

MERSEY SYNOD – 8th November 2008 at Bridge Chapel, Liverpool

IN ADDITION TO THE BOOK OF REPORTS, this briefing paper highlights matters discussed at November Synod to help you report back to Elders' and Church Meetings. This is an informal document, not the minutes, which will be sent at a later date.

Synod was held in Liverpool and a buffet lunch was provided to celebrate Liverpool's status as European Capital of Culture 2008.

Personalia : In addition to the information in the Synod Book of Reports, it was reported that Revd Florence Mowat and Revd Bill Peters had died recently.

Synod Executive :

Appointments: Revd Gordon Smith - Mission Council rep
Mr. John Griffith - Synod Commitment for Life Advocate
Mr. Phil Reeve - Convener of Youth & Children's Committee
Revd Ken Summers - Convener of Manse sub-Committee
Mr. Ian Paul - Member of Manse sub-Committee

General Assembly matter - the Synod Clerk will report that he has received no objections to Resolution 49.

Synod Appeals Procedure - was adopted and it was agreed that decisions made should be referred back to Synod for concurrence.

Pastoral :

Appointments: New Pastoral Officers: Revd Martin Truscott - Liverpool
Revd Gwynfor Evans - Wirral

Churches seeking advice on property matters should contact Andrew Martlew at Synod Office in the first instance. Matters will then be referred to Pastoral Committee as necessary.

Resources :

Copies of the 2007 accounts are available on request from Andrew Martlew. Due to the current economic situation, capital has decreased as Synod has had to purchase manses without first selling those no longer required and low interest on investments means income is less than usual.

Charities Act 2006: Local churches with an income in excess of £100,000 per annum will need to register as Charities with the Charity Commission in 2009. Please access the link at the URC website www.urc.org.uk or contact Andrew Martlew.

Woodward Trust: a charity which supports retired ministers in the North West would be grateful for donations which will help them to continue their valued work.

Mission Grants - it has been recommended that grants are paid to:

Caradoc	Outreach Coordinator
Chadwick Mount	Neighbourhood Outreach Worker
Heswall	Children/Family Worker
Warrington: Elmwood Avenue	Youth & Children's Worker
Warrington: St John's	Pastoral Worker
Warrington: Thomas Risley	Youth Worker

The outcome of an appeal brought by one church will come to March Synod.

Property Group: Colin Usher (Convener) made an appeal to churches to suggest members within their church who have surveying, building construction or architectural experience who might like to join the Group to share their knowledge (4 meetings per year).

Ministries :

Conversare: is a Christian charity which encourages people to engage in spiritual conversation in groups. They have an extensive library of resources for this purpose which can be accessed for a small charge and can offer training for church members in 'Christian Facilitation'. A group from Heswall URC who have done this training are willing to come to churches in the Synod to give an introduction and run groups. Further information at www.conversare.org.uk or call Sue Brown on 0151 348 4004 or Sandra Wellington at the Synod Office.

General Assembly Resolution 23 'A Challenge to the Church': asks each church to think creatively about its future, what kind of ministry does it want/need and how these can be merged. All stories, suggestions and views are welcomed so that, as a Synod, we can form a realistic strategy for the future which preserves our reformed tradition. We will be asking all churches to put this on the Church Meeting agenda in the new year.

'Encounter': Sandra Wellington, Synod Retreats Link Person, asked churches to draw members attention to this booklet which gives information about the URC Retreats Network. Next Synod Quiet Day, led by the Moderator, is on 29 November at Heswall URC – an oasis of God in the busy run up to Christmas.

Youth & Children's Work : It was noted that every church should have a designated Youth & Children's Elder and Youth & Children's issues should be on every church meeting agenda.

Children's Work Year - during 2009 Mersey Synod will focus on Children's Work. There will be a meeting in January (information available soon!) and we are looking to appoint a Children's Advocate.

Child Friendly Church Award - St. John's URC, Warrington were presented with a certificate and plaque which is valid for three years. This scheme gives churches an opportunity to explore the nine criteria and work towards the award. If your church is interested in this scheme, please contact Malcolm Evans at Synod Office.

Church & Society :

Malawi Partnership Group - Sue Ainscough and Judi McGowan reported on their time in Malawi. Those who made the trip are very willing to visit churches to speak about their experience.

Commitment for Life - Although Revd Brian Holroyd has retired as Synod Advocate, he is still very happy to come to churches to explain and encourage.

Fairtrade: Following the recent Fairtrade status review, those churches who are not yet Fairtrade churches were encouraged to explore it with the aim of having 100% commitment in our Synod.

Mission

Vision4Life : John Oldershaw offered some ideas and encouraged churches to sign up at www.vision4life.org.uk Each church will receive 2 copies of a Vision4Life resource booklet for the "Bible Year" and those churches which have signed up via the website will receive a DVD. Further copies available from the URC Bookshop. Keep checking the website for the latest information.

Hope08: Churches were asked to register the 'Hours of Kindness' they have contributed with Synod Office (current total 1156) and some suggestions were offered for ways to bring Hope in the run up to Christmas.

CEA cards: Churches have received four sample cards and can use the code on the special offer order form to gain a discount on this useful tool for reaching out to those who use our church buildings etc.

Diary Dates

16 Nov	Roberta Rominger, General Secretary of the URC, will be preaching at 10.30am at Eshe Road URC, Crosby and 3.00pm at Heswall URC, Wirral. All are very welcome
17 Nov	Day for Ministers with Roberta Rominger at Bishop's Lodge
22 Nov	Meeting for designated Safe Church reps 10 am – 1 pm at Upton-by-Chester
29 Nov	Advent Quiet Day with the Moderator at Heswall URC from 10am – 3pm