

Moving towards Mission Partnerships in Eastern Synod



Introduction

This takes us on from the [Principles of Mission Partnership in Eastern Synod](#) that were adopted at our Synod meeting in March 2023. So please remind yourself of them, and the proposed amendment, before you read on and seek to apply them locally.

Since then, the November 2023 meeting of the Synod Pastoral Committee agreed a framework for initial conversations between churches.

This is a process, and for us to get to the point where we can effectively deploy Ministers of Word and Sacrament, direct other Synod resources, and implement ways of working that ease the pressure on elders and office holders in local churches, we need to make a start. This will require additional effort in the short-term, but our intention is to move towards a pattern of being that lifts burdens and creates space for flourishing,

There is the proverbial joke in response to asking for directions, “I wouldn’t start from here!” There is also the proverbial saying, “The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second-best time is now.” We are where we are. We have principles to guide us. We have a list of neighbours to explore with. So, let’s get started.

Getting Started

The Synod has deployed Rev’d Alex Jacob as our Synod Transitional Minister to support some churches on this path. Others will be accompanied by people with various roles in the Synod structure. But many will receive encouragement from the Pastoral Committee to begin exploring together as an elders’ meeting and to gather people from nearby churches to talk together.

Our starting point is conversation. Coming together to get to know each other, our neighbouring churches, and building relationships.

This will require a degree of organisation and may well start with an individual taking the initiative and arranging an initial meeting. But there may well be a case for a small group to oversee the ongoing process as different groups are invited to come together to explore specific areas. e.g., Worship leaders, treasurers, administrators etc.

Step 1

Select a venue and set a date 6-8 weeks ahead, coordinating with church secretaries and anyone else you think appropriate, to gather people together.

The starting point for the guest list will be elders, but you can broaden that out as you feel appropriate.

And why are you gathering? The emphasis is getting to know each other better, so you might choose to have a formal meeting, but you could also gather for worship, to eat together, or a mix of all three. There needs to be space for conversation, but also a reminder of what Mission Partnerships are about, and presentations from each local church describing who they are, what they do, and their mission.

Synod wants to offer whatever support we can, so we will endeavour to make someone available to help with arrangements, be present and/or speak to the gathering and, working to a pre-agreed budget (up to £10 per head), pay for the catering.

Step 2

Following this smaller groups, concerned with specific areas of church life, should be invited to come together to reflect on:

- How does what we do happen now?
- How can we support each other?
- How can we make the task simpler, easier or shared?
- Do we want to meet again? (How often / what agenda / who to coordinate?)

Hopefully those questions will trigger conversations for whichever group come together, whether they be church secretaries, treasurers, worship leaders, ministers / local leaders, pastoral carers, mission/family workers, safeguarding leads, bookings or buildings maintenance people.

Step 3

At some point there will be the need for a group of people to reflect on the various conversations to review what's progressing, stalling or needs redirecting. This would probably be made up of the church secretaries, ministers and local leaders involved.

Things to consider:

- What groups are having discussions?
- Which groups aren't and should?
- What support do you need from the Synod? (e.g., to enable discussions / explore grant funding / resource common areas of activity etc.)
- Are you beginning to resemble a Mission Partnership?

Step 4

The next step on this path will be to make some form of mutual agreement to become a Mission Partnership and begin describing how it will work for you.