committee**

Synod Ecumenical Officer - Revd Dr Janet Tollington (2021-2027)

Advocate for Health & Healing -

**Vacant**

**Area Partnership Pastoral Advocates:**

Mid Essex                      -

**2 Vacancies**

And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.”. John 6:12 ESV

County Denominational Ecumenical Officers:

Cambridgeshire -

Essex -

Norfolk & Waveney - Revd David Ely (2024-2027) (Methodist)

**Vacant  
Vacant**

**Synod representatives to General Assembly 2024:**

Revd David Coaker  
Mrs Claire Coster  
Mrs Machrina Ejaz  
Revd Sohail Ejaz  
Miss Chloe Elmer  
Revd Sue Fender  
Mr Richard Lewney  
Revd Lythan Nevard  
Mr Charles Palin  
Mrs Faith Paulding  
Mr William McVey  
Rev'd Kathryn Taylor  
Revd Anne Sardeson  
Revd Nigel Uden  
Mr John White

## **Synod Treasurer**

We are indebted and grateful that Gil Heathcote took on the role of Synod Treasurer and was willing for his term to be extended last year. Gil's term ended at the end of last year, so we are currently looking for his successor.

Please find below the updated job description for Synod Treasurer. If you feel called to discuss it further, please don't be shy. Feel free to share it with others.

### ***Job Description for the Honorary Treasurer – URC Eastern Synod***

*The Structure of the URC at 2.(4) requires the Synod to elect a Treasurer and to determine their period of service.*

#### **Responsibilities**

The responsibility of the Treasurer is to the Synod in all matters financial. The Treasurer is one of three Synod Officers along with the Moderator and Clerk.

The role of Treasurer is essential to the sound running of the Synod and Trust bodies, and the Treasurer is required to provide a strategic overview of the Synod and Trust's current and future financial requirements. The role involves close working with Synod Officers, Committee Convenors, the Chair of the Trust, and the Finance and Resources' Officers, to ensure the continued fulfilment of Synod and Trust financial policies.

The Treasurer is the Convener (but could be just a member) of the Resources Committee and all that flows therefrom including budgets, accounts and property matters.

The Treasurer will usually be a director of the Synod Trust Companies (or at least attend their meetings).

The Treasurer must ensure compliance with Companies House, Charity Commission and other statutory requirements. The role involves attending a combination of local and national meetings and is required to be a member of the United Reformed Church in the Eastern Synod. Occasional visits to elders and church meetings may be required.

Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. 1 Corinthians 4:2 ESV

The Treasurer is a signatory on the bank mandates.

The Treasurer is the point of contact for those wishing to clarify (or question) the working of the Synod Finance Policy and brings to the Synod any proposal for expenditure outside of the policy.

The insights, experiences and knowledge gained through all of the aforementioned duties are to be clearly but succinctly reported in accessible terms to Synod and the Trust by the Treasurer.

### **Support**

The main day to day support comes from the Finance and Resources' Officers.

A line manager will be appointed.

The Resources Officer acts as Secretary to the Resources Committee, preparing and distributing the agenda and supporting papers. Legal support is available from the Synod solicitors, auditor and external accountant.

### **Commitment**

The Synod Resources Committee normally meets four times a year.

The Synod Trust Directors normally meet four times per year.

The Treasurer presents and reports to the two meetings of Synod each year. The reports include the budget and annual accounts (October Synod).

As a Synod Officer the Treasurer is a member of the Synod Officers and Convenors meeting, which meets as required (typically three per annum).

The Treasurer is also an ex-officio member of the Mission & Discipleship and Pastoral Committees, attending when necessary.

All meetings are held during the working day.

The Treasurer needs to liaise closely with the Synod based staff and be available as required to ensure compliance in all areas.

The Treasurer represents the Synod, at the General Assembly Resource Sharing consultations and the annual Treasurers consultation in February and reports back to the Synod accordingly.

The Treasurer will normally be one of the Synod representatives to General Assembly.

The period of appointment is for three years with an option for a further three years.

The role is on a voluntary basis and anticipated to require an average of between 2 – 3 days per month, including meetings (most of which are hybrid and can be attended on-line when necessary). Presence in person is expected when attending a meeting in the role of convenor.

### **Person Specification**

- Good understanding of the structure of the URC.
- Financial management experience.
- Awareness of property matters and associated legislation.
- Must be comfortable with preparing and presenting to Synod.
- Be able to efficiently use computers and modern technology and have e-mail access.

*There is a modest honorarium for this post, plus expenses.*

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God.

Luke 12:6 ESV



## United Reformed Church (Eastern Province) Trust

**The Trust is an independent body** whose members are put before Synod to be confirmed each March.

**Resolution 2** Synod confirms the following as directors of the Synod Trust.

*Membership: (Trustees confirmed at each March Synod)*

*Chair – Mr Andrew East*

*Mr David Bird*

*Mr Gil Heathcote*

*Revd Dr Rick Mearkle*

*Mr Ian Miller*

*Revd Lythan Nevard*

*Mr Clifford Patten*

*Revd Dr Janet Tollington*

*Revd Canon Professor David Thompson*

In attendance: Synod Clerk  
Resources Officer – Mrs Penelope Davies-Brown  
Finance Officer – Mrs Faith Paulding  
PA to the Moderator - Mrs Maggie Jones (Minutes Secretary)

**Environmental Policy – Implementation Plan** (Pages 10-13)

**At our October 2023 Synod we adopted our Environmental Policy**, this takes the agreed text and inserts actions to implement the policy.

**Resolution 3** Synod adopts the implementation plan for our Environmental Policy.

**Church Closure Process** (Pages 14-23)

**There are times when, for one reason or another, a local church will be concerned about its future.** It is much better for these concerns to be voiced, rather than ignored. By raising these concerns, you are not admitting defeat or failure. You are fulfilling your obligations as church members by placing your situation before God in prayer, giving thanks for the devotion, service, and faith of those followers of Christ that went before you, and being open to where the Spirit may lead you next. Even though this is called the 'Church Closure Process' taking the first step does not mean closing is inevitable. Raising the issue, having the conversations, and exploring possibilities may lead to starting on a new path rather than closure.

**Resolution 4** Synod adopts the Church Closure Process and commends it to local churches.

David Coaker, Eastern Synod Clerk      01223 632999      [clerk@urceastern.org.uk](mailto:clerk@urceastern.org.uk)

"Thus says the Lord who made the earth, the Lord who formed it to establish it—the Lord is his name: Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known. Jeremiah 33:2-3 ESV

# Environmental Policy

## Implementation Plan

### 1. Purpose

1.1. This is an agreed, documented statement of the United Reformed Church Eastern Synod's plan to implement its Environmental Policy. (Issue 2, October 2023)

### 2. Implementation

Eastern Synod affirms its pledge to shrink its carbon footprint and to strive to protect and restore the environment. Synod recognises that this is a demanding and collaborative endeavour and commits to providing all practicable assistance to churches. Synod also recognises that this pledge calls for both conversion on the part of its individual members and the transformation of internal structures.

2.1. Accordingly, Eastern Synod will:

a) encourage and support local churches to achieve Eco Church status and progress through the award levels, celebrating successes and sharing stories.

- Jeremy Flack, Green Apostle to offer encouragement and support to local churches, and to collate stories to be shared on the website.
- Lythan Nevard, Moderator, Jo Clare Young, Mission and Training Officer and Nicola Grieves, Children and Youth Development Officer to raise the possibility during local church visits.
- Environment theme of Sept 2023 Faith in Action day and will be for March 2024 Synod.

b) develop and implement plans to progress through the Eco Synod award levels (Bronze awarded June 2023)

- In April 2024 Jeremy Flack, Green Apostle, Faith Paulding, Finance Officer and David Coaker, Synod Clerk to work through draft Silver Eco Synod application.
- Through that determine actions or areas of work to achieve silver or work towards gold.

c) Calculate and track the carbon footprint of key activities (such as energy use of buildings, travel and transport, and meetings)

- Develop and implement an action plan for making annual reductions in this carbon footprint in order to reach net zero emissions by 2030.

- In April 2024 Jeremy Flack, Green Apostle, Faith Paulding, Finance Officer and David Coaker, Synod Clerk to work 360° carbon to offset Synod activities for 2023.
- That result to be compared with the 2022 result and propose an action plan.
- Engage with the URC Net Zero Task group to ensure that our plans integrate with theirs.

d) Appoint and support at least one or more 'Green Apostles' to monitor progress on creation care within the synod

- Jeremy Flack, Green Apostle, current term runs to the end of 2025.
- Encourage others to support him and local churches in this activity.

e) Ensure that its buildings and land are environmentally friendly and offer grants to ensure that church premises are environmentally friendly

- [Sustainable Buildings Guidance](#) and [Sustainable Buildings Plan](#) have been prepared and shared with local churches.
- Make best efforts to make the Synod Office, manses in the Synod Manse Scheme, and associated land, environmentally friendly.
- Synod grants are available to support Eco improvements to property.

- include environmental and energy saving suggestions into quinquennial surveys of buildings.

- Surveyors to be instructed to include these suggestions.

- Investigate and, where possible, improve the levels of energy efficiency and environmental performance of buildings, including insulation, glazing, ventilation and heating and cooling systems, through refurbishment or replacement.

- Any building related visits to local churches by Resources or LBAC to raise these possibilities.
- Audit to be undertaken to highlight buildings that can be easily improved and those that require greater effort. Resources to review and decide what support and finance to be offered to make necessary improvements.

- Ensure any buildings purchased have an Energy Performance rating of C or above, or are upgraded immediately after purchase to achieve this rating.

- Amend Property and Manse policies to reflect this.

- Implement measures to reduce energy use.

- As above

- Support the generation of renewable energy – either on our own buildings or by investing in and cooperating with local community projects.

- Promote examples, share experiences and encourage grant applications.
- Taking note of Local Authority planning policies re: renewable energy e.g. installation of solar panels.

- Choose green energy tariffs, from suppliers investing in new renewable energy generation, and pay to offset the carbon emissions of any unavoidable use of fossil fuels.

- Promote green energy suppliers and carbon offsetting.
- Offset Synod activities as determined by 2.1 c)

f) Reduce, where practicable, car and air travel for meetings through the use of videoconferencing. With due regard for distances and costs involved, individuals will be encouraged to use transport with minimum impact – to walk, cycle, use buses and trains, car-share and use electric and other energy-efficient vehicles where possible. Where there is no alternative to flying and the benefits out-weigh the environmental harm members will be encouraged as a temporary expedient to adopt the practice of carbon off-setting with respect to essential travel by making payments supporting sustainable projects, e.g., through Climate Stewards.

- Synod conference room set up for video conferencing.
- Staff encouraged to use minimum impact transport and video conferencing.
- Company cars to either be hybrids or EVs.
- Synod meetings papers to include minimum impact transport details and encouragement.

g) Not invest in fossil fuel companies whose total turnover is more than 10% derived from the extraction and/or supply of fossil fuels, including thermal coal, natural gas and oil. (These provisions reflect the Church's current agreed Ethical Investment guidelines)

- Existing policy

h) Encourage churches to work in collaboration with ecumenical partners and with/initiate local transition and sustainability groups.

- Jeremy Flack, Green Apostle to offer encouragement and support to local churches, and to collate stories to be shared on the website.

i) Promote an environmental theology and encourage their churches to receive training and support on issues of environmental care and to include these in the initial and on-going training of ministers, preachers, worship leaders and elders.

- Jo Clare Young, Mission and Training Officer to include in her offer.
- Nicola Grieves, Youth and Children's Development Officer to include in her offer.
- Include in programme for Minister's Summer School and Gathering.
- Explore what can be offered by RCLs

- Compile, promote and use resources for worship and teaching related to environmental themes.

- Include on Synod website.
- Include in worship at Synod, Committees and other times that staff lead worship.

- Provide, promote and use resources and campaigns that support churches and church members to reduce their environmental footprint.

- Include on Synod website.
- Engage with URC and ecumenical programmes to encourage this within local churches.

j) Encourage church congregations to be more aware of, and ready to respond to, environmental issues in their area.

- Jeremy Flack, Green Apostle to offer encouragement and support to local churches, and to collate stories to be shared on the website.

k) Encourage individual members of church congregations to be environmentally aware as part of their own lifestyle.

- Engage with URC and ecumenical programmes to encourage this within local churches.

l) Campaign at a local and/or national level for policies that care for the environment.

- Engage with URC and ecumenical programmes to encourage this within local churches.

m) Establish the habit of recording and celebrating environmental initiatives of churches in the Synod.

- Jeremy Flack, Green Apostle to offer encouragement and support to local churches, and to collate stories to be shared on the website.

# Church Closure Process

## Contents

1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. HAVING THE DISCUSSION.....	2
3. MAKING THE DECISION .....	3
DRAFT NOTICE OF SPECIAL CHURCH MEETING.....	3
4. IMPLEMENTING THE DECISION .....	4
Pastoral Concerns.....	4
Disposal of Contents.....	4
Administration.....	5
Finance.....	5
Building .....	6
5. CLOSING SERVICE .....	6
6. DRAFT RESOLUTION – to be agreed with the Synod Pastoral Committee and the Resources Officer (on behalf of the Trust) prior to sharing with the membership. ....	7
7. VACATING A CHURCH BUILDING CHECKLIST.....	9

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 There are times when, for one reason or another, a local church will be concerned about its future. It is much better for these concerns to be voiced, rather than ignored. By raising these concerns, you are not admitting defeat or failure. You are fulfilling your obligations as church members by placing your situation before God in prayer, giving thanks for the devotion, service, and faith of those followers of Christ that went before you, and being open to where the Spirit may lead you next.

1.2 At such a time it will be of great help for the church / elders' meeting to share their concerns with the Synod Pastoral Committee who will support the church with prayer, advice and guidance as needed.

1.3 In the case of an LEP the principles included here will be of help, but the church will also need to include the Synod and/or County Denominational Ecumenical Officer and their equivalent in any partner denominations, in the conversations.

1.4 Even though this is called the 'Church Closure Process' taking the first step does not mean closing is inevitable. Raising the issue, having the conversations, and exploring possibilities may lead to starting on a new path rather than closure.

## 2. HAVING THE DISCUSSION

2.1 When these concerns first appear in some form on the elders' meeting agenda:

- Hold before God in prayer the situation, fellowship and surrounding community.
- Consider where the church might be in five years' time.
- Distinguish between a church ceasing to meet as a worshipping community, the body of people, and closing a building. One can happen without the other.
- The church (body of people) may they wish to dispose of the premises, but meet elsewhere, such as in a community space, or a building of another denomination.
- The church may consider uniting with another URC, either to make 'one church on two sites' or to unite on one site. Would the church benefit from uniting with another local church of another denomination?
- If it is the management of a building that is the issue, it is worth considering whether the church could continue without such a millstone. Is it a lack of people to serve as officers, to deal with policies/compliance, and might that burden be eased by uniting?
- Look at mission, ministry, finance, buildings, and membership.
- Request support from the Synod Pastoral Committee.

2.2 As the Synod Pastoral Committee comes alongside and the conversations continue:

- Hold before God in prayer the situation, fellowship and surrounding community.
- Consider setting up a steering group with Minister / Interim Moderator, two or three Elders, and members of the Synod Pastoral Committee.
- Maybe send a questionnaire to members and wider church family about the situation and possible ways forward.
- Take time to consider all possibilities - explore every alternative and listen for the Spirit's guidance.
- Circulate a list of all possibilities, including closure.
- Keep all members and the wider church family fully informed about what is happening or being explored, especially those who do not attend Church Meetings. Use every possible means to do this e.g. hand-outs, Sunday notices, magazines etc. so that no one can justifiably say, "We did not know".
- Accept that this process will take time and that people might change their minds.

### **3. MAKING THE DECISION**

3.1 By embarking on this discussion your concerns about closure may have been transformed into a creative, effective and transformed way of being church together. If so, the Synod gives thanks and blesses you on your new path.

3.2 If this new path involves the retention of your building and uniting with another URC or a local church of another denomination, your engagement with this closure process is at an end. The Synod Pastoral Committee will of course support you as you follow this path.

3.3 If this new path involves closure or disposing of your building through uniting with another URC or a church of another denomination:

- Discuss the wording of a draft resolution with the Synod Pastoral Committee and the Resources Officer for agreement prior to sharing with the membership. (see Draft). There will be a number of legal and technical issues involved, and it is best to clarify those first.
- The elders should reach a unanimous, or agreed, decision to go as a recommendation to the Church Meeting.
- Have a meeting with members and wider church family to discuss the possibility of union or closure but where no decision will be taken.
- Hold the decisive Church Meeting where the vote is taken immediately after a service so that it is in the context of worship. It is important that all members and adherents are given formal notice of this meeting. (See draft Notice of Special Church Meeting)

### **DRAFT NOTICE OF SPECIAL CHURCH MEETING**

#### **NOTICE OF SPECIAL CHURCH MEETING**

Formal notice is hereby given to all members and adherents of ..... United Reformed Church, and to other interested parties, of a special church meeting to be held on (Date, Time) at (Venue).

The purpose of the special church meeting is to formalise matters arising from the previous church meeting held on (Date) and the decision to move towards closure as a worshipping congregation and the necessary steps in connection with the proposed disposal of the church premises.

The special church meeting will consider the attached draft Resolution. (Attach draft Resolution as agreed with Synod.)

- Ensure that the Synod Pastoral Committee is aware of the meeting and, if possible, a committee member is present.
- The Church Meeting could vote to have a secret ballot.
- Provide pastoral care for those upset about the decision.
- Complaints may come from previous members who have not attended for years.



- Be prepared for a reaction by families with distant links to the church, or from those whose relations'/friends' ashes have been scattered or buried in the grounds - deal with these sympathetically. Agree a press statement with Synod should the issue be raised in the local press.
- The power to dissolve a congregation is a function of Synod. The local church should ask Synod for its approval to close and with that approval so resolve. If the members have already done this and dispersed, such a vote is a formality. If a church has dispersed without any Church Meeting resolution, the Synod needs to declare the congregation formally dissolved from an appropriate date.
- For the closure of a building the usual practice has been to request that the Church meeting passes a resolution under paragraph 2 of the schedule to the URC Act. This is perfectly in order but is not required. If a building is redundant and there is no longer a Church Meeting, it can be disposed of under paragraph 5.

#### **4. IMPLEMENTING THE DECISION**

4.1 Making the decision to close or dispose of a building through uniting with another URC or a church of another denomination is not the final act of a church meeting or the respective elders meeting.

4.2 The membership and wider church family may be grieving, moving on from a building in which their lives have revolved around for many years.

4.3 Other considerations:

##### **Pastoral Concerns**

- Decide whether the fellowship is going to move on as a group or go their separate ways.
- Give people time and space.
- Acknowledge the need to grieve.
- Recognise the need to find a new spiritual home – encourage people to try several churches.
- Continue to provide pastoral care until people are settled in a new church.
- The Church Secretary should arrange for certificates of transfer for those members who wish to join other churches.
- Be aware of the extra needs of people ill or bereaved at the time of closure.
- Ensure the housebound continue to receive pastoral care/home communion etc.
- Realise that there will be a loss of network to pass round news e.g., of deaths.
- Hold at least two Elders' Meetings after closure.

##### **Disposal of Contents**

- Elders are authorized to dispose of, by way of gift or sale, the furnishings and other articles in the church buildings as they think fit. The disposal of the communion plate or other valuables, the pews, organ and fixtures and fitting, must be agreed with the Synod Trust via the Resources Officer. Any proceeds should be paid into general funds.

- The locally held assets are held for the charitable purposes of the URC. Until the moment of 'closure' they could legally be given for anything supporting the charitable purposes of the URC e.g. to another congregation of the URC. It would not be lawful to give away assets beyond the limits of the charitable purposes of the URC e.g. making financial donations to a dogs' home. Any assets remaining after the point of closure not committed via the closing resolution become the property of the Synod.
- Make sure one person, and one person only, is in charge of the complete list of contents. (Probably the Church Secretary in consultation with the elders' meeting.)
- Nothing should be given, promised, or taken without this person being consulted.
- Keep a detailed register of all gifts, donations and recipients of the objects/contents.
- Be sensitive when disposing of any items. Consult donors or their relatives and consider offering things back to them.
- Let the congregation take souvenirs - hymn books, Bibles, plates, cups etc.
- Offer things to local churches - especially those with links including ecumenical ones.
- Consider offering items of interest to a local museum.

### **Administration**

- The Registrar of Births Marriages and Deaths needs to be informed. The church building may no longer be a place of public worship and the church will no longer conduct marriages. The Registrar will give instructions.
- Keep the insurance company fully informed of changing situations.
- Give organisations using buildings warning/notice of closure.
- Website, Facebook and email accounts in the "name" of the church should be closed.
- The final Elders Meeting may be three months after closure.

### **Finance**

- Transfer any money in High Interest Accounts to the current account as closure approaches.
- Make a full list of all Direct Debits & Standing Orders.
- Notify regular payees that the account is to be closed.
- Assess the funds required to wind up the church's affairs.
- All monies owing to the church to be gathered in.
- Plan to leave at least £100 in the current account. When ALL transactions have cleared, make donations as agreed by the final Church Meeting.
- If thought appropriate, the Elders can make small donations from the church's unrestricted funds.
- Ascertain from bank the correct closing procedure.
- Check for any restrictions on disposal of bequests held in restricted or endowment funds.

- The remaining balances to be paid to the Synod as soon as possible after disposal of the premises.
- All investments to be transferred to the Synod.
- All bank accounts to be closed and final accounts to be prepared not later than three months after the disposal of the premises.
- Final Church Meeting should agree that Elders can accept final statement of accounts.
- The final/closing accounts must be independently examined and then sent to the Synod Finance Officer as soon as possible after the official closure.
- All Church accounts from the previous three years should be scanned and sent electronically to the Synod Finance Officer.

### **Building**

- The premises and other assets to remain insured until they are taken over by Synod.
- All necessary action to be taken to comply with health and safety and public liability requirements.
- Any items stored for any other organisation to be returned / collected by the relevant / authorised personnel before the date of the final service.
- Church clearance day to be held to dispose of any remaining items (skip to be hired if necessary).
- All keys to be collected in and handed to the Synod Resources Officer.

## **5. CLOSING SERVICE**

- This is the final communal act of the worshipping community.
- If you are uniting (and not retaining your building), this may change the tone of the service but not its necessity.
- Liaise with the Synod Moderator to set the date.
- Plan this as a group.
- Think carefully about who should be asked to preach.
- Involve as many people as possible, including children and young people.
- Consider including reflections on different aspects of the church's history and life.
- Do not assume that the minister (if you have one) will want to do too much in this service.
- Make a list of who should be invited e.g. past ministers, regular lay preachers, ecumenical neighbours, civic representatives and the wider community.
- Have something for people to take away from the service. Take these to people who missed the service through illness, etc. and to the housebound.

**6. DRAFT RESOLUTION – to be agreed with the Synod Pastoral Committee and the Resources Officer (on behalf of the Trust) prior to sharing with the membership.**

At a meeting of the:		United Reformed Church (“the Church”)
----------------------	--	---------------------------------------

Held at:		Date:		Time:	
Chaired by:					

It was proposed and agreed that the Church, being the body of people who assemble here for worship, witness and mission, asks the Eastern Synod, for permission to dissolve itself in accordance with the provisions of (4)A(iii) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church.

1. That the following people:

--

- are appointed to wind up the affairs and assets of the Church. The responsibilities include discharging all debts and liabilities and those responsibilities and duties set out in the Eastern Synod Church Closure Process.
- are to be indemnified in respect of all acts and omissions except in the case of malice, recklessness or dishonesty.

2. The church be dissolved from:

3. That the buildings associated with the church (church, halls, manse etc.) be sold.

4. That the following donations (under £1000) be made from the church’s unrestricted funds to the following registered charities or United Reformed Churches:

--

5. The Church asks Eastern Synod, for approval to apply the net assets and sale proceeds entitled to them in the following manner (after payment of debts and liabilities as aforesaid and all other expenses):

--

- the remainder shall be entrusted to Eastern Synod for the purposes of the United Reformed Church.

Signed, for the Church Meeting:

Chair		Print	
Secretary		Print	
Treasurer		Print	
		Date:	

## 7. VACATING A CHURCH BUILDING CHECKLIST

<b>CHURCH NAME</b>			
<b>ADDRESS:</b>			
<b>Date of Closure</b>			
<b>ELECTRICITY</b>			
Name of supplier			
Account Number			
Meter reading at date of closure			
Location of meter			
Have you notified the supplier of closure / that you are moving?	<b>YES / NO</b>	Date	
<b>GAS</b>			
Name of supplier			
Account Number			
Meter reading at date of closure			
Location of meter			
Have you notified the supplier of closure / that you are moving?	<b>YES / NO</b>	Date	
<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY</b>			
Local Authority			
Have you notified the LA of closure / that you are moving?	<b>YES / NO</b>	Date	
<b>WATER</b>			
Name of Supplier			
Account Number			
Meter reading at date of closure			
Location of meter/stopcock			
Have you notified the supplier of closure?	<b>YES / NO</b>	Date	

<b>SECURITY SYSTEM (if applicable)</b>			
Supplier			
Account Number			
Alarm code			
Have you notified the supplier of closure?	<b>YES / NO</b>	Date	
<b>TELEPHONE</b>			
Supplier			
Account Number			
Have you notified the supplier of closure?	<b>YES / NO</b>	Date	
<b>TELEVISION / BROADBAND</b>			
Supplier			
Account Number			
Supplier notified of closure?	<b>YES / NO</b>	Date	
<p><b>Please provide details of who will hold the keys. Please label the keys as to which doors they open.</b></p>			
<p><b>To the best of your knowledge please provide details of any issues, problems, idiosyncrasies and details of any other service contracts on these premises.</b></p>			
<b>Signed:</b>		<b>Print:</b>	
Date			
<p><b>Please return this form to: <a href="mailto:resources@urceastern.org.uk">resources@urceastern.org.uk</a></b></p>			
<p>or by post to: URC Eastern Synod FAO The Resources Officer 36 Duxford Road, Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire CB22 4ND</p>			

# Mission & Discipleship Committee Report

Convenor – Trevor Hahn; Secretary – Margaret Smith

## MISSION ACTIVITIES

It continues to be my privilege to be able to bring another Mission Committee report to the Synod highlighting such extensive mission and outreach initiatives taking place throughout the Synod.

## NEW MEMBERS

It is my joy to welcome new members to the committee, Gillian Thompson and Margaret Smith. Gillian comes with a wealth of experience in mission and Margaret joins us as in a dual role, one as advocate for children and young people, and two, as our secretary. I am sure both will augment the committee beautifully.

## WHOLE OF LIFE DISCIPLESHIP

A Grove booklet (L7) on whole-life discipleship has been distributed to all churches with the hope that this will encourage elderships and congregations to reflect further on mission and discipleship and to feed back to the Synod Mission and Discipleship committee. I look forward to hearing about all the exciting mission and discipleship initiatives that are happening around the Synod. The committee stand ready to support you in any way we can in your mission, discipleship, evangelism, and vision, so do please get in touch, we would love to come alongside to listen and support.

## PRAISE PARTIES

Recently some praise parties have been held in local churches across the Synod with 'Dougie Doug Doug' Doug Horley for children, families and young people which have been a tremendous success. More events are being planned, but if your church is interested in hosting an event please speak to our Children and Youth Development Officer, Nicola Grieves.

## GRANT APPLICATIONS

Grant applications keep coming in, which is marvellous to see as churches look to reach out to their communities, in particular to support new Christians and those seeking, as well as looking to engage more with children, young people and families.

This just shows there is much to celebrate as churches engage in mission, discipleship, and faith in action. Do please speak to the team if you are planning any such activities, we would be delighted to come alongside you and support you as you reach out in love and service to your communities.

## REACHING OUT DISCUSSIONS

The committee is also looking to spend some time reflecting more on how we can reach out and help local churches fulfil their vision, mission, and ministry, so watch this space!! If there are ways in which you can contribute to this discussion, please let me know.

The heavens are the Lord's heavens, but the earth he has given to the children of man.

Psalm 115:16 ESV



## **COMMITTEE MEETING DATES AND GRANT APPLICATION DEADLINES**

Just a reminder that grant applications need to be submitted to the committee at least 2 weeks prior to the meetings and the dates of the upcoming mission and discipleship committee meetings are as follows:

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> November

And finally, if there is anything that you think either I or the team can support you with in relation to mission and discipleship do please get in touch. It is a delight to partner with you as you continue to share the gospel in word and action.

Trevor Hahn, Convenor, Mission & Discipleship Committee

E-mail: [trevormhahn@gmail.com](mailto:trevormhahn@gmail.com)

Telephone number: 07854 640773

## **Faith in Action Forum - UPDATE**

### **Sharing good practice**

FiA has agreed to support each of the Roadshows this year as well as the Big Day Out rather than host a Faith in Action Day during 2024. Although the two days held in 2022 and 2023 were successful, we intend to engage in a wider capacity and meet more churches across the Synod. In addition, Advocates are also available to make presentations at Area Partnership meetings.

Members of the FiAF will also be sharing articles which churches may wish to use in their newsletters or on their websites. The first one will be circulated in early Spring.

The focus of the FiA is “action” and we are keen to hear stories from individual churches of activities that are working and connecting with congregations and local communities. We are also working on producing short information videos of these “good” actions so that we can recognise good practice and share ideas. This is all part of our “discipleship” so whether it be a school uniform exchange scheme, a listening ear drop-in, a café for specific causes, green issues or reaching out to those on the fringes of society, please let us know. One of our principal aims is to give “a voice to the voiceless” and to develop an inclusive welcome.

Our churches are our eyes, ears and developers of Mission and the FiAF is there to support and advise. If there are training needs, then this can be facilitated too.

We are particularly keen to ensure that any mission work undertaken is for all, regardless of age but we also recognise that one size does not fit all, so we are focussing our discussions on how we reach out and do things differently whilst recognising and reflecting the changing nature of our society in terms of age, the cost of living, technology advances and times when people are available to attend, support and deliver. This is a complex matter and the FiAF are focusing on local context, pioneer ministry and the principles of good practice.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Genesis 1:28 ESV

# Faith in Action



Our Development Plan is constantly revised and since the Synod in October it has discussed the need to reach out and support refugees; to pray for the situation in Gaza; to keep a focus on Green Issues and to develop our responses to the Legacies of Slavery.

In addition, we continue our quest to find Advocates for Rural Life & Ministry, Commitment for Life and a Racial Justice and Multicultural Co-ordinator, and would welcome any interest.

Robert G Ogden, Chair & Faith in Action Advocate [easergo@gmail.com](mailto:easergo@gmail.com) 01842 630632

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. Colossians 1:16-17 ESV

# Pastoral Committee Report

Convenor – Anne Sardeson; Secretary – Andrew Fleming

Since last Synod meeting full Pastoral Committee met on 7th November 2023 and the core committee met on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

## CHURCH CLOSURES:

We are sad to announce that Dunmow URC had their closing service on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and Fowlmere URC held their closing service on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

We give thanks for the ministry of these churches and prayer God's blessing will surround the congregations at this time.

## MINISTERIAL CHANGES:

Barnabas Shin has received a call to serve in the Bolton and Salford Missional Partnership in the North Western Synod so will be moving on from Billericay and Ingatestone URCs and his Synod-directed work in the next few months. We assure him and his wife Maria Lee of our prayers as they move to this new ministry together.

## LAY PRESIDENCY AT THE SACRAMENTS:

The Committee have spent time discussing the process for authorising lay people to preside at the sacraments and a paper and resolution regarding this attached for Synod to discuss at this meeting.

## MISSION PARTNERSHIPS UPDATE:

Letters regarding the proposed shape of Mission Partnerships in the Synod have now been sent to all the churches in the Synod. As well as time for discussion at this Synod meeting, zoom meeting dates have been scheduled by the Moderator and Pastoral Committee convenor for those wishing to discuss things further and they are also more than willing to have further conversations about the specific details of implementation of these going forward. We do stress that this is a marathon, not a sprint, and we are aware that this will take time to implement in many places in the Synod. We thank the Synod for their willingness to take this journey together.

## MEMBERSHIP OF PASTORAL COMMITTEE:

We are currently discussing what is the appropriate membership of Synod Pastoral Committee. We recognise that as we move towards Mission Partnerships it will be important to find a way of the voices of those partnerships are heard at Pastoral Committee so that the committee engages well with the life of the Synod. We will keep Synod updated about our thinking about this matter.

## Principles of Mission Partnership – amendment

Since March 2023 Synod there have been meetings with our ministers to talk through the principles and how they might work in practice. One aspect that became clear in our discussions is that the concept of Resource Church and Partner Churches will not work across all of our Mission Partnerships, as in some places in the Synod there are a few churches of a similar size that would be working together and to identify one of these as the Resource Church might prove more divisive than helpful.

Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth.

1 Chronicles 16:33 ESV

Therefore, we seek to replace the text of 1: Mission Partnerships rather than joint Pastorates on pages 3-4 within [Principles of Mission Partnership](#) with the following:

### **1: Mission Partnerships rather than joint Pastorates**

Ministers will be called to a Mission Partnership of usually 3-4 churches. The East Midlands model we are adapting uses Resource Church and Resourced Churches, with 50% of the scoping with the Resource Church and activity with the Resourced Churches on a need or project basis. Our initial thoughts were to revise the language to Hub Church and Partner Churches, which may apply in some cases, but on reflection it is likely that many of our Mission Partnerships will be a coming together of Partner Churches to adapt these principles to best meet their needs and situation.

The emphasis is much less on what percentage of a minister a church has but rather a Mission Partnership working together to enable mission and discipleship in each community. All churches will need to look at what they need a Minister to help them with. This might be to develop certain projects or work out what God is calling them to be in the future. When a Minister of Word and Sacraments is involved in a project, the Mission Partnership will need to consider sustainability and succession planning as the Minister moves on to a different ministry focus within the partnership.

So, a Minister of Word and Sacraments will be called in a different way which is much more about targeting stipendiary ministry where it is most needed and can be most effective in a much more flexible way.

There are of course expenses involved in deploying ministers. Those related to Plan for Partnership will be calculated proportionally based on the existing Fair Share numbers and divided between the Mission Partnership. There will also need to be conversations about manses to accommodate ministers.

**Resolution 5** Synod agrees to amend our Principles of Mission Partnership accordingly.

## **Lay Presidency at the Sacraments**

In 2016 General Assembly amended the previous guidance in The Manual regarding Presidency at the Sacraments, stating that if the minister in pastoral charge is not available then the Church Meeting may invite another Minister of Word and Sacraments (including a retired minister who has expressed willingness to do so) to preside. If such a minister is not available, General Assembly agreed that the Church Meeting may invite an elder or accredited lay preacher authorised by the synod, and that in such a circumstance, elders of the local church and accredited lay preachers regularly conducting worship there, should be considered first. This reminds us that the pastoral relationship between the congregation and the one presiding is a significant factor in who is asked to preside. However, these provisions also establish the principle that worship should be led by representative persons recognised by the wider church as well as by the local church.

To support the sharing of resources across Mission Partnerships, Eastern Synod will enable the authorisation of Lay presidents for Communion and Baptism across Mission

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. Psalm 23:2 ESV

Partnerships, in accordance with 2016 General Assembly Resolutions. In order to do this, we will:

- a. Contact all those who are currently authorised to preside to ask if they sense a call for their authorisation to be extended to cover other congregations in an existing or proposed Mission Partnership. If this is the case, Synod will extend their authorisation accordingly.
- b. Encourage those seeking authorisation in the future to consider whether they feel called to be authorised for the whole the Mission Partnership of which they belong<sup>1</sup>.
- c. Emphasise that the pastoral relationship with a church is a key aspect of presiding at communion. Because we are aware that some lay preachers have historic pastoral links to churches where they are authorised to preside that are not part of a current or proposed Mission Partnership, these authorisations will be allowed to continue. However, when the time comes for review consideration will be given as to whether such authorisations are still pastorally appropriate or whether the needs of such congregations are now being met within their Mission Partnership.
- d. Offer Synod Authorised initial training to those who are preparing to be authorised to preside at the Sacraments.
- e. Offer ongoing support and Synod Authorised refresher training every three years.
- f. Agree the means by which those authorised to preside will be reviewed, particularly in the light of Resolution 14c<sup>2</sup> and ensure that we are complying with resolution 14c in terms of length of service (between 3 – 5 years) and renewal.

Pastoral Committee reminds congregations in the Synod that:

- a. Presiding at Communion is a serious call and needs to entail training and recording of those who preside to give good governance.
- b. Training and authorisation for presidency at Communion and Baptism are distinct. Authorisation to preside at one does not automatically mean authorisation to preside at the other.
- c. The URC does not practice communion by reserved sacrament. Those wishing to take communion to people outside a public worship setting need to be authorised to preside at communion. For those who sense a calling to preside such communions there will no expectation that they will have to preside in a public act of worship.<sup>3</sup>
- d. It is possible to offer one-off authorisation for those who are trained and authorised elsewhere. Application needs to be made in advance to the Convenor of Pastoral Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> This is an enabling authorisation and does not mean that being authorised to preside at the Sacraments across a whole Mission Partnership implies an expectation for a lay president to do more than they sense they have capacity to do.

<sup>2</sup> Resolution 14.c states: “authorisation for such presidency by the synod, normally of members from within the congregation concerned, should be for an initial period of three to five years (according to synod judgement), including a probationary year on first appointment, with the possibility of renewal. Before renewal there should be consultation by the synod with the congregation, and a review of its needs.”

<sup>3</sup> There is currently discussion going on as to whether “communion by extension” might be acceptable within the URC – that is when the elements from a communion service are taken out after the service to someone at home by an elder of the congregation who is not authorised to preside.

- e. Advice needs to be sought from Pastoral Committee regarding ecumenical settings where someone not ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacraments is being considered to preside at communion.
- f. Some congregations may find it helpful to change the Sunday on which they celebrate communion to ensure that they are able to invite an appropriately authorised person to preside.
- g. These provisions do not prevent the congregation assembled for baptismal or communion service from themselves appointing, as a church meeting, a suitable person to preside at the celebration of the Sacrament in a case of emergency, for example if the expected president is taken ill or held up in travel. The provisions do not require such an action rather than a postponement of the baptismal or communion service if that seems preferable.'

**Resolution 6** Synod adopts the Lay Presidency at the Sacraments policy.

## Northstowe Church Network

After our decision in October Synod to affirm the Trust decision to support the Northstowe Church Network bid for Section 106 land for faith and community use, we are delighted to announce the launch of the Northstowe Church Network.

The new town of Northstowe is being built on former RAF land near Cambridge. Just 1,500 of the planned 10,000 homes (upward of 25,000 residents) have been built. But, already, this new town is characterised by people working together to make a difference. Pathfinder Church has brought together those from across the Christian traditions and those new to faith. As they have put down roots in Northstowe, their commitment to “praying, exploring, and sharing” has inspired partnerships with schools, councils, and developers. To allow more fresh expressions of church to form, and to facilitate new community partnerships and a potential new community centre, a new legal framework has been set up.

The Northstowe Church Network is a local ecumenical partnership of the Church of England, United Reformed Church, and Baptist Union of Great Britain. What unites those involved in this new charity is much more than denominational background. It is rooted, growing, and transforming faith based on an encounter with the eternal God who still changes lives today.

**Resolution 7** Synod gives thanks for the creation of the Northstowe Church Network and instructs the Clerk to prepare a General Assembly resolution to receive Northstowe Church Network (LEP) as a local church of the United Reformed Church.

Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Matthew 6:26 ESV

## Consultations

Both of these documents are now open for consultation for them to be adopted at the next Pastoral Committee meeting on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions please submit them using the appropriate online form. If you are unable to access the forms, please contact the Synod office.

### Synod Accredited Local Leaders

Synod Pastoral Committee have prepared guidance for appointing Synod Accredited Local Church Leaders: <https://urceastern.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Local-Church-Leadership.pdf>

Please respond by Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May. <https://forms.office.com/e/YJRPK8P1UE>

### Mission Partnership Call Process

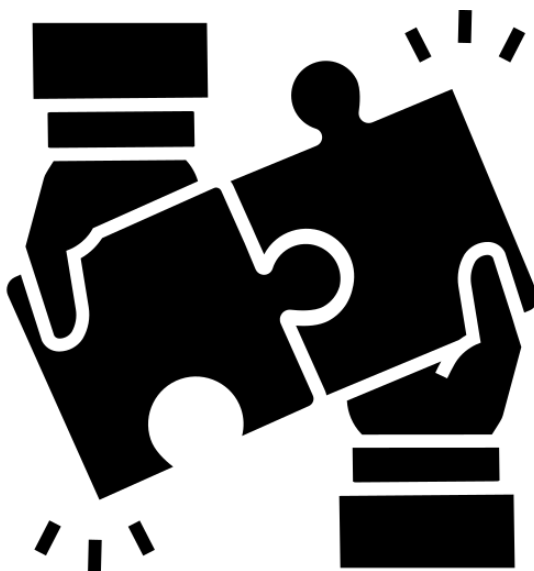
Synod Pastoral Committee have prepared guidance for the call process as we move to Mission Partnerships: <https://urceastern.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Mission-Partnership-Call-Process.pdf>

Please respond by Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May. <https://forms.office.com/e/My1JU1ypaP>

Anne Sardeson, Convenor, Pastoral Committee

E-mail: [minister.dengieurcs@gmail.com](mailto:minister.dengieurcs@gmail.com)

Telephone number: 07712 615739



Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Luke 12:27-30 ESV

# Resources Committee Report

Finance Officer: Faith Paulding; Resources Officer: Penelope Davies-Brown

## RESULTS TO DATE

**Results and variances** are explained on the Synod Administration and CLMI Fund reports. (Pages 35 & 36)

**Resolution 8** Synod receives the Synod Administration Fund and the Church Life and Mission Fund reports

## INVESTMENTS

Investments show a reassuring trend in capital growth over the past 18 months.

Guidance is to be sought in developing an investment strategy (including reserves policy) to achieve financial goals taking into consideration risk tolerance, cash holdings and portfolio management.

## GRANTS

- Christchurch, Rayleigh – an increase in existing property grant to cover increased costs.
- Water Lane URC – a Project Facelift grant.
- Melbourn URC - a mission grant for improved facilities.
- Great Notley URC – a mission grant for second year’s employment of a Family and Youth Worker.

## PROPERTY POLICY (Pages 37 to 40)

**The Synod Property Policy was last reviewed and adopted at the March 2017 Synod.** A further review was undertaken which makes the following amendments:

- 2.4 first bullet – ‘normally’ added – ‘does not normally need the permission’.  
fourth bullet – ‘To hold suitable indemnity insurance’ replaced with ‘To comply with relevant legislation in relation to alteration and maintenance building works’.
- 3.2 LMMR deleted.  
Environmental Sustainability and Building Sustainability Checklists added.
- 3.6 Completely rewritten.

**Resolution 9** Synod adopts the revised Property Policy

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” Genesis 1:26 ESV



## SYNOD MANSE SCHEME (Pages 41 to 46)

**The Synod Manse Policy was approved at October 2005 Synod and amended December 2007.** A further review was undertaken. The policy is now included in the newly named Synod Manse Scheme.

### **Resolution 10** Synod adopts the Synod Manse Scheme

The following amendments have been made:

1. Same text, slightly reordered, with a link to the URC website added.
- 2&3 Order swapped, Scheme now first, then Fund.
- 2.2 New paragraph added.
- 2.4 New paragraph added.
- 2.5 Reworded 3.3 (see changes from Appendix 1 to Schedule 5).
- 2.6 Scheme now pays for all costs of repairs and capital works (see changes from Appendix 1 & 2 to Schedule 5 & 6).
- 2.7 Scheme takes on local responsibilities when a manse is let.
- 2.8 New paragraph added.
- 3.1 Tense changed, as an existing Fund rather than being created.
- 3.4 Added.
- 4.2 & 4.4 Transitional arrangements now termed Transfer arrangements.
- 4.5 Deleted.
- Schedule 5 Local churches become just responsible to Plan for Partnership, providing a local contact person and carrying out annual inspections.
- Schedule 6 Local contact arranges listed routine maintenance, inspection and servicing with the Fund paying costs.  
Local contact liaises with occupant and Scheme for listed repairs with the Fund paying costs.
- Schedule 7 Scheme fully responsible for manses during a vacancy.
8. Principles added – to ensure we have sufficient manses and that negotiations should lead to ‘a fair and equitable result’.  
Bullet points unchanged, apart from deleting ‘Cancellation of manse loans’ as none now exist.  
Final paragraph and a) - d) offer guidance.
9. Updated in light of other changes.

And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?’ And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

Luke 13:6-9 ESV

## COMMITTEE EXPENSES POLICY

This new policy was approved by the Resources Committee and has been circulated to all convenors. It details permitted reimbursement of expenses which track HMRC benchmarks and clarifies the authorisation process.

## RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR

The Synod Trust has agreed in principle to the creation of an additional fulltime post to increase the support offered to local churches in respect of property and financial matters.

Faith Paulding, Finance Officer

01223 830770

[finance@urceastern.org.uk](mailto:finance@urceastern.org.uk)



[www.urceastern.org.uk](http://www.urceastern.org.uk)



36 Duxford Road, Whittlesford, Cambridge CB22 4ND  
01223 830770 [admin@urceastern.org.uk](mailto:admin@urceastern.org.uk)



Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Matthew 6:26 ESV

	Note	Budget 2023	Budget to date	Actual to date	Actual 2022
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>					
Investment income		31,050	31,050	29,053	39,665
Bank interest	1	120	120	1,316	586
Other income	2	0	0	1,315	1,426
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>31,170</b>	<b>31,170</b>	<b>31,683</b>	<b>41,677</b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>					
Portfolio management fees	3	(30)	(30)	(6,521)	(28)
<b>Governance</b>					
Staff costs		(137,750)	(137,750)	(137,143)	(111,249)
Premises expenses	4	(22,130)	(22,130)	(24,705)	(27,061)
Office costs	5	(46,024)	(46,024)	(43,454)	(53,929)
Synod meetings		(4,000)	(4,000)	(2,057)	(1,152)
General Assembly expenses		(1,000)	(1,000)	(69)	0
Synod Clerk & Treasurer expenses		(3,100)	(3,100)	(2,726)	(2,155)
Committee expenses		(1,820)	(1,820)	(1,620)	(1,649)
Professional indemnity insurance		(1,500)	(1,500)	(1,340)	(1,528)
<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>		<b>(217,354)</b>	<b>(217,354)</b>	<b>(219,635)</b>	<b>(198,751)</b>
Realised gain (loss) on investments		0	0	(3,818)	0
<b>Surplus/ (deficit)</b>		<b>(186,184)</b>	<b>(186,184)</b>	<b>(191,770)</b>	<b>(157,074)</b>
Transfer	6			0	163
Balance brought forward				1,202,716	1,527,623
Adjustments				0	(167,996)
<b>Closing balance</b>				<b>1,010,946</b>	<b>1,202,716</b>

**Summary**

Actual deficit £5.6k greater than budget due in main to increased portfolio costs and realised losses on investments

**Income**

Total income is £500 more than budget due partly to increased bank interest income

**Expenditure**

Total expenditure is just 1% more than budget. The large increase in portfolio costs of £6.5k has been offset by office costs and Synod meeting costs being significantly less than budget.

**Notes**

**These are draft figures only and do not include year end adjustments e.g. accruals**

- 1 Use of the Barclays deposit account and increased Bank of England base rate has had a positive impact on interest income
- 2 Other incoming resources relate to the HMRC NIC Employment Allowance
- 3 Significant increase in commission charges due to Epworth Managed Portfolio costs where reporting of true costs is now transparent
- 4 Premises costs are greater than budget primarily due to increased utility costs as a result of the energy price cap having been removed, office repairs and security costs, and increased insurance premium.
- 5 Office costs are well within budget but the figures disguise audit costs being 44% less than in the preceding year and cleaning costs having reduced by 40% due to a change in contractor.
- 6 Prior year funds transfer is to move petty cash from CLMI Fund to General Fund

	Note	Budget 2023	Budget to date	Actual 2023	Actual 2022
<b>INCOMING RESOURCES</b>					
Investment income					
Dividends received	1	195,800	195,800	228,541	233,226
Bank interest	2	2,825	2,825	48,695	18,367
Rental income	3	127,360	127,360	663,638	159,922
Other income					
Grants and donations received	4	0	0	32,411	178,637
Other incoming resources	5	0	0	3,026	406,085
		325,985	325,985	976,311	996,238
Property sales	6	0	0	992,776	(19,412)
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>325,985</b>	<b>325,985</b>	<b>1,969,087</b>	<b>976,826</b>
<b>RESOURCES EXPENDED</b>					
Property management costs	7	(7,150)	(7,150)	(88,876)	(37,920)
Portfolio Commission Charges	8	(1,000)	(1,000)	(14,458)	(887)
Ministry and Mission					
Ministry		(10,400)	(10,400)	(10,534)	(7,223)
Synod Transitional Ministry		0	0	(1,635)	0
Local Leader salary		(24,000)	(24,000)	(20,889)	(24,747)
Higher Education and Chaplaincies	9	(6,000)	(6,000)	0	(1,500)
Ecumenical payments		(4,850)	(4,850)	(3,209)	(3,686)
Mission grants	10	(63,360)	(63,360)	(12,423)	(267,687)
Youth Work	11	(73,000)	(73,000)	(138,862)	(184,578)
Moderator expenses & support costs		(19,800)	(19,800)	(19,699)	(35,191)
Ministry and Mission Fund top-up	12	(100,000)	(100,000)	(80,000)	(90,000)
Training					
Mission and Training Officer		(58,600)	(58,600)	(27,508)	(43,185)
Children & Youth Development Officer	13	(63,510)	(63,510)	(72,536)	(65,367)
Safeguarding Officer	14	(30,000)	(30,000)	(43,896)	(2,229)
Office costs	15	(628)	(628)	(2,321)	(1,145)
Property grants					
Property, Project Facelift and Quinquennial surveys		(61,500)	(61,500)	(45,742)	(220,904)
New buildings grants incl. ECO projects		(2,000,000)	(2,000,000)	62,251	(74,400)
Mission linked to buildings and ECO projects		(200,000)	(200,000)	0	0
Westminster College		(75,000)	(75,000)	0	0
Utility grants		0	0	(121,935)	0
Governance					
Synod Council/General Assembly	16	0	0	(239)	(2,064)
Synod Clerk salary and expenses		30,000	30,000	(30,333)	(12,163)
Audit & Legal expenses		(1,000)	(1,000)	(854)	(1,441)
Committee expenditure	17	0	0	(418)	(291)
Ecumenical officers		(100)	(100)	(149)	(45)
Resource sharing		(200,000)	(200,000)	(100,000)	(100,000)
<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>		<b>(2,969,898)</b>	<b>(2,969,898)</b>	<b>(774,263)</b>	<b>(1,176,652)</b>
<b>SURPLUS/ (DEFICIT)</b>		<b>(2,643,913)</b>	<b>(2,643,913)</b>	<b>1,194,824</b>	<b>(199,826)</b>
Realised investment Gains/(Loss)		0	0	(8,376)	0
Unrealised investment Gains/(Loss)		0	0	0	0
Transfers between funds		0	0	0	(163)
Balance brought forward		8,363,251	8,363,251	9,214,178	9,414,168
<b>Closing balance</b>		<b>5,719,338</b>	<b>5,719,338</b>	<b>10,400,627</b>	<b>9,214,178</b>

**SUMMARY**

**Income**

Income is up on budget primarily due to £568k revenue from the renewal of the Lion Walk headlease & the sale of Trinity URC, Harlow (£993k)

**Expenditure**

Overall expenditure is £1,750k less than budget primarily due to large Eco grant budgets

**Gain**

A surplus of £1,195k compared to a budgeted deficit of £2,644k due again to large Eco grant budgets, property sale and headlease renewal

**NOTES**

**These are draft figures only and do not include year end adjustments e.g. accruals**

There are notes to explain key figures

- Improved market performance in COIF Ethical Income Fund has resulted in income above budget. By year end, Epworth investments had also performed better than budget expectations
- Use of the Barclays deposit account and increased Bank of England base rate has had a significant and positive impact on interest income
- Rental income includes £568k re. the renewal of the headlease at Lion Walk URC. The accounting of this income is to be discussed and agreed with the auditor.
- Sundry income is historical interest earned on rent deposits held for churches that have now been cleared down and £75 compensation from Columbia Threadneedle for delay in processing instructions
- Other incoming resources relate to HMRC NIC Employment Allowance. The 2022 figure arises from a year end adjustment to show sale proceeds from manses in 2016 and 2018 in the CLMI Fund rather than the Manse Designated Fund
- Property sale income relates to the sale of Trinity URC, Harlow
- Property management costs that significantly exceed budget are primarily due to costs relating to: Water Lane URC (£13.3k), Lion Walk URC headlease professional fees (£34.2k), Leaside unsafe boundary wall costs (£7.4k), The Stable Newmarket (£3.6k), Little Baddow boundary dispute (1.5k) and Christ Church Ipswich Deed of Variation (£3.1k)
- Significant increase in commission charges due to Epworth Managed Portfolio costs where reporting of true costs is now transparent
- UEA chaplaincy post has now ceased but cost was already in the budget
- 2023 figure includes a refund of £7,840 in respect of payments made to the Abbeyfield Community Project (Berechurch Road). 2022 figures includes £92k grant to Westminster College for Tower repairs and £97.5k write-off of Leaside, Ware loan.
- Youth Worker costs include £35k moved to Grant Control for three-year Youth Worker projects & £45k for five year project at Grays URC
- A further £17,577 was paid in January 2024
- The budget figure inadequately reflected the pay review afforded
- Increased costs against budget due to additional hours worked above contract
- Increased office costs primarily due to computer depreciation charges arising from the replacement of faulty hardware
- Synod Council costs shown in General Fund
- Faith in Action costs in budget as from 2024

# Property Policy

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Eastern Synod is one of 13 Synods of the United Reformed Church (“URC”) within the United Kingdom. Geographically encompassing Norfolk, Suffolk, most of Essex, most of Cambridgeshire and part of Hertfordshire. It is constituted in accordance with the Scheme of Union and the United Reformed Church Acts of 1972, 1981 and 2000 and consists of United Reformed churches and Local Ecumenical Partnerships and United and Union churches with URC Involvement.

1.2 Synod Meeting has judged it expedient to give guidance to Trust Directors, the Synod’s Resources/Property Committee and Eastern Synod churches regarding current governance requirements and the way it seeks to work with local churches and the wider Christian community regarding property matters. (However, such guidance cannot bind the Trust Directors who have to act independently in accordance with the URC Acts) Synod Meeting will itself review the terms of the policy at no more than five yearly intervals to ensure it continues to represent the intention of Synod Meeting and remains fit for purpose.

1.3 The legislative framework in which we work is ever changing. Attached to this policy is a guidance note on the legislative framework applying to the occupation and maintenance of church property. That note does not form part of this policy and will be updated as required.

1.4 Eastern Synod’s constituent churches occupy and use a large number of buildings, including church sanctuaries; halls; manses; or other dwelling houses. In some cases, burial grounds or agricultural land are also associated with the local church. In a very few cases local churches and/or the Trust Company have an interest in Shopping Centres or other investment properties.

1.5 The overwhelming majority of local church land and buildings is held on trust by, and legally registered to, The United Reformed Church (Eastern Province) Trust (hereinafter “the Trust Company”) as sole trustee. The Trust Company holds such properties for the benefit of local churches and/or for other URC charitable purposes. The legal trusteeship allows the local church to benefit from the use of the property while ensuring that the trust over the property continues to be managed according to its governing documents and places duties on the local church to operate it and to maintain it in accordance with the URC Acts and the legal obligations of an occupier of property (in addition to the expectation of operating to ‘best practice’ standards). Any modifications to such buildings or any change to, or extension of, their use together with the sale, other disposal or purchase of properties requires the approval of the Trust Company. Any local churches that still have local trustees are also obliged to act in accordance with the URC Acts, unless they are joint churches, Local Ecumenical Partnerships or Union Churches governed by other trusts and legislation.

1.6 A schedule of all properties utilised by Eastern Synod churches for which the Trust Company is corporate Trustee will be maintained by Synod, along with a database relating to each property.

1.7 In addition, and quite separately, the Trust Company holds, on behalf of the Synod, manse which are part of the Synod Manse Scheme as well as a number of burial grounds no longer associated with any Eastern Synod constituent church. Such property is to be reflected in the accounts of the Trust Company. The Trust Company may also from time to time hold the property formerly utilised by a local church which has now closed, pending its sale. Only moneys which come under the control of Synod in accordance with the terms of the URC Acts are to be reflected in the Trust Company accounts on the disposal of such property.

## **2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LOCAL CHURCH, SYNOD AND TRUST COMPANY**

2.1 Synod seeks to act in a spirit of partnership between the Trust Company and the local church, encouraging dialogue and sharing of good practice and advice, and it is in that spirit that Synod seeks to apply and understand governance and asset management within the URC. The Trust Company and Synod, whilst part of the wider Church with its own particular ministry, exist to support and facilitate this work through the local churches.

2.2 Local Churches, Synod and the Trust Company directors act individually and in partnership to follow the guidance and governance procedures set out in the URC Manual as updated, when necessary, by General Assembly and by the URC Acts of 1972, 1981 and 2000 incorporated into the manual.

2.3 The Trust Company has obligations as trustee of the property, as well as legal duties imposed by legislation and the URC Acts. The Trust Company holds the local church premises on trust to allow them to be occupied and used for the purposes of public worship, instruction of children and adults, and the promotion of other charitable purposes not inconsistent with these uses.

2.4 Whilst the Trust Company may in the future seek to delegate some powers to the local church at present the local church as occupier of the building under the current understanding of trusteeship in the URC has the following responsibilities:

- To repair and maintain the premises, to enter into suitable contracts with those carrying out this work and to be responsible for making any payments. This work at present does not normally need the permission of the Trust Company but Synod expects the local church to seek advice as to the suitability of any significant proposals and provide information when seeking financial assistance. (The Trust Company needs to be assured that the local church has the funds to complete any work undertaken.)
- To obtain the permission of the Trust Company before undertaking any improvement or alteration works. Again, the local church is responsible for employing suitably qualified consultants, for entering into suitable contracts for the work and for making any payments.
- To comply with all legislation controlling the occupation of premises.

- To comply with relevant legislation in relation to alteration and maintenance building works
- To be responsible for all temporary, occasional, or intermittent lettings and the resulting facilities management issues.
- Not to enter into any implied or formal tenancy or lease, this is the responsibility of the Trust Company.
- Not to dispose of any part of the premises or its fixtures and fittings, this is the responsibility of the Trust Company.

### **3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LOCAL CHURCH AND ITS BUILDINGS**

3.1 Synod recognises that the mission of the Church in its local and broader sense is the responsibility of the church meeting often working together with other church families and agencies. However, buildings in terms of location, the messages they proclaim and the way they express the nature of the family who occupies them can greatly hinder or facilitate this work.

3.2 Church congregations are encouraged to consider the way their buildings facilitate or limit their individual and shared mission to the community in which they are set. This process should consider amongst other issues:

- The viability of the location of the buildings in relation to those it serves
- The economic and environmental sustainability of the buildings
- The way the building expresses or detracts from the mission of the Church in terms of welcome, inclusivity and relevance.
- Whether maintaining and running our own building for all activities is the most sustainable and suitable approach.

The Synod Environmental Sustainability and Building Sustainability Checklists are available and can be used to create Sustainability Plans. Every church meeting or elders meeting should consider this material and arrive at an honest self-appraisal of the buildings it uses.

3.3 Unsuitable church buildings will significantly shape the way the Local Church is viewed by the community and how they see themselves as well as significantly influencing what they are able to undertake as a church and limiting their response to what they are being called to do. We know that we have too many church buildings, to properly address the inherited maintenance and restoration costs is prohibitive and that buildings can consume too great a portion of the Church families' income. Church families through the church meeting are encouraged to develop a shared community-wide understanding of what they are being called to do and work with Synod officers to understand the best long-term way of ensuring effective and efficient building assets. The Trust Company directors are keen to understand how our current assets can be incorporated into a longer-term property plan.

3.4 This is a challenging process but unless we embark upon it the future of Local Church families, their distribution and effectiveness will be determined by building economics and not our calling.

3.5 Synod seeks to develop the way it is able to fund building projects to enable it to encourage local churches to develop with others long and short-term building development strategies which are not compromised by the initial expectation of lack of funds. Synod wishes to work with all local churches to encourage and facilitate the process of dreaming dreams and developing visions.

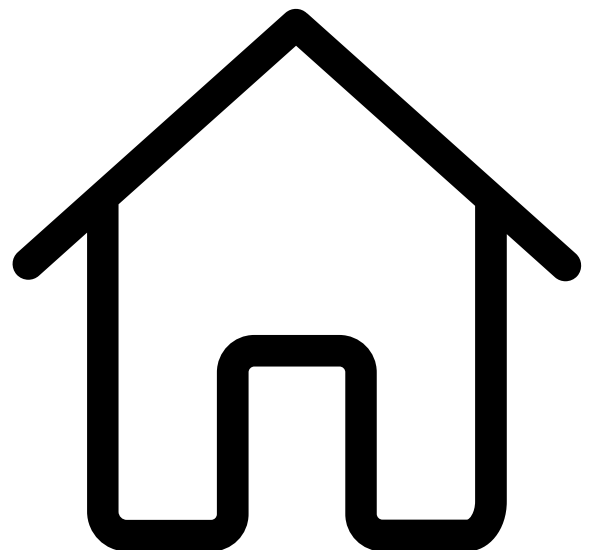
3.6 The proceeds from the disposal of all property are subject to the provisions of the URC Acts. The Eastern Synod holds the net proceeds from the disposal of non-Listed 'redundant' buildings (other than manses) in the Church Life and Mission Fund and the Ten Per Cent Fund in a ratio of 9:1. As the name implies, the Church Life and Mission Fund provides monies for all aspects of the Synod's activities that facilitate the life and mission of existing churches as well as new projects, church grants and mission initiatives both within the Synod and further afield, The Ten Per Cent Fund earmarks monies for specific large expenditure at the discretion of the Resources Committee and Trustees. Between 2010 and 2020 a significant proportion of the income from the sale of properties was directed to the Pioneer Fund which provided the financial means for pioneering new mission projects. This funded Pioneer Ministry both in Ipswich and St Neots but is now under review in the light of the more flexible CLMI and Ten Per Cent Funds. In the case of the sale of a Listed Building the net proceeds are held in a designated fund entitled the Heritage Fund. The Heritage Fund supports the cost of works on other Listed Buildings.



# Synod Manse Scheme

## Contents

The Policy .....	2
1. Policy Objectives .....	2
2. The Synod Manse Scheme.....	2
3. The Synod Manse Fund .....	3
4. Joining the Synod Manse Scheme .....	3
Schedules .....	3
5. Responsibilities of the Pastorate for manses in the Synod Manse Scheme in occupation by Ministers or Church Related Community Workers .....	3
6. Shared Responsibilities of the Pastorate and Synod Manse Scheme for manses in the Synod Manse Scheme in occupation by Ministers or Church Related Community Workers ....	4
7. Responsibilities of URCEPT for vacant manses in the Synod Manse Scheme .....	4
Arrangements for Transfer of Assets to the Synod Manse Scheme .....	5
8. Principles in the matter of the Transfer of Assets .....	5
9. Draft Church Meeting Resolution.....	6



# The Policy

## 1. Policy Objectives

- 1.1 To ensure the provision of suitable housing in accordance with the Plan for Partnership: <https://urc.org.uk/urc-ministries/the-plan-for-partnership/>  
  
Manses are held in trust for the purpose of housing URC 'Church workers' under the terms of the URC Act. Part II of Schedule 2 sets out the Trust provisions. Paragraph 5 relates to the sale of redundant manses and Paragraph 2(e) to lettings.
- 1.2 To enable manses to be provided in suitable locations to meet the needs of current and future pastorates.
- 1.3 The Policy objectives will be met through a Synod Manse Scheme (The Scheme) and a Synod Manse Fund.

## 2. The Synod Manse Scheme

- 2.1 The Scheme is administered by the Synod Resources Committee through the Resources Officer.
- 2.2 The Scheme has been in existence since Oct 2005 and as of 1/1/2024 holds 22 properties.
- 2.3 When a pastoral vacancy is to be declared, the Pastorate and the Synod Resources Committee will agree if an existing manse meets the requirements of the Scheme and the Pastorate, or alternatively agree what measures are required to upgrade an existing manse or provide a new property.
- 2.4 In cases of pastoral necessity, ministers and their families will be permitted to stay in residence in manses, rent-free, for up to three months from the end date of the minister's deployment e.g. retirement or call elsewhere. However, they, or the receiving Synod, would be expected to meet the associated costs relating to Council Tax and utilities. After three months, rent at market rate may become payable depending on individual circumstances. The decision regarding this will be taken by the Synod Officers.
- 2.5 The Pastorate will continue with their responsibilities under the Plan for Partnership, and some general management and maintenance as set out in Schedule 5, through a locally appointed contact.
- 2.6 The Synod Manse Scheme will cover the costs of repairs and capital works as set out in this Policy.
- 2.7 When a manse is vacant it will be let in the name of the Trust Company using an approved Assured Shorthold Tenancy agreement with the Synod Manse Scheme taking on the local responsibilities.
- 2.8 Manses no longer needed will be sold, (after consultation with the Synod Pastoral Committee, pastorate and Area Partnership Pastoral Advocate.)

### **3. The Synod Manse Fund**

- 3.1 A designated Synod Manse Fund receives the proceeds from Manse sales, local Church manse funds and income from manses within the Scheme.
- 3.2 The Fund will be administered by the Synod Resources Committee through the Finance Officer and will comprise investments, cash funds and property. A suitable working capital will be held as cash funds.
- 3.3 The Fund will be used to improve, replace maintain or provide manses. Improvements will not normally be made against the wishes of the current occupiers, unless required on Health and Safety grounds or to carry out essential works.
- 3.4 If Synod Resources Committee determines there is a persisting surplus of capital, some may be transferred to the Synod CLMI Fund.

### **4. Joining the Synod Manse Scheme**

- 4.1 When a church wishes to join the Synod Manse Scheme it will be necessary for the church to pass a Church Meeting resolution to that effect. Prior to this, details of the property and funds, timing of the entry into the Scheme and any transfer arrangements would need to have been agreed with the Resources Committee. A Standard Resolution is given in this Policy, which will require approval by the Church Meeting and agreement by the Synod Resources Committee.
- 4.2 Some churches currently rely upon rental income or income from local church manse fund investments. Transfer arrangements will be discussed and agreed with the church and Synod Resources Committee.
- 4.3 When a resolution to join the Scheme is passed, the approval of the Trustees will be required.
- 4.4 The resolution to join the Scheme will entitle the Synod Manse Scheme to receive existing local manse funds, investment or future rental income and any sale proceeds, subject to any transfer arrangements agreed.

## **Schedules**

### **5. Responsibilities of the Pastorate for manses in the Synod Manse Scheme in occupation by Ministers or Church Related Community Workers**

Items in the Plan for Partnership (principally buildings insurance (arranged by Synod and charged to the Pastorate), Council Tax and water rates.)

Provision of a contact person responsible for day-to-day matters pertaining to the manse, including being the local keyholder.

Annual building inspections.

## **6. Shared Responsibilities of the Pastorate and Synod Manse Scheme for manses in the Synod Manse Scheme in occupation by Ministers or Church Related Community Workers**

The local contact person, in consultation with the occupant and Synod, will arrange for the following to happen; with the Synod Manse Fund covering the cost on receipt of invoices:

- Regular servicing of the heating system and the annual testing and certification of gas installations.
- Annual inspection and statutory periodic certification of the electrical installation and actions arising.
- The installation and maintenance of smoke and carbon monoxide detection and alarm equipment.
- The servicing and replacement of fire extinguishers and fire blankets.

The local contact person, in consultation with the occupant, and with agreement of the Synod, will arrange for the following to happen; with the Synod Manse Fund covering the cost on receipt of invoices:

- Repairs to roof and rainwater drainage.
- Internal & external redecoration.
- General repairs (except major structural repairs normally paid for by the Synod, if not covered by its insurance.)
- The replacement of internal floor coverings or finishings.
- Repairs and alterations to existing plumbing and central heating installations.
- Repair and alterations to existing electrical, telephone, computer, security alarm installations, etc.
- Repairs to internal & external windows & doors, including repairs to glazing etc.
- Repairs and alterations to external paths, hard standings, steps, fences, etc.

## **7. Responsibilities of URCEPT for vacant manses in the Synod Manse Scheme**

URCEPT is responsible through the Resources Officer for the letting of vacant Manses within the Scheme along with the associated costs and any maintenance required.

The Synod Manse Fund will receive revenue and bear the cost of capital works required to manses as follows:

- Extensions and alterations required to bring a manse up to the latest recommended National Manse Guidelines.
- Refitting bathrooms and kitchens
- Replacement of central heating boilers.
- Replacement of roof coverings, including the replacement of existing flat roofs (with high performance finish or the installation of sloping roofs).
- The replacement of existing external windows & doors, with new double-glazed units.
- The replacement of existing barge and gutter boards with UPVC if possible.
- Electrical rewiring.
- Installation of safety and security facilities, including where applicable the initial provision of fire extinguishers and fire blankets.

- New fences and/or boundary walls where the replacement is necessary other than by damage covered by insurance.
- The construction of external hard standings to allow or increase off-street parking.
- Major structural repairs not covered by insurance.
- Work required to comply with Health & Safety regulations.
- Any professional, planning, building control fees, etc. in connection with the above items.
- Professional Quinquennial buildings inspections and reports.
- Disabled Access Facilities when required.

## **Arrangements for Transfer of Assets to the Synod Manse Scheme**

### **8. Principles in the matter of the Transfer of Assets**

The priority is to ensure there are sufficient manses, meeting the requirements of Plan for Partnership, for deployment as determined by the Synod Pastoral Committee.

Transfer arrangements will be negotiated between the church and the Synod Resources Committee. (This may involve more than one church when a pastorate, with a surplus of manses, is seeking to join the Scheme. In such cases all parties should endeavour for a fair and equitable result.)

Such negotiations will include:

- Development of an arrangement which will take full account of the needs of the church.
- Assisting the church in a financial review of its income and expenditure.
- Consideration of any loss of rental income.
- Consideration of the current condition of the property.
- Provision of all relevant documentation regarding the legal and physical aspects of the property.

When such arrangements involve a local church manse fund, or the immediate sale of a manse, there shall be a discussion between the relevant local church(es), Resources Committee and Pastoral Committee to establish:

- a) the level of funds required to purchase a replacement manse for the pastorate or Mission Partnership.
- b) the level of funds required to resource capital improvements, emergency repairs or upgrading to an acceptable standard, any manse within the Scheme that serves the pastorate or Mission Partnership.
- c) how any transferred local church manse fund and / sale of proceeds (net of a and b), will then be divided equitably between the Synod and the local church(es).
- d) if any restrictions should apply to the use of monies apportioned under c.

## 9. Draft Church Meeting Resolution

The ..... (name) Church Meeting held on .....  
(date) agrees to place their manse ..... (address),  
into the Eastern Synod Manse Scheme and/or their manse investment fund .....  
(value) into the Synod Manse Fund in accordance with the Eastern Synod Manse Scheme.

This agreement is subject to Transfer Arrangements agreed with the Synod Resources Committee and Pastoral Committee as detailed below:

*(insert agreed Transfer Arrangements)*

It is agreed that the responsibilities for the costs and maintenance, of any manse assigned to the pastorate will be shared between the churches in the pastorate and the Synod as defined in the Synod Manse Scheme.

It is agreed that the Eastern Synod Manse Fund will benefit from any rental income or interest arising from this property/investment. The date for this to become effective shall be ..... (date).

It is agreed that at some future date it may be necessary to sell the Manse (after consultation with the Resources Committee, Pastoral Committee, Pastorate and Area Partnership Pastoral Advocate).

Signed on behalf of the Church Meeting:

Name ..... Signature .....

Date ..... \* Church Secretary / Treasurer / Minister / Interim Moderator

Approved after review by the Synod Resources Committee:

Name ..... Signature .....

Date .....

## **The URC Eastern Synod Meeting - Minutes held at Castle Hill URC, Ipswich on Saturday, 14 October 2023**

56 persons were noted as being in attendance, 17 of which were non-voting and 20 people accessed the meeting via live-streaming.

**The Constitution of Synod** was led by the Moderator, who thanked the host church's ministers and members for their hospitality.

### **Opening Worship led by Castle Hill URC**

The Synod meeting was called to silence by the Minister of Castle Hill URC – the Revd David Rees before opening worship began. He took as his Bible reference, 1 Corinthians 12 and entitled his sermon 'God is Love'. The opening worship concluded with prayer. The Moderator, the Revd Lythan Nevard thanked the minister for worship.

**Jubilee Ministers** were noted as follows:

The Revd Liz Caswell (50yrs)

The Revd Allen Morton – present (50yrs)

The Revd Peter Page (60yrs)

The Revd Michael Dunford – present (actually 61yrs but he was not able to be greeted last year)

A welcome and thanks for their respective ministries was given to all and certificates to those who were presented to those present. Those not able to be present have already received theirs.

The Moderator welcomed any members present for the first time

It was noted that it would be the final time that we see The Revd Peter Ball present in his current role as he will shortly be retiring after 29 years of ministry, all of which has been within this Synod.

We also have two students on living ministry placements (internships).

The Moderator then asked those present for the names of those ministers and others who have died since the previous Synod meeting, so that they can be included in the closing worship.

### **Notices for the Day**

The Synod Clerk, the Revd Dave Coaker brought to the attention of synod members that various publications for each church were available and could be taken from the stage at the rear.

The Revd Nicola Grieves was announced as the First Aider.

He informed those present that the Synod website is now up and running and asked that people should let him know if there are things missing.

Dave also drew to the attention of those present, that Eastern Synod has now been awarded Bronze Eco-synod status earlier in the year and had hoped to be granted a silver award next year but the 'goalposts' have changed so we have a little more work to do.

People were also asked not to rush into the lunch hall all at the same time, and in addition, travel expenses will be available during the first half of the lunch break, thus leaving time for everyone to pay a visit to the on-site Bookshop.

**Tellers** (if needed) will be Alison Jiggins, Faith Paulding, Revd Dr Catherine Ball and Clifford Patten

**Minutes of previous synod meeting** – were in the Book of Reports. Lythan asked the Synod meeting if anyone had any amendments. There being none, she then asked for a show of voting cards. The Minutes were then accepted as a true record.

**Induction of the Revd Alex Jacob** – The Synod Clerk then gave notice that the Revd Alex Jacob would be inducted as the Eastern Synod Transitional Minister. He will begin work in that post on 1 November. During the Induction, we usually proceed with the whole of the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church but as we have the whole day it had been decided that each part of the full Statement would be inserted at intervals during the day, the first part following next. Responses were displayed on the screen.

**Presentation and Discussion: Partnership & Discipleship – Jo Clare Young**

The Moderator introduced the Revd Jo Clare–Young, the new Mission & Training Officer based at the Synod Office and has been in post for four months. She spoke about ‘Partnership’, taking as her Bible references, verses from – Exodus 18 and Acts 6. She expressed her view that we can learn/share the load from other Synods. We can work on our discipleship and discover our gifts and callings. Everyone has a ministry. She encouraged us all to turn to our nearest neighbour and talk about what we think our particular gifts are. She enthusiastically recommended joining the Stepwise programme with the Introductory session on 2 November at 7.00pm.

Her second challenge was to work in partnership and explore whole of life discipleship. Every elder has been provided with a booklet relating to this, as the tangible result of a grant from the Discipleship Development Fund. Jo referred to Luke 10 and then asked us to discuss where our daily life places were. She advocated all elders to read the booklet and then register with Marion at the Synod Office to the introductory session of Whole Life Discipleship on 11 November from Noon until 2.00pm delivered via Zoom.

Her next challenge was ‘How do we move forward in partnership?’ There is a national course – led in Eastern Synod by Jo herself and Nicola Grieves, who are even willing to come to your church, if it would help. The sessions are every two months. She reminded us that every single person present has a ministry. She then asked us to consider ‘what we can do better if we work together?’ Jo then finished her talk by reading a passage entitled ‘The Bricklayer’.

**Mission Partnerships: East Midlands Synod’s experience**

The Moderator then introduced two people – the Revd George Mwaura and David Maddison. From the East Midlands Synod, who gave us a ‘picture’ of how things are going in their Synod and what things we can learn from them. Mr Maura spoke first, and reflected upon changes resulting from ministerial deployment, which has been reduced in recent years; however, there are many mission opportunities. Their journey to find a model that was workable, began in 2017. They then identified a hub church and then area churches. This resulted in a Resolution being passed at their Synod meeting in 2018. Most congregations were understandably fearful. They were afraid of losing members but only two churches were negative. The model is now beginning to bear fruit. Some churches were rich and had large buildings – others not. There was a need to listen and exercise empathy. It was recognised that difficulties faced smaller churches with elderly congregations. There must be a need to acknowledge this. All partnerships will be different as all churches and local situations are different. It is critical that there is a continuous dialogue. Hard work is required from all. Being a 21<sup>st</sup> century pastor is not enough; that person needs to be a 21<sup>st</sup> century Practitioner. Ministry should be exercised according to the spirit moving in you.



David Maddison spoke from the position of a recipient (and elder) at the North Notts area partnership. The East Midlands Moderator had asked them to explore potential. In North Nottingham there were no ministers. They chose to see it as a challenge and were given permission to 'invent the new'. The largest and most active church had 50 members; another had only 8 members (has now closed). Where to begin? They decided to meet together on a regular basis. A foundation had to be set. The other part of the partnership had young people, leaving 'us' isolated. By meeting together, talking together, they decided how they could work together. It was not a straightforward journey but they built a foundation of trust – and they had the confidence to disagree in a positive way but there were no power games at play. What holds us together? They produced a simple statement which became their core purpose. Now they have a sense of something happening between them. There is a sense of connection. Eventually an Area Minister was called. The church profile was eventually printed professionally. It is a mark of the journey they have taken together. There was no certainty that they would succeed.

Many Area Ministers do not understand what their role is. The main one is to visit their churches. The role of the church is to identify key people to help him. There is a significant role for those key people to advise him/her about the churches and on some cases, go with him/her as some visits are not easy. He will be seen by some as 'the minister' delivering the same old things. The resource church needs to become the area minister's 'home' – hence the need for the hub/resource church. They feel supported by the Moderator, which they hadn't done before. There is training available but there could be more.

One of the things they did in the earlier meetings, was that they wrote everything down. The next time they met, they talked to the document, and discovered this to be really important. They also created a leadership team. As a result, they found people who were able lead, as long as it was with a trained and experienced leader e.g., the area minister. And there were others with skills that they can afford to pay for – to take some of the burden. It is crucial to know where you are going - and then find the people on the way. He displayed a mosaic cross – representing one body but many parts -and then presented it to the Moderator. He also has a document which he will make available, which tracks the process. Lythan will send it out to every church. They were both given a round of applause. This was followed by prayers for the East Midlands synod.

### **Feedback from General Assembly**

The Moderator then invited Cloe Elmer – a young person in the 18-26 age group, to speak about her recent attendance at General Assembly and the pre-cursor event - 'What Do You Think?'(WDYT?), which gave her an expectation of what they would be discussing at Assembly. The support didn't end there but continued throughout Assembly. The contacts made were then followed up via a WhatsApp group. She found it an amazing experience and was happy to have been there.

The Revd Adam Earle a new Assembly member also spoke. He mentioned a presentation about the Theos report and encouraged everyone to read this. It highlights what the URC is really good at. It is doing things locally, where people can glimpse the kingdom of God.

The Moderator drew attention to the General Assembly 2023 Resolutions which have implications for local churches and/or Synods. (page 18)

This was followed by a further Statement concerning the Nature, Faith and Order of the URC.

### **Gift from Zimbabwe**

The Revd Jon Sermon was invited to speak and he had brought a gift from Zimbabwe. He had recently visited three countries in Africa and had represented our Synod at a partnership summit in Zimbabwe. In fact, the new Moderator of their Assembly is from Zimbabwe the Revd Lydia Neshangwe. The gift is a plaque upon which is engraved the icon representing the United Reformed Church together with their own, and the following words: '*The URC in partnership with the Presbytery of Zimbabwe. We are stronger together*'.

This reflects what Jo Clare-Young was asking us to explore, earlier. Indeed, 'Stronger Together' is the theme of the General Assembly. The Moderator received the gift with applause, informing the Meeting that it will be displayed in the Synod office. She then asked for an indication by show of hands, those churches currently engaged in a partnership with the Church in Zimbabwe. The Synod is always looking to create new partnerships supported by Robert Dart, the Global Partnership Co-ordinator who is not able to be present today. Lythan had recently discovered that the East Anglian Methodist District also partners the Church in Zimbabwe so it might be possible to do things together with the partner denominations both here and there.

### **Notices before lunch**

The Clerk then gave out some house-keeping notices before the Meeting broke for Lunch.

The afternoon session opened with the Clerk reading the next section of the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church, to which the Meeting responded.

### **Youth and Children Update**

The Revd Nicola Grieves was then invited to give an update of the work relating to Children and Youth.

- a) Advent packs – good resource for Mission and outreach and is targeted at children from toddlers and up to @ 14 yrs, and their families. Packs are available from Nicola at £1.00 per pack.
- b) 12/13 Jan – Retreat for those working with children & young people, at Pleshey – the Diocesan Retreat Centre in the Chelmsford Diocese.
- c) Praise Party at Hutton & Shenfield – 25 Feb 2024. Do please put this date in your diary. If you are interested but cannot make the date or the location, please speak to Nicola and she may be able to organise something in a church near you.
- d) Nicola has decided that she will take Youth Camp to Greenbelt in 2024- £35 per person, from 23-25 August.
- e) She encouraged anyone over the age of 16 to attend Youth Assembly, as there are several places vacant.
- f) Leaders Gathering which runs alongside and is parallel with the Youth Assembly, from 26-28 Jan 2024 for anyone leading youth work in their church/area.
- g) New Holiday Club materials are available now.
- h) Faith Adventures with Children – resource available online – FREE, written by URC members for the United Reformed Church, it is published monthly. They can be easily downloaded. They are also broadening the age target to include 11-14 yrs old. Contact Nicola for more information.
- i) 'Talking About' – on the fourth Thursday every month at 7pm via Zoom specifically for those who work with children and young people, so that they can meet together and share experiences and ideas.

Lythan thanked Nicola for her enthusiastic update.

**Synod Appointments** and vacancies were listed on page 7 of the Synod papers. Dave gave advanced thanks to Gil Heathcote, Treasurer, who service to the Synod ends at the end of this year.

If there is any interest in any of the vacancies or you know someone who might be interested – get in touch.

The Synod officers are also looking for additional members for the Mission and Discipleship and Pastoral committees. If anyone has the ability to take accurate and concise Minutes, you will be warmly welcomed at the Trust and Resources committee meetings.

Liz Caswell has now given notice that she will be stepping down from her various roles in the Synod in addition to being the Director of Ministerial Training – and going forward, Maggie Jones will take responsibility of the Candidating paperwork and process prior to training, and Jo, as the Mission Training officer will be supporting those in training.

The Synod Officers wish to place the following names (listed on Page 7) before Synod.

**Resolution 1 - Synod appoints the following and encourages names to be offered for the vacant posts.**

The Moderator supported strongly the call to fill the many existing vacancies. There being no questions, a vote was taken which was **CARRIED**, with none against.

The Clerk gave notice that next summer he will be on a ministers' sabbatical and also on reduced hours and therefore his priority will be the Autumn Synod meeting and preparation for General Assembly.

The next Synod in March will bring an update on the Property policy and the Manse Policy, with the possibility of the Pioneer Fund.

**Advocates: Pastoral / M&M**

There was also a meeting of Synod Officers, Convenors and several others to discuss where we stand with the Advocates. In the short-term, Pastoral Advocates will remain as they are. M&M Advocates will receive more admin support from Synod staff.

**Environmental Policy**

There being no questions, the Clerk then moved onto the Environmental Policy. The reports details where we were and includes the suggested revisions.

**Resolution 2 – Synod adopts the revised Environmental Policy and requests an action plan to be presented to the March 2024 Synod meeting.**

There being no questions or comments, voting cards were shown and the vote was **CARRIED** unanimously.

**Mission Grants** – the administration and paperwork has been amended to be more helpful to those working through the process.

**Property Grants** - Lythan explained that previously when applying for a property grant, applicants needed to state the source for the money to come from. The Synod will now do this on their behalf.

**Missional & Sustainable Buildings** - Thanks were offered to Clifford Patten for the work that he has done on this. Guidance and plans are available online. The Moderator commended these papers to all and stated that she had found them incredibly helpful.

**Trustee Recruitment**

The Trust is seeking new trustees to fill various roles outlined in the paper on page 10. If you think you might help in this way, please speak to Andrew East or one of the other Directors of the Trust.

## **Northstowe Church Network**

The Revd Dr Beth Cope spoke to Janet Tollington's report which and gave an outline and what they hope to become. She referred to in the Synod papers (page 11). She noted one amendment to the report – in the final paragraph on page 11. It should state £5,000 in place of £10,000.

The vision has always been about partnership. It has always been ecumenical. Now, this partnership is about to be formalised. She has every confidence that this work will continue. This is an unusual opportunity to be able to bid for community land which will be a hub for something much bigger. Northstowe will have 10,000 houses and 25,000 people. The Pathfinder C of E School is where they currently meet. Northstowe needs more than just one worshipping community, but not denominational, so when the land has been identified, the worship centre will be multi-denominational. The developers have not set aside a space for a new church but the community have identified a space where a special place can be built. The whole site can be designed for all uses as an open-hearted meeting point.

Lythan highlighted the complication of dealing with developers. We don't know when the land will be released but as soon as it is, a bid must go in immediately. The Methodist Church have authorised some money for this, as has the CofE. The URC also has funds available because we have closed some churches and sold those buildings. This money could be used for this. We need a guarantee for now. Tony Deighton from Witham asked whether a document has been written to outline how the denominations involved will work together with the community. Janet Tollington responded that a charitable incorporated organisation will be created with the usual layers of trustees, management etc. from the three denominations and submitted to the Charty Commission. Churches Together in Cambridgeshire are also actively involved in this.

## **Resolution 3 – Synod affirms the Trust decision to support the Northstowe Church Network bid for Section 106 land for faith and community use.**

A vote was called for, which was unanimously **CARRIED**. The Moderator led Synod Meeting in praying for their endeavours.

## **Mission & Discipleship**

Trevor Hahn spoke to the report on page 13 of the papers. And requested that Church Meetings might add Mission & Discipleship on their agenda, and to feed back to the M & D committee, any comments. They will be happy to be involved in any conversations.

**Faith in Action and Mission & Discipleship** have now split but did meet together recently. They continue to work together and the hope is that this will bear much fruit.

The Mission applications are exciting; particularly Alex Clare-Young and team at Downing Place.

Warm Hubs are now in peoples' minds. Trevor reminded us that there is some help financially available for this.

Lythan gave a short update on the Faith in Action Forum. The work is exciting to see. There are a number of Advocate roles currently vacant so if anyone is interested, please speak to Robert Ogden.

## **Pastoral Committee**

Anne Sardeson spoke to the report on page 15, stating that the key piece of work at the moment, is Mission Partnership and how we might share with other churches. Work will be done on Lay Presidency at the sacraments and a new process will be available at the next Synod. We need to think differently.

Thanks were given for the life and witness of Castle Camps and Christ Church, Colchester, although at Christ Church, there is an Anglican congregation remaining. The building was shared for 40 years. Ken Forbes emphasised that it is not always failure – sometimes the job has been done.

Peter Ball mentioned that the East Suffolk Area churches are already well along on that same road.

### **Resources Committee**

This is Gill Heathcote's final report. He gave his thanks to all the churches in the Synod for maintain their M&M contributions and thanked the Synod Team and all Church Treasurers.

The Moderator introduced the following three resolutions:

#### **Resolution 4 – Administration Fund**

**Synod accepts the Synod Administration Fund report to 31 August 2023 and the Church Life and Mission Funds report to 31 August 2023.**

The vote was called with none against and was therefore **CARRIED** unanimously.

#### **Resolution 5 – Synod receives the Trust Report and audited Financial Statements**

The vote was **CARRIED** – none against.

#### **Resolution 6 – Synod accepts the Church Life and Mission Fund budget and Synod Administration Fund budget for 2024**

The vote was **CARRIED** – none against.

She went on to explain that Gil has been spearheading an investigation into ways to release restricted funds (funds that have a specified use) so that we have more funding that we are able to share and support those who need it most. There may also be a time coming when we look at inter-Synod resource-sharing to aid those synods who are really struggling – so now is the time to ask, as it may not be available in the future. Gil will be formally thanked in March.

**Next Synod Meeting** will be at Downing Place, Cambridge on 9 March 2024.

The Clerk led the final part of the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church.

The Business has ended. The Clerk issued a few notices.

The final act will be Communion including the Induction of the Revd Alex Jacob.

## Directions to Downing Place URC, Cambridge, CB2 3EL

**By Car** – *if travelling by car, please try to share transport where at all possible.* There is no parking available at the church and the City Centre car parks are very expensive. (Only those requiring disabled parking, agreed in advance, will have parking costs covered by expenses.)

Therefore, if travelling by car, you are encouraged to use the Park and Ride service. (You can claim costs for this with your expenses by showing your ticket.)

There are five such sites on the outskirts of Cambridge. The service that runs from the Trumpington site just off the M11 to the south of Cambridge stops outside Downing Place. Alternatively, particularly for those coming from the north or east of the Synod area, the park and ride sites at Milton or on the Newmarket Road may be more convenient. The buses on both those services terminate in Emmanuel Street, within a short walking distance of Downing Place.

Please see the map on the following pages for the location of Downing Place and Emmanuel Street. And to see further details of the locations of the Park and Ride sites please follow the link <https://cambridgeparkandride.info/>

For those using sat nav, the postcodes of the Park and Ride sites referred to above are Trumpington (CB2 9FT); Milton (CB24 6DQ) and Newmarket Road (CB2 8AA).

**Disabled Parking** – There is no disabled parking although passengers can be dropped off in Downing Place, and the park and ride services stop either outside Downing Place or nearby. However, if you need to park close to Downing Place, please consult Faith Paulding at the Synod office if you need to claim this on expenses and use the Lion Yard multi-storey at a cost of £29.90 for 5 hours or more.

**By Rail** – the station in Cambridge is over a mile from the Church. You would need to get a bus or a taxi to the church.

