MEETING OF

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

WESSEX SYNOD

at

Avenue St Andrew’s URC
The Avenue
Southampton
SO17 1XQ

SATURDAY 21st March 2015
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AGENDA

10:00 Arrivals and Coffee

10:30 Synod constituted by the Moderator
   Opening Worship
   1. Welcome to Ecumenical Visitors and new members of Synod
   2. Ministry and Pastoral News
   3. Apologies
   4. Minutes of Synod held on November 2014 and matters arising
   5. Order of business

10:45
11:10 Synod Executive report
   a. Nominations Group
   b. Resolution 1 Synod Appointments
   c. Resolution 2 Newbury Closure

11:30 Ministries and Learning Committee
   Group reports: Lay Preachers, Training, Ecumenical

11:45 Finance and Property Committee
   a. Ministry & Mission Fund
   b. Mission & Mission Fund

12:00 Report on Synod visit to Zambia

12:30 Mission and Outreach Committee
   a. Mission Development Group
   b. Church and Society Group
   c. Silence and Retreats Group
   d. World Church Group
   e. Le Weekend

12:50 Administration

1:00-2:00 LUNCH

2:00 Introduction to Same Sex Marriage discussion
   Discussion

3:15 Resolution 3 on Fossil fuels

3:30 Children’s and Youth Work Committee
   a. Synod Youth Executive
   b. Resolution 4 on Good Practice
   c. Child Friendly Church Award – re-award to Fareham

4:00 Closing worship led by Ruth White and Children’s Day participants
   followed by tea and departures

Next meeting of Synod: Saturday 7th November 2015 at High Cross Church, Camberley
LISTING OF ORDINANDS AND MINISTERIAL CHANGES

Ordinands training for Ministry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>College/Course</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ruth Wilson</td>
<td>Westminster College</td>
<td>(4th year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul O’Connor</td>
<td>Northern College</td>
<td>(2nd year)</td>
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<td>Paul Stein</td>
<td>Westminster College</td>
<td>(1st year)</td>
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Inductions

16th November Jon Sermon was inducted to High Cross Church, Camberley
6th February Bob Almond (Baptist) was inducted to United Church Ferndown

Ministers who have Retired

31st December Richard Becher from Marlow and retires to West Midlands Synod

Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers Commissioning

11th January Louise Shrubsole
8th February Helen Everard

Jubilee Ministers
Those ministers celebrating significant anniversaries during 2015 are as follows:

50th Anniversary Brian Treharne
60th Anniversary John Sturney
60th Anniversary Raymond Moody
60th Anniversary Stanley Jones
60th Anniversary Nelson Bainbridge
75th Anniversary Lawrence Squires

Changes to Ministerial Responsibilities

1st January Anne Bray became Trust Chaplain for Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
27th March Nick Adlem from Richmond Hill St Andrew’s, Bournemouth to out of pastoral charge, but is remaining in the Synod

Movements before November Synod

April  Terry Hinks moves from The Abbey & Braishfield, Romsey to Thames North Synod
April  Alison Dalton (CRCW) from Bridging Communities, Poole to North Western Synod
August Debbie Borda (Methodist) moves from United Church Winchester
August Adam Stevenson (Methodist) moves from Holy Family Blackbird Leys, Oxford
Obituaries

David Murray Main
21 September 1924 – 3 October 2014 (aged 90)

West Benwell Church, Newcastle (1949-52)
St Ninian’s, Luton (1952-61)
St James, Huddersfield (1961-65)
St Paul’s Harrogate (1965-79)
Secretary, Healthcare Chaplaincy Board Free Church Federal Council (1979-91)

Born within the sound of Bow Bells, David regarded himself as a "Cockney", but was also very proud of his Scottish heritage. On leaving school, he gained a Chemistry Degree from London University as an external student, and during the war worked in the chemical industry, on the development of more efficient aircraft fuel.

Life changed significantly when David responded to the call to ministry. During his theological training at Westminster College, Cambridge, he met and married his first wife, Grace, attracted by her lovely singing voice in the church choir! David was ordained in 1949 and inducted to West Benwell, ministering there for 3 years before moving on to Luton, Huddersfield, and Harrogate. Many people in these Churches remember David fondly, and have been touched by his life and Ministry.

Life changed again in 1979 when David and the family moved to London, when he was invited to pursue his interest in Hospital Chaplaincy as Secretary to the Free Church Federal Council’s Healthcare Board. During his 12 years in post, David made a significant impact during a difficult time of NHS reorganisations, conducting delicate negotiations with sensitivity, encouraging deeper ecumenical relationships and increasing the number of Free Church Chaplaincy posts.

David retired to Potters Bar where he threw himself enthusiastically into District meetings, faithfully serving on District Pastoral Committee, acting as Interim Moderator in various churches, and involved with pastoral consultations and vacancy visits, often acting as a "troubleshooter". He read widely, and often circulated stimulating and challenging articles to ministerial colleagues!

Throughout his life, David was always been proud of his family, and interested in the progress of his grandchildren, enjoying family visits and appreciating their support. After a time of sadness, it was a great joy when Pauline, a colleague at FCFC, came on the scene. They were married in 1999 in Potters Bar URC. David was delighted when Pauline was herself called to the ministry, and was very supportive.

Over the last few years David’s health deteriorated, necessitating a triple heart by-pass which gave him a new lease of life. He reached a milestone on Sunday, 21st September 2014, celebrating his 90th Birthday with Pauline and his family before his death a few days later.

Throughout his life, David had placed himself in God’s hands; faithfully responding to God’s Call, obediently fulfilling his ministry - God reaching out in love and compassion through him. We thank God for David's life and ministry and for all he has meant to those who have known and loved him.

Revd Jeanne Ennals
Donald Schofield
28 February 1928 – 12 October 2014 (aged 86)

As a young man of 17 years Donald saw a poster at his local church advertising the need for missionaries to serve with the London Missionary Society. He was surprised that anyone could volunteer to be a missionary, thinking that you had to be specially called. His minister encouraged him to follow up his interest. Donald asked the LMS whether it would be of any use for him to study French at university and was told that it would be very useful for service in Madagascar. This set him on a path via Manchester University, where he graduated in French Studies, Mansfield College, Oxford, where he graduated in Theology and completed the Ordination Course for the Congregational ministry. Donald was accepted by the Society for missionary service and, following his marriage in the summer of 1952 to Jean Rowland, he was ordained at Digbeth-in-the-Field, and commissioned for overseas missionary work. Donald and Jean left for further French language study at the Alliance Francaise in Paris, before setting off for Madagascar where they arrived in 1953. After an initial period which included study of the Malagasy language and qualifying to teach French in schools, Donald was appointed District/Educational missionary with responsibility for a new Protestant school, a new boarding house for girls, and evangelism and church administration in an area twice the size of Wales. Donald and Jean remained in Madagascar until 1971, fulfilling this demanding schedule, and bringing up their family of three sons, Michael, John Paul and Christopher, who were initially home-schooled by Jean before entering Eltham College.

On returning from Madagascar and following a refresher course at Westminster College, Cambridge, Donald was called to the pastorate of Hanover Chapel, Peckham, where he combined his ministry with outreach as youth worker with the Inner London Educational Authority, and also qualifying in Pastoral Ministry and Family/Marital Counselling through the Westminster Pastoral Foundation. His final pastorate from 1982-93 was at Bromley URC and the Shortlands Community Church (URC/Church of England) where he steered the Bromley Church through the complications of the compulsory purchase and destruction of their much-loved church building as part of the redevelopment of the town centre, and the planning and dedication of a new building. It was a turbulent time but Donald remained throughout a calm and enabling leader, encouraging people to grow in faith and decision-making. At this time also he became the British organiser of the Colloque franco-brittanique, which had been formed after the second world war as a gesture of solidarity between ministers of the Eglise Reformee de France and the Congregational Union of England and Wales, later to form part of the United Reformed Church. Donald held this role for sixteen years and became well-known and widely respected in the churches of Nord-Normandie, where he garnered a reputation as a preacher as impressive in French as well as English and Malagasy.

Retirement brought Donald and Jean to Witney, and to membership of St Columba’s URC in Oxford where Donald often played the organ for services and his wisdom and commitment to ecumenism and the world church were greatly valued by the congregation. For five years he convened the Pastoral Committee of the then Reading and Oxford District Council.

Tributes to Donald bear abundant witness to his friendly, cheerful and competent nature, his deeply committed Christian faith, his clear thinking and the caring, challenging and loving theology that he both preached and lived. He was a good husband to Jean, a good brother, and for his wider family a good Dad, Granddad, and Great-Granddad. All who knew him give thanks for his life.

Revd Anthony Tucker
MINUTES

MINUTES of the meeting of WESSEX SYNOD on Saturday 8 November 2014 at High Cross Church, Camberley

The Moderator, the Revd Clare Downing, welcomed members to the meeting and constituted the Synod. She then led the opening worship featuring the blog from the Beaker Folk of Husborne Crawley.

Personalia Members were asked to pray for Carla & David Grosch-Miller. Carla’s father has died recently in USA; Phillip Jones and his wife who is seriously ill; and the family of the Zambian minister, the Revd Obed Mutale, who recently attended Spring School, and who has died. For Gwen & Bernie Collins, who are serving in retirement in Papua New Guinea, and their concerns for the effects of climate change. Members were asked to stand in memory of those who had died and thanks were given for good lives lived.

Attendence

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<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Church representatives</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>URC Ministers/CRCWs</td>
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<td>Ministers of other denominations</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Retired ministers</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Others holding Synod appointments</td>
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<td>Ordinands</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Visitors</td>
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<td>180</td>
<td>Children’s Forum</td>
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14S15 Child Friendly Church Awards A new Child Friendly Church Award was presented to Lymington URC and an award was presented for a second time to Trinity URC, Bournemouth.

14S16 Ecumenical visitors: The Moderator greeted Revd Canon Stuart Thomas, Rector of Frimley on behalf of Guildford Diocese of the Church of England. The Revd Patrick Wintrebert brought greetings from Eglise Protestant Unie de Nord-Normandie

14S17 Ministry and Pastoral News:

a. There have been 4 inductions/welcomes: the Revd Tom Carmichael to Cheap Street Church, Sherborne; the Revd Ian Griffiths (Methodist) to Trinity Abingdon; Janet Hayes (Methodist deacon) to Bordon and the Revd David Hull (Methodist) to Bell Street United Church, Shaftesbury.

b. Before the next Synod the Revd Jon Sermon will have been inducted to High Cross Camberley.

c. Since the last Synod 1 minister has moved out of the Synod: the Revd Mark Meatcher to Eastern Synod.

d. Since the last Synod the Revds Gwen & Bernie Collins have moved to Papua New Guinea to take up a short term appointment.

e. Since the last Synod one minister has retired: the Revd Stephen Wilkins

f. Since the last Synod 3 retired ministers have moved into the Synod: the Revd Patricia Clamp; the Revd Howard Sharp and the Revd David Witts

g. Before the next Synod 1 minister will have retired: the Revd Richard Becher.

Since the last Synod John Eric Ticehurst; the Revd Ivy Halden, the Revd William John (Bill) Connell and the Revd Eric John Rix (John) Bentliff have died and tributes to them are included in the book of reports. Revd David Main and the Revd Donald Schofield have also died and obituaries will be included in the March Synod papers.
The Moderator said that as Mr Colin MacBean had stood down as Synod Clerk, Mr Peter Pay was standing in as Synod Clerk for the meeting of Synod.

14S19 Order of business: Mr Peter Pay said that there was no change in the Order of Business.

14S20 Minutes of the Last Meeting: The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2014 were approved and signed as a correct record after the following changes to 14S13. In line 2 replace Fury Assembly with Youth Assembly.

14S21 Matters Arising: There were no matters arising not otherwise on the agenda.

14S22 Church Growth Day: The Revd Rob Weston spoke about this second conference which is scheduled for 16th May 2015 and encouraged all churches to attend. The booking form can be found on the back of the flyer or bookings can be made by e-mail to development@urcwessex.org.uk

14S23 Finance and Property Committee report: Dr David Page introduced the report and asked members to alter the statement under Grants Loans and Permissions for Lytton to read £42,000 over 5 years and under Woking to read £42,000 over 5 years. He also said that exceptional grants had been given to churches for storm damage earlier in the year. This included one of £115,000 made to Basingstoke for repairs to the roof. A grant of £67,000 had been given to Walton-on-Thames URC for work on their entrance. With these alterations the report was received by consensus.

Under point 4, Trinity Hall Reading, Mr Bob Purdom spoke on behalf of three Reading churches, St Andrew’s, Grange and Tilehurst URC’s, regretting the closure of the Halls of Residence which had served students well over the last 25 years.

RESOLUTION 2
TRINITY HALL:
Wessex Synod notes the closure of Trinity Hall, a student Hall of Residence in Reading, and records thanks to all involved in establishing & running this mission project over the last 29 years.

The resolution was presented by Mr Bob Purdom on behalf of the Church Meeting of St Andrew’s URC, Reading. He paid tribute to the wardens, chaplains and management committees. The resolution was agreed by consensus.

14S24 Ministry and Mission Fund Report: Mr Peter Pay thanked the churches for their offers for 2015. He is now only waiting for responses from a few of the smaller churches. He encouraged churches who are having financial problems to consider undertaking TRIO, the new stewardship programme. He also offered to visit churches to discuss their financial situation. He then presented Resolution 1 encouraging churches to give 1% more than the amount requested. This would give the central church the resources to employ more ministers.

RESOLUTION 1
Synod notes the Resolution 28 from General Assembly and challenges local churches to offer at least 1% annually above the amount requested according to the Synod formula.

The resolution was passed by consensus.
In answer to a question, Peter said that he will be writing to all churches making them aware of this resolution. Peter was thanked for his work.

14S25 Synod Executive Report: The report was presented by the Revd Nigel Appleton. Nigel was thanked for his work in preparing it. He highlighted four items from the report.

Item 5. Celebration of 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Church of Zambia. He confirmed that representatives of the Synod would be travelling out to join in the celebrations.

Item 6. Overlap of membership between Wessex Trust and the Finance & Property Committee. Nigel told Synod that a consultation with other Synod Clerks about the situation in other Synods would be fed back to the group looking at the question.

Item 10. Links between the Synod strategy and the programmes of the committees is being addressed together with the Synod Risk Strategy.

Item 4. Safeguarding. The role of Tom Grant in the Safeguarding work was clarified. Tom will be the first point of contact for those with Safeguarding concerns but will share responsibility with the CYDO’s.

The report was accepted by consensus.

The Moderator asked members to pray for Colin MacBean’s health and well being and to pray for those being challenged to consider whether they might be called to serve as Synod Clerk.

14S26 Ministries and Learning Report: The report was presented by Mrs Margaret Telfer. LMMR: Margaret said that the meeting that had been arranged to review the programme had been cancelled due to lack of those able to attend. However many had sent in helpful written comments which will be useful when it is rewritten. Lay Preaching: The list of those who have become Assembly Accredited Lay Preachers should not yet include the name of Helen Everard as she had not yet been commissioned. Lay Presidency at Communion: The churches are to be consulted on this matter. Sarah Hall said that the Faith & Order Committee would like to have any feedback from the discussions.

Developing Leadership in Local Churches: A video about the programme ‘Growing Leaders’ was shown. The course will be promoted as part of next year’s training programme. Meanwhile members were asked to think about who in their congregations it would be most appropriate to send. The report was accepted by consensus.

The Moderator said that it had not been forgotten that it was close to Armistice Day and she had hoped to have one of our army chaplains with us but they were overseas at present. She commended the quiet space organized by the Silence and Retreats Group that was available in the vestry next to the sanctuary.

14S27 Silence and Retreats Group: The Convener, the Revd Brenda Stephenson, drew members’ attention to the Retreat being organized from 9-11 October 2015.

Members were asked to share in small groups what they would like others to pray for in the life of their church. She then suggested that members could contact Carol Rogers with prayer requests to be put in the e-newsletter.

14S28 Same sex marriage information session and overview of the process: The facilitators who were present were introduced. The Moderator said that Synods and local churches need to make their responses by the end of March. The need to make these responses was because of the change in the Civil law. (The law does not apply to Scotland, Jersey or Guernsey.) Clare emphasized that at General Assembly possible changes were not blocked by a minority, but the decision was taken that no decision should be taken without consultation. Resource material including prayer and worship resources are now available through the website. They also include the answer to questions about ecumenical situations. It should be noted, in relation to the question of whether the acceptance of same sex marriage would involve a doctrinal change, that there is no specific doctrine of marriage within the United Reformed Church.

14S29 Introduction to the Workshops: Nigel Appleton announced the location of the workshops which would take place immediately after lunch.
These were

1. Imagine church for those who don’t do Church!
2. Mary Joseph & the Midwife (Christian Aid)
3. When things go wrong – redemption or dismissal?
4. Green Christians & Eco congregations – more or less!!
5. Affirming the future of the United Reformed Church
6. The United Reformed Church’s gift of conciliarity

He also reminded members that there was a Prayer room arranged by the Silence and Retreats Group.

After lunch members took part in their chosen workshop

14S30 Feedback from the Discussion Groups: The Revd Nigel Appleton asked a representative from each of the groups to summarize their findings in 2 or 3 sentences.

1. Fresh Expressions - imagine a church for those who don't do church!
   It was felt that the aim should be to make disciples by being friendly. Church is not just for Sunday any more. Food and faith all round! No God, no peace: Know God, know peace!

2. Christian Aid - Mary, Joseph and the midwife: In Kenya today 40 women will die in childbirth due to a lack of adequate health care, lack of sexual education, poverty, malnutrition & conflicting attitudes from traditional birth attendants. Christian Aid supported by the URC is reducing this level of maternal & child death. It is hoped to change this situation through increased government support which will double the money churches raise in this Christmas Appeal campaign which starts today, 7 November.

3. EcoCongregations – Green Christians more or less!
   * Christians must make the link between faith and creation
   * Re-environment – The church should be an influence at a political level since only politicians can enforce solutions to the problems.
   * The church should note that Development agencies are at the forefront in the fight against Climate change. Fighting against climate change seems like a David and Goliath situation but remember that David won!!

4. Employment – When things go wrong – redemption or dismissal? In order to have a happy employer and a happy employee it is necessary to have
   * Clarity of expectations from both employer and employee.
   * There needs to be good paperwork and regular face to face meetings.

5. The future of the United Reformed Church: Those present definitely felt that the URC has a future but found it difficult to envisage what that might look like or how it could be achieved. However it was felt that our denomination has much to offer that is distinctive. This included
   a. Freedom and flexibility within our structure
   b. Local autonomy to respond to their mission context
   c. Church Meeting and our grass roots conciliarity
   d. Collaborative leadership
   e. A servant heart with a strong emphasis on pastoral care.
   These may not all be Unique Selling Points but they are selling points none the less.

6. The United Reformed Church’s Gift of Conciliarity: Conciliarity is defined as something that is agreed upon by a whole body in which each member of that body has an equal authority and voice.
   * where no one person or group of persons has greater authority than others.
   * In the case of the URC we seek the leading of the Holy Spirit to guide us in our thinking, listening and reasoning to help us make a decision.
   * We need be to be clear about the responsibility that comes with URC membership and the need to be diligent in attending Church Meetings
   * The role of Chairman is crucial in ensuring that all sides in a debate are heard and if possible equally.
   * Where disagreement occurs we should be more sensitive to the need for pastoral care and support for
those who are left hurting by decisions that are taken.

* To help enliven meetings we should consider inviting outside speakers more frequently.

14S31 Synod Youth Executive: There have been recent changes to the Executive which now consists of Alistair Stichbury (Convener), Kit Rasmussen, Caleb Dawson, Alice Hoyle, John McAdam, Emily Meachin, Anna Ouston, Valli McAdam and Bex Seymour.

RESOLUTION 3

The Wessex Synod affirms its commitment to promoting greater understanding of mental health, in response to resolution four passed at the 2014 United Reformed Church Youth Assembly and resolution nine passed at the 2014 General Assembly.

The Wessex Synod commits to:

1. Follow the lead of the National Synod of Scotland by committing to work towards ending the stigma around mental ill health, and utilise the training opportunities and resources developed by the Assembly Education and Learning Committee

2. Make links with appropriate agencies who provide support and training around mental health, enabling local churches to access these local developments opportunities if appropriately identified as a need in their communities.

3. Calls on all local churches to take further steps to end stigma around mental ill health amongst their community.

Proposer: Alistair Stichbury  Seconder: Andrew Weston

The extent of the problem was outlined and in response to a request, it was agreed that the Executive would make available specific instances of what churches can do. An offer was also made to provide speakers for churches who want to discuss the resolution which was passed by consensus.

14S32 Inclusive and Expansive Language: Elizabeth Nash presented a paper which discussed the language that we use for God. She commended the use of 'expansive' language which honours all God's people.

14S33 Notices: In response to a request it was agreed that Attendance forms would be available for everyone at the next Synod so there would be no need to download them.

Holiday Forum: Members were encouraged to book before January 1st to receive a 5% discount.

14S34 Thanks: The Moderator thanked members of the Camberley church for their warm hospitality, Clare thanked her Support Group, the Synod Executive and particularly Nigel Appleton, and Peter Pay for stepping in, the Synod Staff for their part in organising the meeting. Carol Rogers and John Downing for the visual services and all those who work to keep the Synod functioning between Synods. Clare also thanked everyone for attending.

Closing worship was led the Revd Rob Weston and the Revd Gordon Connell

The next meeting of Synod will be on Saturday 21st March 2015 at Avenue St Andrews URC, Southampton
SYNOD EXECUTIVE REPORT

1. **Risk Assessment**
   The executive is reviewing the risk assessment for the Synod.

2. **Synod website**
   A small working group is working to launch an improved Synod Website. It is hoped this may be in place by the Synod Meeting.

3. **Safeguarding**
   Revd Tom Grant has been appointed as ‘Synod Safeguarding Coordinator and Vulnerable Adult Officer’ and is starting to establish working processes and policies. We have decided to discontinue the role of ‘Safe Church Coordinator’ as it is covered fully by this new post.

4. **Committee membership**
   We will be reviewing the membership of our committees and in particular the degree to which it is appropriate to have Trustees who are also members of other committees (eg F&P).

5. **Area Gatherings**
   The recent round of Area Gatherings considered Resolutions 11 and 12 from General Assembly on ‘The future of the URC’ and ‘Conciliarity’. The Powerpoint presentations which were used for these are available on the website if churches wish to use them for their church meetings.

   Future dates of Gatherings are:
   - 21st September – South West
   - 22nd September – North East
   - 28th September – North West
   - 1st October – South East

6. **Nominations**
   A list of nominations is attached for approval (see Resolution 1). There are still a number of outstanding vacancies and offers or nominations for these posts should be sent in the first instance to Deborah in the Synod Office.

7. **Synod planning**
   The Executive continues to review past meetings and plan future meetings.

8. **Resolution 31 from General Assembly**
   We will be discussing the Resolution regarding same sex marriage at this meeting of Synod. The Assembly Resolution can be found here: Resolution 31.pdf
   There are also a variety of resources on this topic on the main URC website - http://www.urc.org.uk/marriage-of-same-sex-couples.html

9. **Lobbying Act**
   We noted the advice from the General Secretary and have sent this to local churches.

10. **Appointment of New Synod Clerk**
    Interviews are being held shortly and it is hoped that an appointment of a new Synod Clerk will be made effective from the end of this meeting of Synod.

11. **Closure of Newbury URC – Resolution 2**
    We note with regret that Newbury URC has decided to close. Their final service which will be a celebration of their life and witness will take place on Saturday 11th April 2015 at 2pm.

Peter Pay
Interim Synod Clerk
**RESOLUTION 1**

Wessex Synod approves the list of appointments in the Nominations paper.

**RESOLUTION 2**

Wessex Synod notes the decision of the Church Meeting of Newbury United Reformed Church to cease regular services of worship on 5th April 2015, concurs with that decision, and agrees that the Church will formally close on 11th April 2015. Synod gives thanks to God for the worship, mission and ministry of this Church throughout its life which will be celebrated at a closing service on Saturday 11th April at 2pm.

Synod further notes the decision of the Church to dispose of the premises at Cromwell Place, Newbury, RG14 1AF, under the provisions of Paragraph 2(c) of Schedule 2 Part 1 of the URC Act 1981 and for the proceeds to be added to the unrestricted funds of the United Reformed Church (Wessex) Trust Limited to be used in accordance with the objects set out in paragraph 3 of its Memorandum of Association.

Synod further notes the decision of the Church that any monies or investments belonging to the church at closure, together with any records, fixtures, fittings and furnishings not otherwise passed to other United Reformed Churches will be transferred to the URC (Wessex) Trust Limited.

**RESOLUTION 3**

It is a widely accepted view that the earth is under threat of global warming from the continued use of fossil fuels. Synod recognises the importance of responding to this issue and the wider challenges of responsible ethical investing and therefore:

1. welcomes the decision of the Wessex Trust to join the Church Investors Group, adopt their stewardship code on behalf of the Synod and review their current investment practice
2. strongly encourages them actively to engage with our investment partners to use mechanisms such as the Carbon Disclosure Project to encourage more responsible use of carbon

Synod also urges local churches to:

a) seek to minimise their own use of fossil fuels
b) review their own investment policy

from Church & Society Group

**RESOLUTION 4**

The Wessex Synod recognises the Good Practice Policy on Safeguarding Children and Young People published by General Assembly is a key resource for all churches. It is noted that it has been delayed in being published and was promised to be published just after the New Year. Wessex Synod asks Mission Council on behalf of General Assembly to ensure that the policy is published in full before September 2015. This would mean it is published before the new school term and most groups start up again after the summer.

from Children’s & Youth Work Committee
SYNOD NOMINATIONS

Appointments for Synod March 2015

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

OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES

Synod Clerk
Deputy Synod Clerk
Synod Treasurer
Development & Support Officer N (Mission)
Development & Support Officer S (Training)
Trust Executive Officer
Bookkeeper and Trust Administrator
Property Officer N
Property Officer S
Children and Youth Development Officer (CYDO) N
(CYDO) S
Employment Advisor
PA to Moderator and Clerk/Synod Secretary
Development Team Administrator

APPOINTEES

Candidating and Ordinand Secretary
Commitment for Life Advocate
Communications Facilitator (incl. Newsletter Service)
European Partner Link Coordinator (France)
Finance Secretary
Global Partner Link Coordinator (Zambia)
Health & Healing Link
Inter-Faith Advocate
Lay Preaching Commissioner

Area Preaching Co-ordinators

LMMR Coordinator
Racial Justice Advocate
Safeguarding Co-ordinator and Vulnerable Adult Officer
Synod Ecumenical Officer
Synod County Ecumenical officers

Oxfordshire: TBA
Berkshire: Revd Martyn Neads (2018)
Surrey: Revd Phillip Jones (2016)
Hampshire: Mr Frank Mulholland (2017)
Dorset: Revd Peter Clark (2019)*

TLS Coordinator

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

**Synod Executive**
- **Convener:** Moderator
- **Secretary:** Synod Clerk
- **Members:**
  - NW  Revd Nigel Appleton  (2019)*
  - NE  Mr Robin Gray  (2018)*
  - SW  Ms Rosie Martin  (2018)
  - SE  Mrs Sue Brown  (2016)

**Nominations Group**
- **Convener:** Synod Clerk
- **Secretary:** Assistant Synod Clerk
- **Members:**
  - 2 people nominated by each ASPC

**Mission & Outreach Committee**

**Mission Development Group**
- **Convener:** Revd Robert Weston  (2018)
- **Secretary:** Mr Graham Thatcher  (2018)
  - Revd John Lee  (2018)
  - Revd Tim Searle  (2018)
  - Revd Peter Southcombe  (2018)
  - Mrs Sheila Thatcher  (2018)
  - Revd Chris Vivian  (2018)

**Church & Society Group**
- **Convener:** Ms Pat Oliver  (2019)*
- **Secretary:** Mr David Wrighton  (2019)*
- **Members:**
  - Mr David Hoadley  (2018)
  - Mr Brian Wilkins  (2017)

**World Church Group**
- **Convener:** Mr Ian Simpson  (2019)*
- **Secretary:** Mr Bruce Crook  (2016)
  - Mr Philip Bonnier  (2016)
  - Mrs Helen Everard  (2017)
  - Revd Jabu Mdlalose  (2017)

**Silence & Retreats Group**
- **Convener:** Revd Brenda Stephenson  (2018)

**Ministries and Learning Committee**
- **Convener:** Mrs Phyllis Williams  (2019)*
- **Secretary:** TBA

**Area Synod Pastoral Committees:**

**North Western**
- **Convener:** Mr Roger Clark  (2018)
- **Members (5):**
  - Revd Duncan Wilson  (2019)*
  - Mrs Cynthia Bartlett  (2018)
  - Mrs Fiona Hobson  (2016)
  - TBA
  - TBA

**North Eastern**
- **Convener:** Revd Ruth Dillon  (2019)*
- **Members (5):**
  - Revd Alison Toplas  (2016)
  - Revd Lucy Brierley  (2018)
  - Mr Sydney Shore  (2016)
  - Revd Graham Hoslet  (2016)
  - Mrs Wendy Dunnett  (2017)

**South Eastern**
- **Convener:** Revd Paul Bedford  (2016)
- **Members (7):**
  - Revd Peter Norris  (2016)
  - Mrs Christine Hardwick  (2016)
  - Revd Mike Perrott  (2018)
  - Revd Tim Searle  (2016)
  - Revd Helen Higgin-Botham  (2018)
  - Mr Derek Hiscocks  (2019)*
  - TBA
South Western
Convener: Revd Simon Franklin (2018)*
Members (7):
- Revd Anne Dove (2018)
- Dr Richard Hall (2016)
- Revd Ray Stanyon (2018)
- Revd Nick Adlem (2018)
- Mrs Margaret Knighton (2018)
- Revd Peter Southcombe (2018)
- Mrs Mary Chipping (2016)

Finance & Property Committee
Convener: Mr Ray Dunnett (2017)
Secretary: Finance Secretary (2017)
Members:
- Revd Romilly Micklem (2016)
- TBA
- TBA

Area representatives
- NE: Mr Mike Liddle (2018)
- NW: Vacant
- SE: Mr Dave Humphreys (2018)
- SW: Revd Julian Macro (2016)*

Listed Buildings Advisory Group
Convener: Mr Peter Richardson (2019)*
Secretary: Mr Gerry Prosser (2016)
Members:
- Revd Michael Hopkins (2017)
- Mr D Illingworth
- Mr Keith Loveless
- Revd John Lee

Ministry and Mission Fund Secretary
Mr Peter Pay (2018)

URC (Wessex) Trust Limited
Convener: Revd Julian Macro
Trustees:
- Revd Nigel Appleton
- Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith
- Revd David Cuckson
- Revd Clare Downing*
- Mr Ray Dunnett
- Mr Christopher Evans
- Mr Colin MacBean
- Dr David Page
- Mr Peter Pay
- Mr Peter Stevenson*

Note: In accordance with article 9 of the Articles of Association of the Trust, one third of the trustees retires by rotation each year and, being eligible, may offer themselves for re-election. Those retiring and standing for re-election in 2015 are marked with an asterisk.

Children’s & Youth Work Committee
Convener: Mr James Parsons (2019)*
Secretary: Miss Alison Marshall (2019)*
CYDOs Line Manager: Revd Tim Meachin
Advocates:
- Revd Tom Grant (2016)
- Mrs Angela Fensom (2019)*
- TBA
Synod Youth Executive Rep: Convenor (or another SYE rep in their absence)
**Synod Youth Executive**  
Convener:  
Mr Alistair Stitchbury  
Secretary:  
Mr John McAdam  
Treasurer:  
CYDO  
Members:  
Mr Caleb Dawson  
Miss Alice Hoyle  
Miss Valli McAdam  
Miss Emily Meachin  
Miss Anna Ouston  
Mr Kit Rasmussen  
Miss Bex Seymour

**Synod Panel for Ministerial Discipline**  
NE  
Mrs Wendy Dunnett  
TBA  
TBA  
NW  
Mr Robert Harding  
Mr Richard Norris  
TBA  
SE  
Mrs Christine McMillan  
Revd David Williams  
Mr Owen Collins  
Mr C Halliwell  
SW  
Mr Nick Lowe  
Revd Margaret Evans  
Mrs Loraine Dougall  
Revd Colin Marsh

**Co-opted Members of Synod (2015)**  
Mr Graham Barber  
Mr David Childs  
Mrs Christine Hardwick  
Revd Julian Macro  
Dr David Page  
Mr James Parsons  
Mr Peter Pay  
Mr Phil Ray  
Mr Peter Stevenson  
Mrs Margaret Telfer (March 15)  
Mrs Phyllis Williams

**Youth Representatives to Synod**  
Mr Alistair Stichbury  
Mr Kit Rasmussen

**Alternate Chair of Synod Meeting**  
Revd Nigel Appleton

**REPRESENTATIVES TO OTHER GROUPS AND COMMITTEES**

**Mission Council**  
Synod Clerk  
Ex Officio  
Mrs Sue Brown  
(2017)  
Revd Graham Hoslett  
(2017)

**Assembly Nominations Committee**  
Synod Clerk

**Mission Committee**  
TBA

*new/renewed appointments for approval of Synod
MINISTRIES AND LEARNING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Committee has met twice since the November Synod.

The Development and Support Officers (DSOs) continue to respond to requests to provide Elders’ development and other training days for individual churches as well as arranging various training and development days as can be seen on the Training Calendar. Elders’ development material is now available for churches to use on an ad hoc basis as part of the development and support being offered by the Synod and the DSOs. The material is on the website. In the coming months, the DSOs will also be arranging for the mandatory Safer Sacred Space Training for all ministers.

A candidate for the ministry was interviewed by a Synod Panel and was recommended to the April Assessment Conference. The Panel also met with a Non Stipendiary Minister to discuss transfer to Stipendiary Ministry and made a further recommendation to the Assessment Conference. The Revd Mary Thomas continues to maintain contact with, and support, the ordinands at college. The Committee were saddened to hear of the death of Penny, Paul Stein’s wife. Please remember the students in your prayers.

Louise Shrubsole and Helen Everard were commissioned and received their Lay Preacher accreditation certificates. Louise’s service was at Ringwood in January and Helen’s at Camberley in February.

Updates from the Area Synod Pastoral Committees (ASPC):
Ministerial changes can be seen at the beginning of the Synod Report Book.

NORTH WEST
Newbury – It was with sadness that the committee heard that Newbury Church Meeting had decided in principal that they will close.
Thame – The Revd John Lee has been appointed as Interim Moderator.

NORTH EAST
Windsor and Egham – 100% Vacancy has been declared for the joint pastorate and The Revd Glyn Millington has been appointed at Interim Moderator.  
Bracknell – The Special Category Ministry has been reviewed and a recommendation made to the Ministries and Learning Committee for approval for application for another term. This approval was given and the application has now gone to the Accreditation Sub Committee.

SOUTH WEST
Salisbury Area and Andover - 100% vacancy has been declared and the churches are now on the Moderators’ List.  
Revd Joshua Han – a 3 year review has taken place of Joshua’s Certificate of Limited Service. The Committee recommend that the certificate be extended for a further three years. This recommendation has now gone to the Accreditation Sub Committee.  
Richmond Hill St Andrews – The Revd Nick Adlem has resigned from his ministry at the church. The Revd Heather-Ann Adlem has resigned from her Area Placement at the church and is now doing some work with Hythe Church. Richmond Hill St Andrews is now in Ministerial Transition.
Poole Churches - Parkstone / Longfleet / Skinner Street – The Revd Peter Southcombe has been working with the three churches in his capacity of Area Minister. The Pastoral Committee have recommended that an application be made for Special Category Ministry. The application has been sent to the Accreditation Sub Committee.

SOUTH EAST
Winchester – David Childs has been appointed Interim Moderator.  
Hatch Warren – The Anglicans have appointed a priest. The Moderator is involved in Meth/Ang/URC meetings to arrange the formal closure of the LEP. 
Romsey and Braishfield – will be in Ministerial Transition after Easter when the Revd Terry Hinks moves to High Wycombe.
Numbers of Authorisations for Sacraments
NW – 0       NE – 17       SW – 1       SE – 2 and 1 Baptism

I would like to thank all those who attend or contribute to the Ministries and Learning Committee. Particular thanks to Julie McLaren who has resigned as Secretary, Madeline Diver who has come to the end of her term of service as TLS Administrator and to The Revd Simon Franklin who has come to the end of three years as South West ASPC Convener and who has agreed to serve for a further term. Margaret Telfer has come to the end of her term of office and Phyllis Williams will be the new convener after the March Synod.

Margaret Telfer
Convener

INTRODUCTION TO SAME SEX MARRIAGE DISCUSSION

At our meeting in November we held the first part – the information and clarification stage - of our Synod discussion about the topic of same sex marriage in the United Reformed Church. Since then, many of our local churches will have discussed the topic, and have returned their comments to the General Secretary.

Today, as a Synod, we will be holding the discussion and decision making stages of the debate. We will not be trying to reach a consensus, since what has been asked of us is a “consultation” and to give “the balance of opinion” among those attending the meeting.

There are plenty of resources available for background reading, at http://www.urc.org.uk/marriage-of-same-sex-couples.html so I will not rehearse the arguments here. However, I wish to remind you that the question we are asking is not about what your local church might wish to do, but about the principle of whether the decision about conducting same sex marriages within United Reformed Churches should be allowed to take place at a local church level. In that sense, this discussion is at least as much about ecclesiology (the way we ‘do’ church) as it is about our views on same sex relationships.

Voting members of Synod will have a special voting paper in their envelope which they pick up on arrival at the meeting. This will give an opportunity for you to express your views on the matter in a rather more subtle way than a simple yes/no vote. When we meet together in the councils of the church, we aim to find ‘the mind of Christ’ as we listen to the Spirit in each other, so please hold onto this card and do not fill it in until you are asked to do so at the end of our discussion. Do remember that you are representatives of churches, not their delegates – your church cannot mandate you to respond in a particular way.

As we discuss this emotive topic, do remember that we do so as brothers and sisters in Christ, who are called to worship and serve together. We will do our best to work within the principles for “Towards Living Conversations” reproduced below.

- I will listen carefully before responding, checking out what I am hearing.
- I will express myself with courtesy, and respect to every sister/brother who participates in these conversations, especially toward those with whom I disagree.
- I will express my disagreements and critical engagement with others without insulting, making fun of or slandering anyone personally.
- I will not exaggerate others’ convictions or perspectives, nor make unfounded prejudicial assumptions based on labels, categories, or stereotypes.
- I will always work towards extending the benefit of the doubt in the spirit of generosity.
- I will honour my own discomfort at things said or done in our conversations.
- I will allow myself and others to change as a result of our conversations.
- We will hold each other accountable for not keeping to the above principles, based not on what ideas we expressed but on how they’re expressed.
MISSION & OUTREACH COMMITTEE REPORT

The Mission and Outreach Committee embraces a wide range of the synod’s activities including the work of the Mission Development Group, the Church and Society Group, the Silence and Retreats Group and the World Church Group. Each of these groups have specific areas to cover and each group will report via the Synod papers or the Synod website. In addition to the groups we also have members covering specific areas including Commitment for Life, Racial Justice, Fresh Expressions, Rural Ministry and Mission, Health and Healing, Interfaith.

The Mission and Outreach Committee encourages everyone to attend this year’s ‘Growing the Church’ day conference at London Street URC in Basingstoke. Come and be encouraged by hearing about mission ideas across the Wessex Synod that are making a difference and helping people to grow in their faith and helping the church to grow. Growing the Church day conference is on Saturday 16th May 2015, to book a place please contact Ruth Heine development@urcwessex.org.uk further details and booking forms for the conference are on the Wessex Synod website.

Rob Weston
Convener

MISSION DEVELOPMENT GROUP REPORT

We have been looking at a strategic use of synod resources to encourage and enable church planting and church growth within the Wessex Synod. We have explored various ideas and suggestions, two of which are being actively pursued and we will be informing you of developments later this year.

Firstly, we recognise that much progress is being made by innovative local churches across the synod (and across the United Kingdom) in terms of planting new congregations: some of these offer café style worship, others offer Messy Church, others offer worship for particular groups of people (e.g. people with dementia). As a synod group we want to offer further support to all local churches thinking about setting up another congregation (which might be within existing buildings or may be in other local community space such as a café, school or community centre). To encourage this we aim to produce a resources ‘toolkit’ which will bring together a wide range of materials that might help in the preparation for experimenting with a new congregation. The toolkit will signpost the services of networks such as ‘Fresh Expressions’ which offer a host of materials which can be used with church meetings and elders’ meetings.

Secondly, we have identified the need for specific roles in establishing new worshipping communities in new housing developments. Whilst we are aware of a large number of opportunities across the synod we have identified two specific areas, one in the north of the synod and one in the south. Proposals to appoint Special Category Ministers for each of these new housing estates are being developed, with consultation of all relevant committees across the synod. This will be a complex process and may take several years to complete.

The Mission Development Group continues to operate the ‘small grants for mission’ scheme which is open to all local congregations, offering up to £500 to support any new mission activity that a local church would like to develop. Further details and application form are available on the Wessex Synod website or via Ruth Heine development@urcwessex.org.uk

Rob Weston
Convener
The Commitment for Life (CfL) programme issued several mailings during the year. The yearly meeting for churches about the programme took place in June at Church House and considered El Salvador by those who had recently visited this Central American country. The forthcoming local and General Elections on 7th May are ideal opportunities for church members to engage with their local prospective MPs. We can ask questions that highlight our concern for justice. Wednesday 17th June will see the biggest climate lobby the UK has seen as we ensure our new government keeps the issue at the top of its agenda. The URC and CfL is actively supporting the Pray and Fast for the Climate initiative on the 1st of each month leading up to the UN climate talks in Paris in December 2015. Please see www.prayandfastfortheclimate.org.uk for more details.

Although CfL is a personal challenge to individuals to respond, our Synod has a history of having supported the scheme financially. In future it is hoped that the Synod will match-fund the donations from the churches, doubling the effect of the churches’ giving.

The World Development Movement has just re-launched itself as Global Justice Now. It is an important partner of CfL and receives 10% of the money raised by CfL churches. A representative spoke at the June meeting at Church House.

We are pleased that Christian Concern for One World has increased their links with us and Maranda St John Nicole has been able to attend our last two meetings. Their interests include sustainable development and Fairtrade and can be reached through www.ccow.org.uk

The 25th anniversary of the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility took place in October at Southwark Cathedral. Following a service of thanksgiving a debate on Investing in Equality took place with speakers including ShareAction and Christian Aid. The next meeting of ECCR will be in Oxford on 28th February and is entitled: The Cost of Life on Earth: companies, climate change and your money.

The fast approaching election acts as a reminder to consider the part that many local Churches, particularly through Churches Together, play in organising hustings and similar local meetings. It also highlights the need to be vigilant on behalf of the less privileged and sometimes voiceless in our society. Benefits and the reform of the welfare system continue to be a political football, and food-banks are still very much both something that are desperately needed and in need of support. At the same time they are misunderstood and done down by politicians and branches of the media who seem not to understand how they work, nor to appreciate they work very much on referrals and not just allowing anyone in off the street.

The Group has received reports from IBEX - The Churches Working with the Economy, which continues to support chaplaincy in its various stages through our area, from well-established ones such as that in Winchester City Centre, to developing ones such as those in Dorchester Town Centre and for ASDA in Chandlers Ford. They also held a very successful funding training day in January which, although intended initially as an advanced fund-raising event, became very much also a chance to look at the place of an individual Church in its community, using the inspirational example of Buckland URC as a base.

At our January meeting we discussed with Peter Pay, Acting Synod Clerk and a Trustee of the Wessex Trust, whether we should support the campaign by Operation Noah to disinvest from fossil fuels. We decided not to do so since the Synod does not hold any direct investments in fossil fuels. Instead we agreed to bring the resolution numbered Resolution 3 on page 14 of these Synod papers, which we understand is supported by both the Finance and Property Committee and the Wessex Trust.

This will be my last meeting as co-ordinator of the Group and I am pleased that Pat Oliver, CRCW will be taking over as convenor from the March Synod.

David Hoadley
Convenor
SILENCE AND RETREATS GROUP REPORT

The Group
Over the past year we have lost Diana Townsend from the group and Terry Hinks has stood down as Convenor. We will also be losing Alison Dalton in May. Remaining members are Edward Simmons, Anne Bray, Brenda Stephenson a representative from the Centre for Reflection, Aston Tirrold, together with the Moderator and Development and Support Officer South. However David Bunney has agreed to join the group and we are in touch with another potential member. We are still one short. Anyone else who would be interested in finding out more about being part of the group please get in touch with Brenda Stephenson the new Convenor (01305 459009 or bksteph9@gmail.com).

Centre for Reflection, Aston Tirrold www.reflect.freeuk.com
We show the Synod's support for Aston Tirrold by holding our autumn meeting there (with most members travelling by train to the meeting last September for the first time) and inviting a representative to our meetings. As you will know many Centres which hold Retreats are having a hard time in the present financial climate. Aston Tirrold arranges an interesting programme of quiet days, talks, and opportunities for being creative. Check it out for yourself on the website.

Quiet days in 2014
2014 was a year without a Synod Retreat, which means that we held three Quiet days, two for ministers and CRCWs and one for everyone.
Quiet days for ministers were held in May at Aston Tirrold with Keith Green facilitating, and in November at Wisdom House, Romsey led by Peggy Heron. Attendance at the first was disappointing. We wonder if this is because Aston Tirrold is very much up one end of the Synod. Feedback about this would be welcome.
The Synod Quiet day was held at Winchester United Church in October, led by Alison Dalton and myself. This was very well attended and some useful feedback will be discussed at the next meeting of the Group.
This year held our Lent quiet day for ministers at Green Pastures on February 25th led by Sue Henderson on the theme of Springs of living water - finding God in the desert places.
Our biennial retreat will be held at Old Alresford Place October 9-11. The leader will be Paul Holmes.

Space for prayer
We continue to provide a quiet space at Synod meetings. This has largely been the work of Alison Dalton whose inspiration and hard work we shall miss. We hope in the future to work more closely with the venues where Synod is held and will get in touch with each to ask for help from someone who believes this is important.
We also took the initiative at the last Synod meeting to invite specific requests for prayer from churches to be sent to Carol Rogers for inclusion in one issue of the Synod e-newsletter Sharing the Vision. Our thanks go to her for willingly taking this on. We think this is important as part of our sense of belonging together in the Synod where distances between us can be large. So please remember this opportunity when you have a specific or an overarching need that is exercising your own prayer life locally.

National Retreats group
I represented the Synod at the annual meeting at the Windermere Centre and made a report to the Group which could be shared more widely to anyone interested.

Brenda Stephenson
Convenor
WORLD CHURCH GROUP REPORT

The members of the Group and their responsibilities are:

- Martin Waldron: Convenor, Synod Website
- Bruce Crook: Secretary
- Helen Everard: links with Église Protestante Unie de France (EPUF)
- Ian Simpson: links with the Lusaka Presbytery of the United Church of Zambia (UCZ)
- Philip Bonnier: links with the Council for World Mission (CWM)
- Rev Dr Jabu Mdlalose: links with the World Council of Churches
- Sandy Nunn: representing the Synod Youth Executive Committee
- Rev Cecil King: Methodist Church
- Rev Clare Downing: Moderator, ex-officio
- Colin MacBean (until September 2014)

Église Protestante Unie de France (EPUF) and Le Weekend: the sixth ‘Le Weekend’ took place in April, hosted by the church in Dunkirk. The theme was ‘Remembering the Coming Kingdom’. On our arrival we went to visit war graves in a cemetery near the church and were moved by the ages of many of those who gave their lives – so young. On Saturday, we had activities for everyone including singing, painting and a discussion group, and we did some preparation for Sunday’s service. In the afternoon we had a choice of activities including a visit to the museum in the crypt of the church, a boat trip in the harbour and a walking tour of the city centre, a much prettier place than most of us had imagined. The highlight of the weekend was the worship on Sunday, led by the North Normandy Moderator, Rev Olivier Filhol. Naturally, we ate and drank together too and all agreed that this was the best Le Weekend yet.

Helen Everard attended the North Normandy’s annual Synod in November where one of the main items for discussion was the subject of same sex marriage.

United Church of Zambia (UCZ): the highlight of the year was the visit of 2 UCZ Ministers, Rev Obed Mutale and Rev Bertha Lungu, for nearly 2 weeks in March/April, here to attend the Ministers’ Spring School and to spend time with local congregations. This was done as part of our efforts to forge closer links with the Lusaka Presbytery of the UCZ, and the hosts here certainly played their part. Very sadly, Obed, one of the Ministers died very suddenly in September and we expressed our condolences and remembered his family and his congregations in our prayers.

As a result of the visit, a link has been formed between the URC and Methodist Churches in Salisbury, and St John’s UCZ in Mtendere, Lusaka, but we continue to be frustrated in our efforts to link churches here with congregations in Zambia. Communication links are still proving to be a major stumbling block. We have several churches here waiting for links to be established.

Zambia celebrated the 50th anniversary of its independence in October and several of us attended a celebratory service and lunch at Tyndale Baptist Church in Reading. The UCZ also celebrates its Golden Jubilee in January 2015 and Ian Simpson has spent a great deal of time in organising a visit to Zambia for the Moderator and 4 others to join in the special service – more in next year’s report on this!
Council for World Mission (CWM): the European office of CWM has continued to produce excellent material including a quarterly newsletter, a quarterly prayer handbook and material for churches to celebrate a CWM Sunday. We encourage all churches to look at this material which can be found online at www.cwmeurope.org and to use the worship material.

Philip Bonnier has continued to establish links with URC members serving CWM of whom there are 4 at present – Rev Philip Woods working at CWM Headquarters in Singapore, The Rev Dr Gwen and The Revd Bernie Collins serving at Rarongo Theological College in Papua New Guinea, and Alison Gibbs serving as a Headmistress in a school on the Zambian/Tanzanian border.

Other Issues: as a Group we are concerned about the plight of Christians in many parts of the world and have asked Rev Dr Jabu Mdlalose to present a report to us on the plight of Christians in Egypt where a lot of persecution is taking place.

Synod Website: we are pleased to see that the ‘new look’ Synod website is being developed as we use it extensively to highlight the Group’s work. Do take a look!

I am standing down after 7 years as Convenor and would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the Group, past and present, for their support. We recognise that the main focus of local churches is on local issues, but please take a moment to think about, and pray for, the worldwide church to which we belong.

Martin Waldron
Convenor

MINISTRY AND MISSION FUND REPORT

Outturn 2014
I am pleased to report that in 2014 Wessex Synod delivered £2,021,976.42 compared to an offer of £1,980,000. The extra £41,876 is nearly equivalent to the cost of a minister. The result, whilst satisfactory, still does not fully meet the figures that the Synod formula would anticipate (£2,215,561).

The increase was the result of a combination of some churches meeting arrears, some increasing their payments and some changes in LEPs. The Synod has not contributed over £2million since 2009.

On behalf of the URC, Churches are thanked for their contributions. We are very conscious of the challenging economic environment.

Offers 2015
We are currently offering £2m but we would hope to exceed the 2014 outturn although the closure of Newbury URC will leave a significant shortfall. A total of 17 pastorates have made offers below the formula (2 SE, 2 NW, 4 NE, 9 SW). I will be continuing to monitor these. There are also a few churches (mainly LEPs) who have yet to confirm their offers.

1% challenge offers
12 pastorates have to-date made offers that are 1% or more above the formula request in response to the 1% challenge. Other churches are also encouraged to seek to respond, either by increasing monthly payments or by a lump sum payment.

Advice
I have met with the Elders of a number of churches to help them to review their finances and to consider possible actions they can consider. I am happy to meet with any churches who feel they would benefit from such a discussion.

Peter Pay
M&M Secretary
FINANCE AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE REPORT

1. **Grants, loans and permissions**
The Finance and Property Committee has made the following grants and loans and given permissions in the following matters since the last meeting of the Synod. Except where otherwise stated, loans are at 3% interest repayable over 5 years and grants are made from the Church Mission Fund. All grants and loans were made by the URC (Wessex) Trust Ltd on the authority of the Finance and Property Committee.

- **Poole, Creekmoor** - grant of £20,000 over five years from the Church Mission Fund towards the cost of employing a Children and Families Pastoral Worker. The church is in a four-way Local Ecumenical Pastorate.
- **Park, Reading** - grant of £6,000 from the Church Mission Fund and a loan of up to £19,000 from Synod general funds towards the cost of repairing a flat roof.
- **Twyford, Bucks** - grant of 20% of the cost of a refurbishment project up to a maximum grant of £25,000.
- **Aston Tirrold** - loan of up to £10,000 from Synod general funds towards to cost of replacing the roof. The situation will be reviewed when the outcome of other grant applications is known.

2. **Other property items**
None

3. **Listed Buildings**
The Provincial Property Committee has given the following permissions on the advice of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee:

- **Avenue St Andrew’s, Southampton** - permission to install a fixed projection screen, fixed projector and new speakers.
- **Bridport** - permission to improve the means of escape from the balcony.
- **Mansfield College, Oxford** - permission to increase the access and use of the Chapel.

4. **Church Mission Fund and Special Reserve Fund**
As requested, the Wessex Trust made good the shortfall of £75,600 reported last November by way of a grant from the Special Reserve Fund. As a result, at the beginning of 2015 there was £200,000 in the Church Mission Fund and £614,400 in the Special Reserve Fund.

5. **Revised grant application forms**
Revised application forms for grants, loans and permissions are now available from members of the Resource Team. Please do not use old forms and complete and submit the new forms electronically.

6. **Levels of grant**
Some churches are submitting grant requests that are unreasonably large. Please remember that our resources are limited and that the “Wessex millions” debate resulted in a preference for small mission-oriented projects.

7. **Aerial surveys**
Does your church have inaccessible gutters or gulleys, fragile or hard-to-reach structures? Consider using a multi-rotor remote-controlled helicopter taking high definition video that you can review at your leisure. The cost is £500 for half a day or £800 for a full day, plus VAT. A “cherry-picker” is about £2,000 per day.

David Page
Secretary, Finance and Property committees
CHILDREN’S AND YOUTH WORK COMMITTEE REPORT

Proverbs 22.6
Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.

Looking back at 2014
2014 was a busy year for Children’s and Youth Work in the Synod with a series of big events across the synod and the continuation of support for all churches in our synod.

Children’s Day 2014 : I’m Hands On!
During 2014’s March Synod 28 children aged 7 – 11 came together for a whole day of fun alongside Synod. The event focused on what it means to be hands on in your own church and the Synod. Two key elements were explored from the charter for children:
• Service is for children to give as well as adults
• Children are equal partners with adults in the life of the church
A fantastic day was had by all who engaged with the children creatively, encouraging them to find ways of getting involved in the bigger issues and the life of the church. The children’s opinions have been heard across the nations through the video blogs that they made which were shown at General Assembly 2014.

Spring Festival
At the end of April 2014 the Wessex synod gathered just outside Wokingham for the Wessex Spring Festival, an event for young people, children and their families. Nearly 200 participants in the event age range attended. The event was well received by all even if the weather was less than helpful with heavy showers throughout the day. There was a range of activities including an inflatable village; craft village and Instructor led events like leap of faith and rife shooting. The day ended in a Praise Party where everyone came together and worshiped, engaging all even if they don’t normally make Sunday services.

Summer Camp – RE: IGNITE
Another successful camp with nearly 70 young people aged 11-25 attending from across Wessex Synod plus some guests from other synods. Although the forecast predicted thunderstorms during the weekend the event was very dry and sunny with only a few minor showers in the evenings. A feature packed schedule was run with worship, site activities (high ropes, climbing, raft building), wide range of workshops and games. The theme for the camp explored key Biblical events and thought about how these impacted on us and, particularly this year, we reflected on what our response could be - thinking about God’s call and guidance. The theme sessions were streamed and the participants could choose which stream suited them best. We send our thanks and appreciation to the session leaders; Kay Blackwell (Basingstoke URC), Clare Downing (Wessex Moderator), Tanya Rasmussen (Wheatley URC), Tim Lowe (NW Coventry URC’s), and Tim Meachin (Convenor of the Assembly Children’s & Youth Work Committee). A great weekend was had by all who were there.
Forum
In November 2014 C&YCW held a forum for all who work with children and youth in our churches. The event had a guest speak, Tanya Rasmussen (Wheatley URC), leading discussions and activities around Ministry Teams, understanding calling and discernment and exploring gifts. The event was a success with over 30 people attending and with positive feedback from participants.

Looking forward to 2015 and beyond
The Children’s and Youth Work Committee (C&YWC) has a busy year planned. A programme listing our key events was sent to all churches in January.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>23 - 25</td>
<td>URC Youth Assembly 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>13 - 15</td>
<td>Synod Youth Executive Meeting 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Synod Meeting and Children’s Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Pilots on Safari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>26-28</td>
<td>Synod Youth Executive Meeting 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>17 - 20</td>
<td>Wessex Summer Camp – RE:Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>16 - 18</td>
<td>Synod Youth Executive Meeting 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Synod Meeting with CSA and SYE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The committee is currently in the middle of a visionary exercise looking forward to events in 2016 and beyond as well as considering the question ‘how well do we serve all age ranges in our remit?’.

Children Speaking Aloud
The Synod Children’s Forum, launched last November alongside synod, was named ‘Children Speaking Aloud’ (CSA) by the group that met. The group is open to all children aged 11 - 13 years who want explore key social and topical issues for the church and community, and participate in planning the Synod Children’s Days. Their sessions are split into 2 sections, business and social/team building activities. They will work closely with the SYE. The CSA will meet alongside every November Synod and is open to any child in the age range who wishes to attend.

At Assembly Level
We were proud to see this year’s FURY moderator, Andrew Weston, be inducted into office at URC Youth Assembly in January. We keep him and the whole FURY Executive in our prayers and thoughts through this year. We were also pleased to see Sandy Nunn voted in as Moderator Elect. Pilots are holding a day out at the West Midlands Safari Park and all are invited even if you are not associated with Pilots. We will be facilitating transport up to the West Midlands for the event, please get in touch with Ruth or Phil for more detail. It will be great to see all our young people there!

We are concerned about the delay in producing an updated Good Practice and bring a resolution asking for this to be published urgently for Synods approval.
John 16:33
New Living Translation (NLT)

I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world

The Wessex Synod Youth Executive (WSYE) is a group of young people aged 14-25 who are peer elected to provide a voice for all the children and young people connected to the churches of the Synod. This is done through meetings and support in planning, running and attending a variety of events at a Local, Synod and Assembly level.

This year we are pleased to announce that following the election prior to November Synod, we received a number of applications, both from those within the SYE standing for re-election as well as others applying for the first time. Currently nine members are on the Youth Executive. This does not include the CYDOs, who are present at the meeting, and any non-voting visiting representatives. Our new members, Valli McAdam and Bex Seymour, have both attended a residential meeting since being elected. This meeting we elected members to named roles – Alistair Stichbury remains the Convenor, John McAdam was elected Secretary, and Alice Hoyle is the new National representative. Other members are Kit Rasmussen, Caleb Dawson, Anna Ouston and Emily Meachin. We also note with gladness that two of our past members, Andrew Weston and Alexander Nunn, have been elected to the Fury Advisory Board, to the positions of Moderator and Moderator elect, respectively.

A number of us were present at our last Synod meeting in November, at which we delivered a resolution, presented and prepared by members of the Youth Executive. We are encouraged to hear of churches taking steps to individually begin to tackle the stigma surrounding Mental Health issues in their communities. We will take some time at Synod in small groups to encourage each other with examples from our own churches of areas in which we have been challenging stigma in our own churches.

The Youth at assembly level have taken steps to acknowledge the pledge made at the 2014 Youth Assembly to tackle this issue – as a result, Matthew Barkley, the outgoing Moderator of the Assembly, has, on behalf of the youth of the Church, signed the Time to Change pledge. This is an institutional promise, by Fury, to continue to challenge the stigma surrounding Mental Health issues, and represents a wider rhetoric that took shape in our own resolution – to end stigma in our own communities. We hope that stories from those around you have helped encourage you about the difference that the church can make in this area.

Following on from this, we as a Youth Executive would like to endorse a piece of work, first brought to our attention by our CYDOs, called the Mental Health Access Pack.

The Mental Health Access Pack is a resource to provide churches with a “reliable, Christian-based resources”, presenting the facts on “key mental health issues”. The pack has three key focuses.

– Listing common conditions
– Creating a more welcoming Church environment, including practical ways to help.
– A theological look at some aspects of mental health.

The pack also includes an index of other UK organisations, each with their own focus to help in specific cases. This resource is a great starting point for any church leader who wants to begin to understand mental health issues better, and as a Youth Executive we would like to take this chance to formally endorse this resource and encourage anyone who would like to find out more about the pack to approach the CYDOs, or members of the Youth Executive, who would be more than happy to provide you with links and information.

At our last meeting we were joined by Tim Searle, a member of the Synod’s Mission and Outreach committee, to explore the concept of mission, and how it should affect how we give. This came about from a difficulty in defining the term for our mission fund, which awards PEOPLE with a FUND of up to a third of their total cost (or £200). The group found this extremely helpful, and have since made changes to the publications linked with this fund. It was also of great help to the group personally, who now felt better placed to discern future applications to the fund. We were also joined by members of the Wessex Summer Camp planning team, with whom we continued to plan for this summer’s camp, which will be named RE:Value. Information for this event is available from the CYDOs, or from members of the Youth Executive, and we encourage you to begin to publicise this event in your home churches.
APPENDIX 1

The United Reformed Church (Wessex) Trust Ltd

The United Reformed Church (Wessex) Trust Ltd acts as trustee for the properties and financial assets of the Synod (but please note that the use of those resources is in the remit of the Finance and Property Committee). A full Report is produced each year with the Annual Accounts and these are published on the Charity Commission website with open access. We do not manage the Synod’s investments ourselves but use specialist Church and charity investment managers whose approach and performance are constantly monitored. We have adopted the Stewardship Code first published by the Financial Reporting Council and promoted by the Church Investors Group, which we are joining. The Code as adopted for Wessex is appended to this report.

Trustees The Synod is already fortunate to have trustees with a range of skills and experience but we will welcome suggestions of others who could complement the current trustees, who are listed in the Synod Directory. We shall particularly welcome suggestions of those who have one or more of the following skills and expertise – architecture and design: property: quantity surveying: finance and accountancy: Sage accounting: human resources, and who have a wide knowledge of the Synod and its work. We shall particularly welcome suggestions of people who would address the current gender/age/geographical location imbalance of the trustees, and of a minister in pastoral charge.

At present trustees meet on Thursdays five times a year in Southampton; travel expenses are paid and a sandwich lunch is provided. Further information can be sought from any trustee and suggestions of names, with an appropriate CV, should be sent to the retiring Convener of the Trust, the Revd Julian Macro – julian.macro@mansfield.oxon.org.

The Revd Julian Macro
On behalf of the Wessex Synod of the United Reformed Church, The United Reformed Church (Wessex) Trust Ltd (WESSEX) welcomes the Stewardship Code and its underlying principles. First published in 2010 by the Financial Reporting Council the UK Stewardship Code aims to enhance the quality of engagement between asset managers and companies to help improve long-term risk-adjusted returns to shareholders. As a responsible investor WESSEX takes seriously its role as an owner of the companies in whom our investment managers invest on our behalf. Whilst the Stewardship Code only applies to UK listed companies, where possible, WESSEX seeks for its response to be applied to all of its investment assets regardless of asset type or geography.

**Principle 1: Institutional investors should publicly disclose their policy on how they will discharge their stewardship responsibilities.**

WESSEX is a responsible investor. We do not manage our investments in-house but seek to select investment managers who are committed to both the integration of environmental, social and governance factors into their investment process and conduct active stewardship with the companies they invest in on our behalf. We expect our investment managers to routinely monitor and vote at the AGMs of the companies in whom they invest on our behalf. We also expect our investment managers to escalate engagement where there are concerns with regard to an investee company’s performance, strategy, governance or the management of environmental or social risk. As per the Charity Commission’s guidance WESSEX encourages our investment managers to engage with investee companies on issues that further our underlying values. When, over time, engagement is not successful we expect our investment managers to consider divestment.

**Principle 2: Institutional investors should have a robust policy on managing conflicts of interest in relation to stewardship which should be publicly disclosed.**

WESSEX operates a conflict of interest policy in line with Charity Commission guidance.

**Principle 3: Institutional investors should monitor their investee companies.**

Because WESSEX does not manage our investments in-house we have delegated responsibility for monitoring investee companies on a day to day basis to our investment managers. WESSX’s Trustees regularly meet our investment managers to monitor their investment decision making and assess how they are discharging their stewardship responsibilities on our behalf.

**Principle 4: Institutional investors should establish clear guidelines on when and how they will escalate their stewardship activities.**

WESSEX has delegated its responsibility for stewardship to its investment managers whom we expect to have a clear procedure for escalation should concerns arise. To monitor their activity we expect our investment managers to report their stewardship priorities to us on a periodical basis. WESSEX also expects its investment managers to reconsider investment in companies who, after a period of time, are not responding to engagement. WESSEX is ready to change an investment manager if not satisfied with that manager’s approach to stewardship.

**Principle 5: Institutional investors should be willing to act collectively with other investors where appropriate.**

WESSEX recognises the value of collective engagement. As such we encourage our investment managers to seek to act collectively with likeminded investors whenever appropriate. We are also members of the Church Investors Group and support collaborative engagement initiatives with likeminded asset owners conducted through, and by, the Group on our behalf.

**Principle 6: Institutional investors should have a clear policy on voting and disclosure of voting activity.**

WESSEX believes that voting forms an integral part of the routine monitoring of investee companies. We delegate our voting responsibilities to our investment managers whom we expect to vote all of our holdings where practical to do so in a manner that reflects both our position as a responsible investor and our underlying mission where practical to do so. WESSEX will routinely monitor our investment managers’ policy and activity in this area.

**Principle 7: Institutional investors should report periodically on their stewardship and voting activities.**

WESSEX expects its investment managers to report on their adherence to the Stewardship Code at least once a year. Where possible the WESSEX website will provide links to the website reports of our investment managers on their stewardship and voting activity.