

MERSEY SYNOD – 12th March 2011 at Upton-by-Chester URC, Chester

This briefing paper highlights matters discussed at March Synod to help you report back to Elders' and Church Meetings and should be used alongside the information in the Synod Book of Reports.

This is an informal document, not the minutes, which will be sent at a later date.

Personalia Ministers recently inducted in Mersey Synod, Chris Parker and Kate Gartside, were welcomed. Synod stood to pray and remember those members of Synod who had died and also those who are ill. Synod also prayed for new Moderators, Clare Downing and Nicola Furley-Smith, who have associations with Mersey.

Synod Executive

- Phil Reeve was reappointed as the Convener of the Youth and Children's Work Committee for a 3-year term (2011-2014).
- Revd Gordon Smith was appointed as Synod Ecumenical Officer for the Churches Together in Merseyside area. He will also be a member of the Synod Executive with the ecumenical role for a term of 3 years.

Mission Priorities

The leaflet, "Focus In", was highlighted. A course on Hospitality and Diversity will be held on:

- 21st May 9.30 am – 1.00 pm at Middlewich URC
- 8th June 7.30 – 9.30 pm at Heswall URC
- 14th September 7.30 – 9.30 pm at Trinity URC, Wigan

Youth & Children's Work

Two further Child Protection meetings will take place on

- 24th March 7.30 pm at Ainsdale Village URC
- and 30th March 7.30 pm at Oakvale URC, Liverpool.

Miss Hannah Sharp (Allerton URC, Liverpool) is the Youth representative to Synod.

Gary and Jane Leighton have been appointed as Co-Moderators Elect for FURY. The FURY Treasurer is also from Mersey Synod.

A Children and Youth Synod will run alongside November Synod. Representatives were encouraged to bring their young people along to this meeting.

Pastoral

Churches were encouraged to provide any submissions for Pastoral meetings 10 -14 days prior to the meeting dates shown in the Book of Reports.

LMMR (Local Ministry and Mission Reviews) - an introduction booklet was made available which sets out proposals for Mersey Synod's implementation of the process. Copies of the presentation and script are available from Synod Office. Pastoral representatives will contact churches when it is their turn to undertake the process and supply a full pack of information at this point.

Church Advertising Campaign - an explanatory booklet was made available and the background explain by Lawrence Moore, Director of the URC Windermere centre. A press release for use in church magazines etc. is attached.

Ministries

CRCW - Simon Loveitt gave a presentation on the work of a Church Related Community Worker. If this ministry interests you, please contact Sandra Wellington, Training Officer.

Lay Preaching - A questionnaire will be sent to Lay Preachers (and those who lead worship more than 3 times per year) in the near future to discern how Synod can best offer support for those leading worship in our churches. Further information from Sally Buttifant
Sally_b_creative@hotmail.com

Local Church Leadership - an information leaflet was made available. The names of candidates for the course, which will start in September, should be with Sandra Wellington by May.

TLS (Training for Learning and Serving) - Elizabeth Smyth received her certificate on completing the Foundation course. David Claxton and Arthur Swift will receive their certificates at their local church.

National Enquirer's Day - will be hosted by Mersey Synod at Hoylake with Meols URC on 2nd April from 10.30 am – 4.30 pm. It will cover the whole range of ministries and there will be workshops and discussion groups for people and churches exploring their future mission.

Church & Society

Christian Aid - Linda Tiongco spoke about Christian Aid Week 15-21 May 2011. Linda would be glad to receive invitations to talk about her work. She is based in Warrington: 01925 573769.

Malawi - Tickets for the Liverpool Harmonic Gospel Concert in aid of funds for the Women's Centre in Blantyre on 17th June at Christ Church, Port Sunlight are available from Susan Flynn.

Amendment to Harry Potter's email address on p.16 of the Book of Reports:
handrpotter@talktalk.net

Sweden - Our partner church in Sweden is facing two issues:

- i). The Swedish government is forcing all organisations which carry out marriages to accept same sex marriage. The Free Churches are trying to have a 'conscience' clause inserted.
 - ii). The Swedish Baptist and Methodist Churches are planning to amalgamate in 2014.
- Revd Richard Hambly invited anybody who has a contact in Sweden to contact him if they have any knowledge on either of these issues.

Dates of Synod Meetings:

12th July Summer Evening meeting of Synod at Haresfinch URC
20th July Summer Evening meeting of Synod at St. Columba, Hunts Cross URC
reps choose which to attend

5th November Synod at West Kirby URC, Wirral

PRESS RELEASE from Gill Nichol, Press & Media Officer, United Reformed Church

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Are you ready for change?

Article for synods and local churches – March 2011

On Saturday March 12 the Synod meeting saw a presentation on the campaign of radical welcome that the United Reformed Church has been working on for the past two years. The Revd Roberta Rominger, General Secretary of the URC, believes it to be one of the most significant things she has been involved in during the course of her ministry. Every URC congregation in Britain has been invited to be part of it, and has been asked to think and pray long and carefully about their response to the invitation.

The URC's campaign is primarily an evangelistic campaign of radical welcome and, for those URC churches that decide to accept the challenge of becoming radically welcoming, it will be transformational. The Revd Lucy Berry, Campaign Advocate, explains: "It's a chance for all URC congregations to change the way church is seen to behave to all those who walk through their doors - and to develop and transform the life of their individual church in the process."

Participating churches will be required to examine closely how they - corporately and as individuals - welcome people into their fellowship and how they can learn to be as radically welcoming as Jesus. Mrs. Rominger says: "The power of the campaign is that people will encounter Jesus, through Jesus-shaped churches."

Ms Berry adds: "One of the extraordinary things about Jesus was his love and open welcome for those whom the Pharisees and Sadducees saw as unclean. And yet today people of all kinds know, or suspect, that they won't get a welcome in many churches. Our campaign will tell people about the churches they can attend where they'll find a welcome. We believe this initiative will help the spiritual lives of many, many people who need not feel excluded or outside of the love of God. We're really excited about this campaign and hope that you will be too."

The next nine months are a time of preparation, inspiration, prayer and transformation for the URC, as churches begin to sign up and start moving towards the aim of being radically welcome - the public launch will be in early 2012.

More detailed information about the process should be available in an article in a forthcoming edition of your church and / or synod newsletter.

If you still have questions about how the campaign could affect your church, please contact Lucy Berry, Campaign Advocate, at lucy.berry@urc.org.uk or on 07715 104361

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