

Meeting of The United Reformed Church Wessex Synod



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Meeting ID: 428 112 2198

Passcode: 231612

Wednesday 24th April 2024

Wessex Synod

BIG day out '24



Children £5
Adults £8



SATURDAY 4TH MAY 2024
10AM - 5PM



Hollycombe
STEAM IN THE COUNTRY

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AGENDA

18:00	Registration - V	
18:15	Non-Voting Registration X	
18:30	Welcome & Synod constituted by the Moderator	Moderator
18:35	Opening devotions	Moderator
18:45	Welcome to ecumenical visitors and new members of Synod	Moderator
	Apologies	Clerk
	Minutes of previous Synod	Clerk
	Matters Arising	Clerk
	Pastoral News	Moderator
18:55	Synod Executive	Clerk
	Nominations: Resolution 1	Clerk
19:10	Safeguarding	Safeguarding officer/ Clerk
19:15	Trust Report	Romilly Micklem
Break from 7.30 to 7.45, please be back ready to start at 7.45pm		
19:45	Stepwise presentation	Ruth White
19:50	Mission House Proposal Mission House: Resolution 2	Mary Thomas and Ruth White
20:05	M&M Report	Treasurer
20:35	M&M: Resolution 3	Treasurer
20:50	Any Remaining Business	Moderator
20:55	Closing Devotions	Moderator

Next meeting of Synod: United Church Winchester on Saturday 11th October 2024

UPDATE ON ORDINANDS, MINISTERIAL AND CHURCH CHANGES

Ordinands and CRCWs training for Ministry

Name	College	Ministry Category	Finish Date
Siobhan Antoniou	Northern	Stipendiary Ministry	June 2024
Simon Peters	Northern	Stipendiary Ministry	June 2026
Abigail Perrow	Westminster	Stipendiary Ministry	June 2026

Ministerial Changes

29th February Michael Hopkins left Farnham and Elstead and took up the role of Wessex Synod Moderator.

Jubilee Ministers

50th Anniversary

Cliff Bembridge

Bernie Collins

Richard Davis

Margaret Evans

60th Anniversary

Stephen Thornton

Derek Wensley

70th Anniversary

Tony Tucker

Church Closures

20th February Wimborne closed.

Changes before next Synod

27th April David Masters (Baptist) inducted at Peachcroft Christian Centre, Abingdon

4th May Alison Toplas Retires from Beacon Hill and remains in the Synod

31st May Liss closure

31st July Kay Blackwell moves to Holy Island in Northern Synod

MINUTES

MINUTES of the meeting of WESSEX SYNOD on Tuesday, 20th February 2024, held on Zoom at 6.30pm.

Mike Thomason chaired the meeting and welcomed members and constituted the meeting.

The Chair, Karen Bell and Alison Johnston led opening devotions, which included Psalm 13, a contemporary version of The Lord's Prayer, and "Lead me to Calvary", a song by Jennie Evelyn Hussey, vocals by Peter Wade.

The Chair welcomed guests to the meeting and those attending Synod for the first time and thanked those on the Tech team for enabling the meeting to take place.

The Clerk referred to the Guide to How to Use Zoom which had been issued and advised of a change to the telephone number for members to advise of technical issues, and some other matters relating to the conduct of the meeting on Zoom.

Attendance

28	URC Ministers and CRCWs
38	Church representatives
1	Ministers of other denominations
0	Retired Ministers/CRCWs
1	Ordinands
18	Others holding Synod appointments
5	Visitors
91	Total

24S01 Apologies: The Clerk reported that Apologies had been received from:

3	URC Ministers
13	Church Representatives
0	Ministers of other denominations
0	Ordinands
11	Retired Ministers
3	Others
30	Total

24S02 Minutes of the last meeting: The Clerk advised that there had not been any notice of amendments to be made to the Minutes of the last meeting as published in the Synod papers, and the Minutes of the meeting were agreed with unanimity as published.

24S03 Pastoral News: The Chair congratulated Michael Hopkins on his appointment as Moderator and reminded Synod of the Induction Service taking place on 23rd March 2024 at London Street URC, Basingstoke. Deborah Walker was also congratulated on attaining a First Class honours degree in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

The Chair led Synod in silence remembering the deaths of four ministers since the last meeting of Synod: "May they rest in peace and rise in glory."

24S04 Children's & Youth Work Committee: Josh Thomas presented the report.

- i. At the last meeting it had been reported that the Synod Youth and Children's Camps were going to take place separately and these had been very good. The 2024 Children's Camp will take place in May, the Youth Camp in July 2024. Josh Thomas thanked the Children's Youth

and Development Officers Ruth White and Phil Ray for all the good work involved. Children's Camp bookings for 2024 are going well, with 38 bookings already made.

- ii. Josh Thomas reminded Synod that the CYDOs are available to churches to support in the setting up of new initiatives relating to children and young people.

The CYDOs addressed Synod on their work to support churches:

- iii. Ruth White shared a link to the Wessex Summer Camps Children's Camp and the Youth Camp, which includes a further link to the Camp Brochure 2024 <https://www.urcwessex.org.uk/wsc24/>.
- iv. Ruth commended Broadstone URC who have been exploring the development of their ministry with families. Ruth White suggested their success in seeing and enabling change in their ministries is through their being strategic and intentional in their work. Ruth encouraged churches to be strategic and intentional in their planning remembering that the CYDOs are available to assist churches in being so.
- v. Phil Ray promoted the Children and Youth Friendly Church process which he suggested be regarded as a tool to enable churches to identify and develop their vision and to be strategic for Children and Youth Work rather than as an award. It celebrates what is being achieved in children's work as well as helping churches identify the next steps in their children's and youth development.

Josh Thomas paid tribute to all those working with children and young people throughout the Synod in churches.

24S05 Synod Youth Executive: The Chair invited Laura Everard to give an update further to the report in the Synod papers.

- i. The Synod Youth Exec currently comprises 11 young people drawn from 8 churches across the Synod. The Youth Exec met in 2023 in Gosport, being visited by Josh Thomas, the former Moderator, and Fran Kissack, convener of the General Assembly Task Group reviewing Children & Youth Work across the denomination.
- ii. A group of 15 young people from Wessex Synod representing a quarter of those attending had been taken to the URC Youth Assembly 2023.
- iii. A Beach Day in August 2023 held at West Wittering had been an amazing time of fellowship and an event exploring the theme Story, Story, Story had been held in October 2023 at Westminster College, Cambridge.
- iv. In January 2024 a group of 24 young people had been taken to Youth Assembly.
- v. Youth Camp 2024 will be held 12th-14th July 2024 at the GB Outdoor Centre.
- vi. This coming weekend Wessex Synod Youth Exec will be meeting to plan the programme for 2024, including:
- vii. Synod Youth Exec presence at the Big Church Day Out, 4th May 2024, a Beach Day to be held in August 2024 and an event yet to be confirmed for the weekend of 25th-27th October 2024.
- viii. In addition, Laura Everard reminded Synod that Youth Mission Grants are available to support young people in a mission-based project/trip. Applicants should be aged 14-25, and further information is available on the Synod website.
- ix. A question the Synod Youth Exec wished to pose is: How can your local church best make young people feel like full and active members of their church community, especially if they are the only young person in your church?

The Chair expressed his thanks to the Synod Youth Exec for the events that had been organised.

24S06 URC Children's Strategy: Ruth White referred to the launch of URC Children at General Assembly 2022, screen-sharing some visuals:

- i. URC Children is an umbrella group for those aged 0-12 years in the URC and those caring for and working with that age group, creating identity and boosting the voice of 0-12s in the church, and Ruth White serves as convener of the General Assembly Task Group aiming to:
 - Provide a URC identity for children 0-12 and those who work or care for them.
 - Raise the visibility of URC Children across the URC at all levels.
 - Resource and network those who care or work with children 0-12.
 - Encourage and enable the participation and prophetic voice of children in the URC.
- ii. Ruth asked the question whether URC Children feels connected to Synod members and churches at a local level or not, and invited feedback to be sent to her.
- iii. There will be a Children's Worker's Conference to be held 1st-3rd November 2024 at Ripon College, Oxford of retreat, information and training, bookings open from 1st May.
- iv. In local churches child participation is a chance for children to be heard and to be involved in all church matters.
- v. In some churches children are already involved in planning their groups, in wider church aspects such as Eco Church, the Call of a minister, the choice of charities the church supports, being active members of the church.
- vi. Tools are available to help churches increase child participation, such as the Eco Church questionnaire and the Children and Youth Friendly Church scheme, which contains three questions:

How do we consider the implications for children's and youth work in our decision making?
How do we enable children and young people to participate in decision making?
How do we listen to and learn from our children and young people? How do we share this?
- vii. Ruth shared a picture produced by the children of Fleet URC demonstrating the Children's Charter and reminded Synod of the Lundie Award and Medal and those young people in the Synod who have been recent recipients.

The Synod broke into Break Out Groups considering the questions:

- How are children able to participate in your local church at the moment?
- Where are the opportunities for them to be more involved?
- What might need to happen to enable this? What do you need as a church for support/ideas?

The Chair asked each Group to identify someone to send feedback on the questions to Deborah Walker by email to be sent on to Ruth White.

Synod returned from the Break Out Groups at 19.39.

24S07 Synod Executive Nominations: Resolution 1:

The Chair invited the Clerk to speak to Resolution 1.

The Clerk reported that this year there had been more volunteers to represent the Synod at General Assembly 2024 than may attend. Since the publication of the list of names in the Synod papers there had been further interest and there are now two lay reserves and two minister reserves, one in addition to each category of the names published. The Clerk explained that each

Synod is entitled to send two representatives aged under 26 years, and young people volunteering to represent Synod are allowed to represent those Synods unable to send two under 26 year olds as representatives.

The Clerk brought resolution 1:

RESOLUTION 1

Wessex Synod approves the list of representatives to General Assembly 2024 and allows Synod Officers to appoint replacements should it prove necessary.

This was agreed unanimously.

24S08 Synod Executive Nominations: Resolution 2:

The Chair invited the Clerk to bring resolution 2:

RESOLUTION 2

Wessex Synod approves the appointment of Scott Wheeler as Lay Preaching Advocate.

The Clerk reported that Scott Wheeler has been serving in the role since July 2023.

This was agreed unanimously.

Synod broke at 19.46 and reconvened at 20.00.

24S09 Ministries & Learning Committee: Wayne Hawkins spoke to the report published in the papers and drew the attention of Synod to the event organised by the Spiritualities Group taking place at Guildford URC on Saturday 16th March exploring “Christ of the ashes: finding life in the season of lent,” with Hannah Fytche, a student at Westminster College. There is a need to know numbers of people attending, and a decision as to whether the event is viable will be taken on Monday 26th February.

The Chair thanked Wayne Hawkins and the Ministries & Learning Committee for all their hard work.

24S10 Mission & Outreach Committee: Philip Bonnier brought the report, adding that the working party on becoming an Eco Synod has met for the first time and another meeting is planned.

Le Weekend will be on 3th-5th May 2024 which coincides with the Synod Big Day Out. Anyone may join Le Weekend at Fleet URC on the Friday or the Sunday, they will all be attending Big Day Out on the Saturday.

24S11 Ministry & Mission Fund update, with questions on MAM proposals: In referring to the discussion paper David North read from Acts 4:32-35 and made the following remarks:

- i. The developments emerging from discussions around ministerial deployment in the Pastoral Committees have suggested to the working party that including scoping in the M&M formula is no longer sensible and that a levy on church reserves should be applied to assist in the process of raising M&M.
- ii. David North offered an apology that communication to churches of the anticipated M&M contributions had been sent only lately but commented on some of the responses so far received:
 - a) Several churches have expressed concern where an increase in their contribution is indicated. David North stated that the best would be done to adjust and steer and refine that requested to ensure the M&M contributions can be met.
 - b) Some churches are concerned that as their current scoped Stipendiary ministry comes to an end they had hoped for a reduced contribution to M&M allowing them to employ

lay workers. The Task Group appreciate this is a difficult conversation, but the ministry and mission of the URC is a collective enterprise. It is to be hoped that the Church Life Review may indicate additional answers to this dilemma.

- c) The levy on church reserves has received comment from churches. David North reminded Synod that it is a legal requirement for churches to send their accounts to the Synod every year. The Task Group will probably assume in the future that every church has reserves that should be levied, unless the notified accounts indicate otherwise.
- iii. David North thanked the several churches with a suggested decrease in their M&M contributions that have responded their willingness to continue to offer more.
- iv. We are all in this together, and the Task Group continue to value everyone's thoughts and prayers and further input.

The Chair invited Synod to seek any matters of clarification:

- i. What proportion of the M&M is expected to be raised through the 2% levy? David North replied this is expected to be at most 1 or 2% of the total amount, but there is not yet an accurate assessment of the figure given the numbers of churches which are yet to send Synod their accounts.
- ii. How M&M is spread and how ministry is deployed is a very difficult matter. Ministers are not a commodity to be bid for.
- iii. Churches must submit their accounts to Synod, which may be emailed to treasurer@urcwessex.org.uk or trustdepconvener@urcwessex.org.uk or trustconvener@urcwessex.org.uk.
- iv. It is good to remember that M&M also pays for the training of Ministers.

The timescale and timetable is that the Task Group hope a consensus will emerge and that the Group may be able to bring a proposal to the next meeting of Synod. Should this not be possible an inflationary adjustment will be applied to the M&M contributions agreed with churches under the existing formula.

The Chair asked that further feedback be sent to David North and thanked David North and the Task Group for their work so far.

24S12 Resolution from Synod Pastoral Committee (South West): The Chair invited Peter Clark to speak to resolution 3 following which the Chair invited matters for clarification.

Romilly Micklem reminded Synod that the United Reformed Church (Wessex) Trust has no standing in this matter, not being the trustee of the building. The Trust has made the offer to provide advice to Wimborne URC, but no advice has been sought by the church. In respect of the building itself the Trust has no role or responsibility. Romilly Micklem commented that the Elders, as charitable trustees of the church's funds, have not yet established new charitable trust arrangements, and that therefore on the passing of this resolution Wimborne URC will no longer exist as a charity. In this circumstance, the church's charitable funds revert to the Synod General Fund.

Peter Clark moved resolution 3:

RESOLUTION 3

Wessex Synod, fulfilling the function conferred upon it in paragraph 2(4)(iii) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church, resolves that the local church known as Wimborne United Reformed Church shall be dissolved with effect from 20 February 2024.

Synod authorises the Executive Committee to take any further action necessary to effect this decision, and instructs the Wessex District Council, the trustees of the building (if they can be identified), and the United Reformed Church (Wessex) Trust Ltd to take appropriate action on any future use or disposal of the building, which will be no longer required for the worship of the United Reformed Church from the date on which Wimborne United Reformed Church is dissolved.

This was agreed unanimously.

The Chair asked for prayer for the church and for Synod Executive at this time.

24S13 Remaindered Business: There was none.

24S14 Closing Worship: Lucy Brierley led Closing Worship, reading Psalm 89:1-2 and offered the prayer: "God to enfold me, God to surround me, God in my speaking, God in my thinking, in my sleeping, in my waking, watching, hoping, life, in my lips, in my soul, in my heart." The hymn "O God you search me and you know me" was screen shared and The Grace was shared.

24S15 Thank You: The Chair thanked all those attending Synod for joining the meeting. Synod expressed thanks to Mike Thomason and Josh Thomas for chairing the recent meetings of Synod.

The business was finished, and Synod was adjourned at 20.50 to meet again at 3.00pm on Saturday, 23rd March 2024 at London Street URC, Basingstoke for the induction of the moderator, and then online at 6.30pm on 24th April 2024, **or at such other time and place as may be necessary.**

OBITUARY

The following obituary will appear in “Celebrated Lives”
which is a collection of life stories within the URC Yearbook 2025

John Johansen-Berg

4th November 1935 - 16th November 2023, aged 85

John was born on 4th November 1935 and grew up in Middlesbrough, Teeside as one of six surviving siblings. His grandfather Olaf (a sailor) had come over from Norway in the late 1800s, married, and settled in the North East, and the Johansen-Berg dynasty in the UK grew from there.

Enabled by a state scholarship, John was the first in his family to go to University — Leeds — where he received a degree in English Literature — but was just as interested in the debating societies as in the academic course, representing Leeds University in inter-university debating competitions.

He was very active in the Student Christian Movement and in student politics, participating in marches protesting the Suez invasion by UK and France, and the Russian invasion of Hungary. John developed his life-long objective of using his faith to lead to actions that made a difference.

John then trained for ministry at Westminster College, Cambridge. He was ordained on 3rd July 1962, at St Ninian’s Presbyterian Church, Luton, serving the Luton & Dunstable Team Ministry until he was called to a mission project in Everton, Liverpool in 1969 — an open youth club meeting in a disused pub.

From this, John oversaw the creation and building of a large church youth and community centre — the Rock Church Centre. Joan Parnham, a deaconess, had served in the Dunstable ministry and also moved to a Birkenhead post. John and Joan married in 1971.

In 1977, with a growing family, John and Joan moved to St Andrews, Ealing; a lively church with a strong Ghanaian presence. During the ten years here, John was elected the youngest ever Moderator of General Assembly. He is remembered there as a prophetic voice, eloquently and passionately reminding the URC of its missionary calling to work for peace and reconciliation with justice.

In 1987, the family moved to a 17-bedroom house between Birmingham and Bromsgrove, where John and Joan founded a residential community running a retreat and conference centre and place of sanctuary for anyone in crisis: the ‘Community for Reconciliation’. This continues under the name ‘The Greenhouse’. John’s own ministry developed into international peacemaking and reconciliation initiatives including humanitarian aid projects and conflict resolution programmes in Romania, Croatia, India and Rwanda (following the genocide).

During their final 10 years in the Community John and Joan took on the Ministry of the local village church in Rubery where they had already been members for some time. This became the Beacon Church, and the members gave their time in support of the local and international work of the Community as John and Joan helped them in their mission as a village church.

Between 2005 and 2017 John was Chair of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. He was the FoR’s public face, engaging the media particularly when his fellow-trustee Norman Kember was taken hostage in Iraq.

John will be remembered as a missionary, a peacemaker, a prophet, pastor and liturgist who fully lived out the missionary vocation of the URC.

John leaves behind his widow, Joan, three children and six grandchildren.

SYNOD EXECUTIVE REPORT

Synod Executive has met twice since our October Synod Meeting, my thanks to members of Synod Executive who have taken turns to chair this meeting in the absence of a Moderator.

Wessex Synod Moderator

We welcome the Revd Dr Micheal Hopkins as Moderator of Wessex Synod, following his induction on the 23rd March. My thanks to all those who have been involved in the process of seeking a new Moderator and the call to Michael, and to those who took part in, or supported his induction service and tea.

Employment

Interviews for the role of an Employment Adviser took place late March, and an appointment has been accepted and they will start in September 2024. I will bring you her name nearer the time. They will be employed by the Southampton Methodist District with some hours allocated to URC Wessex Synod.

Ministry and Mission

A MAM group led by our Treasurer David North started meeting in December and after several meetings set out a proposed plan for 2025 which was brought to our February Synod Meeting. All treasurers of churches within the Wessex Synod were sent the figures to show how this would affect their church and feedback was requested. An updated report from this group is included in these papers with a resolution for this meeting on the formula for the M&M calculations for 2025.

Thank you to this team, particularly David, who have put in a lot of hours over a short period of time to support churches in this. It is not an easy task and they have responded to this in a timely manner.

Communication

This group has been met with some issues and have not been able to meet since 2023, however Synod Executive will review how we wish to continue with this at their all-day strategy meeting in May. If you have any suggestions or would like to participate in how we communicate to you, do contact Graham Hoslett or myself.

Big Day Out – Story, Story, Story



The Big Day Out Task group have met several times on zoom over the last few months and have put together an all age programme for the whole of this exciting day.

Letters with some of the activities and some frequently asked questions and answers have been sent out to all churches and a detailed programme will be sent out W/C 29th April to all who have ordered tickets. There will be some copies that can be collected on the day.

We are asking churches to provide a banner showing the story of their church, and these will decorate the site. If you have not received the instructions for this, let me know at clerk@urcwessex.org.uk and I will forward them to you. Alternatively the instructions are available here: [BDO24 Banner Design](#)

Thank you to the children of Petersfield and Liss URC who have made the one below to show us how to do it.



Dimensions: ½ metre wide and 1 meter long

If you can support the event by offering some of your time, please contact me and I will let the right people know. We need help setting up on the Friday and taking down on the Saturday at 5pm. Also if you are attending and can offer an hour of your day to help with the stewarding, please let me know. A list of roles needed will go out to your churches, please ask your church secretary for this if they have not sent it to you, or contact me on clerk@urcwessex.org.uk and I can send this to you directly.

Each week we have been sending out a post that you can use on your Facebook page and your church website. These can all be accessed through the Synod website link. [Synod Big Day Out](#)

All documents and updates are going onto the Synod website where you can also book tickets which are at the same price as 2022 - £8 for Adults and £5 for Children.

[Synod Big Day Out](#)

We look forward to seeing you there.

Synod Meetings

In the March 2022 Synod Meeting, Resolution 4, shown below, was brought and agreed with the understanding that the pattern of meetings would be assessed regularly.

The Synod Meeting resolves that from October 2022 the pattern of meetings will change to be one in-person meeting held on a Saturday normally in October and two online business meetings held on weekday evenings.

We have set the meetings for 2025, however you will be sent a short questionnaire around this pattern in the coming months, and if necessary, a resolution for any changes needed will be brought to the October 2024 meeting.

Nominations

Although all roles on all Synod committees are vital, we have some roles that we see as urgent to fill, these include:

- Deputy Treasurer
- Rural Link (Mission & Outreach)
- Racial Justice Advocate (Mission & Outreach)
- Synod Pastoral Committee members
- Trustees

If you would like more information on any of these, or if you or someone you know may be a good fit, then send names and why you think they are called, to Karen at clerk@urcwessex.org.uk

Appointments

The nominations group bring the appointments list to you for approval. Thank you to all who are finishing a period of service, those who continue to serve and those who are starting their service in 2024. Please support all with prayer and continue to pray for discernment on those who could be called to serve.

RESOLUTION 1

Wessex Synod approves the list of Appointments submitted by Nominations Group

Karen Bell
Synod Clerk
clerk@urcwessex.org.uk

SYNOD NOMINATIONS

Appointments for Synod April 2024

Group	Name	End
<u>OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES</u>		
Synod Clerk	Miss Karen Bell	
Synod Minutes Secretary	Revd Graham Hoslett	2025
Synod Treasurer	Mr David North	2027
Deputy Synod Treasurer	Vacancy	
<u>APPOINTEES</u>		
Trust Convener Support	Vacancy	
DSO Support	Revd Wayne Hawkins	2026
CYDO Line Manager	Revd Josh Thomas	2027
Clerk Line Manager	Revd Mike Thomason	2027
<u>COMMITTEES AND GROUPS</u> (members listed exclude all <i>ex officio</i> members)		
Synod Executive		
Convener:	Moderator	
Secretary:	Synod Clerk	
Minute Secretary:	Synod Minutes Secretary	
Members:	NW: Mr Philip Bonnier	2028
	NE: Revd Mike Thomason	2026
	SW: Vacancy	
	SE: Mrs Sheilagh Courtage	2027
Plus: Conveners from Children & Youth Work, Ministries & Learning and Wessex Trust; Synod Treasurer and the Synod representative to the Assembly Mission Committee.		
Nominations Group		
Convener:	Synod Clerk	
Secretary	Mr George Faris	2027
Members:	Synod Pastoral Committee	
	Convenors	
	One person from each Area	
	Moderator and DSO's	
Mission & Outreach Committee		
Convenor	Revd Ray Stanyon	
Secretary:	Mr Philip Bonnier	2028
Will be lead on Mission Actions	Revd David Downing	2028
Will be lead on Church & Society	Revd Tim Clarke	
Actions		2026
Will be lead on World Church Actions	Revd Helen Everard	2026
Rural Link (MDG):	Vacancy	
Commitment for Life Advocate:	Mrs Christine McMillan	2027
Inter-Faith Advocate:	Revd Paul O'Connor	2027
Racial Justice Advocate:	Vacancy	
Green Apostle:	Revd Mike Shrubsole	2025

European Partner Link Coordinator (France):	Vacancy	
Global Partner Link Coordinator (Zambia):	Vacancy	
Methodist Link (WCG):	Revd Rosemary Fletcher	
Members:	Revd Adam Payne	2026
	Revd Wendy White	2026
	Revd Stephen Ansa-Addo	2027
	Vacancy	
	Vacancy	
	Vacancy	

Ministries and Learning Committee

Convener:	Revd Wayne Hawkins	2025
Secretary:	Revd Graham Hoslett	2025
Lay Preaching Advocate: (was commissioner)	Mr Scott Wheeler	2027
Synod Ecumenical Officer:	Revd Harry Lanham Plus Pastoral Committee Conveners	2027

Synod Pastoral Committees:

North East	Convener:	Revd Lucy Brierley	2025
	Area Lay Preaching Co-ordinator:	Mrs Karen Smith	2025
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Berkshire:	Vacancy	
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Surrey:	Revd Mike Thomason	2028
	Members (5):	Mr Bob Robertson	2026
		Mrs Anna Crawford	2027
		Revd Graham Hoslett	2028
Revd Michael Hodgson		2025	
	Mrs Wendy Dunnett	2026	
North West	Convener:	Mr Tony Brett	2028
	Area Lay Preaching Co-ordinator:	Vacancy	
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Berkshire:	Vacancy	
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Oxfordshire:	Revd Glyn Millington	2027
	Members (5):	Revd Robert Barthram	2025
		Mrs Cynthia Bartlett	2026
		Mr Roger Clark	2024
Mrs Fiona Hobson		2028	
	Mr Clive Snashall	2025	
South East	Convener:	Revd Sarah Hall	2025
	Area Preaching Co-ordinator:	Mrs Pam Humphreys	2027
	Synod County Ecumenical officer Hampshire:	Revd Harry Lanham	2027

	Members (6):	Revd Graham Dadd	2028
		Mrs Sue Sapsard	2027
		Revd Tim Searle	2028
		Mrs Sue Brown	2025
		Vacancy	
		Vacancy	
		Vacancy	
South West	Convener:	Revd Peter Clark	2026
	Area Preaching Co-ordinator:	Mrs Maggie Larkin	2026
	Synod County Ecumenical officer	Vacancy	
	Dorset:		
	Members (7):	Revd Wilbert Sayimani	2027
		Mr Andrew Hirst	2026
		Revd Paul O'Connor	2026
		Mrs Linda Pain	2025
		Revd James Whately	2025
		Vacancy	
		Vacancy	
Spirituality Group Convenor		Revd Alison Toplas	2025
		Vacancy	
		Vacancy	
Listed Buildings Advisory Committee			
	Convener:	Revd Michael Hodgson	2025
	Secretary:	Revd Glyn Millington	2025
	Members:	Mr David Illingworth	
		Mr Gareth Jenkins	
		Revd John Lee	
		Mr Matthew Maier	
		Mr Kevin Morris	
		Mr James Lemanis	2028
		Vacancy	
		Mr Graham Barber (co-opted)	
		Mrs Nicola Werro (co-opted)	
MaM Task Group			
	Convener:	Mr David North (Treasurer)	
	Members:	SE: Mr David Childs	2028
		SW: Mr Nick Tustain	2028
		NE: Mr Jem Ward	2028
		NW: Mr David North	
	Trust Link	Mr Ray Dunnet	
	M&L Convener	Revd Wayne Hawkins	
	Ministry and Mission Fund Secretary	Vacancy	

Children's & Youth Work Committee

Convener:	Revd Josh Thomas	2026
Secretary:	Revd Helen Everard	2027
Paid Youth/Families Workers'	Mrs Jo Hopkins	2025
Representative:		
Members:	Revd Andrew Hall	2028
	Vacancy	
	Vacancy	
	Vacancy	
	Vacancy	
	Vacancy	
Synod Youth Executive Representative:	<i>filled by rotation of SYE</i>	

District Council

	Moderator	
President	Mrs Anna Crawford	2028
Secretary	Mr Keith Bradley	2027
Members (4)	Synod Pastoral Committees	
	Conveners	
Members (4)	NE: Mrs Karen Smith	2027
	NW: Mr Clive Snashall	2027
	SE: Mr David Childs	2027
	SW: Revd Paul O'Connor	2027

REPRESENTATIVES TO OTHER GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

Assembly Executive

	Moderator	
	Synod Clerk	
	Mr Clive Snashall	2026
	Revd Tim Clarke	2026

Youth Representative to URC Youth Executive Assembly

Vacancy

Assembly Nominations Committee

Synod Clerk

Synod Meetings Deputy Convenor

Revd Mike Thomason 2025

Assembly Mission Committee

Revd Ray Stanyon

URC (Wessex) Trust Limited

Convenor:	Revd Romilly Micklem (re-elected 2024)**
Trustees	Mrs Sue Brown (re-elected 2019)
	Mrs Margaret Carrick Smith (re-elected 2021)
	Mr Ray Dunnett (re-elected 2019)
	Mr Andrew Gibb (should have been re-elected 2020; Synod cancelled)
	Mr Colin MacBean (re-elected 2021)
	Revd Julian Macro (re-elected 2021)

Revd Glyn Millington (elected 2022)
Mr John Sinclair (elected 2021)
Mrs Bridget Micklem (elected 2023)*
Mr David North (elected 2023)*
Revd Michael Hopkins (elected 2024)*
Vacancy
Vacancy
Vacancy

Note: In accordance with Article 9 of the Articles of Association of the Trust, the trustee(s) standing for election for the first time in 2023/24, are marked with an asterisk, and the trustee(s) standing for re-election in 2024, one third of them having had to retire by rotation each year and, being eligible, offer themselves for re-election, are marked with two asterisks

Synod Youth Executive

Alexandra Iseghohimen
Eden Withall
Elisa Pizzo
James Jenkins
Jamie Laird
Jemimah White (Secretary)
Kailey Milne
Kathleen Beaman
Laura Everard
Maya Withall
Taylor Hawkins

Co-opted Members of Synod (2023-2024)

Miss Karen Bell
Mr David North
Mr Graham Barber
Mr Peter Stevenson
Mr Philip Ray
Mr Tony Brett
Revd Peter Clark
Revd Wendy White
Mrs Anna Crawford

SAFEGUARDING REFERENCE GROUP REPORT

Updates and Developments

Sharon Barr continues in the role of Synod Safeguarding Officer (SSO), she covers all areas of the synod, working part time. She supports concerns from local churches and advises the safeguarding coordinators in churches on how to best manage cases also answering queries as needed. Phil Ray and Ruth White (Children and Youth Development Officer's) offer cover when Sharon is on leave.

In October 2023 the URCs Good Practice guidance document was update to its sixth version, the new version can be found [here](#) The new documents was launch at a safeguarding symposium which can still be viewed [here](#)

As part of the launch the appendix have all been reviewed and developed and are now listed as resources for churches to use [here](#).

The URC have developed a case management system which Wessex along with all other synods are using for logging safeguarding cases. This really is a positive step forward to professionalise safeguarding and ensure our recording of cases is consistent and withstands scrutiny.

In 2023, Sharon was able to make contact with most churches that through the annual church safeguarding return were identified as needing some support and/or guidance on safeguarding in their local church to ensure they were meeting all the is expected from them both by the URC, and by external regulators. This proved a really useful tool to then share with other teams in the synod to ensure we are supporting local churches holistically when it is needed. This exercise will happen now each year after the annual safeguarding return cut off but please remember that Sharon is here to support your local church with safeguarding matters at anytime.

Training and Development

Phil Ray and Ruth White along with Sharon Barr have continued to offer the full and refresher foundation and intermediate safeguarding training online and Phil and Ruth facilitate face to face courses in their synod areas.

Sharon will start to deliver Advanced training online in 2024, dates will be published in the Safeguarding and Sharing the Vision newsletter and on the synod website.

The URC central safeguarding team continue to offer online training in areas such as Elder as Trustees, Safer Recruitment & DBS Verifiers and Domestic Abuse in the church and Adult Safeguarding, these can be attended by anyone in the synod.

A training flow chart that explains the training on offer and the routes available can be found on the synod website [here](#).

Sharon continues to run quarterly Church Safeguarding Coordinators (CSC) drop in online sessions, these have proved useful to those that have attended, we have had the opportunity to confidentially share cases and offer each other support. The dates and links to these are emailed to all CSC, if you have not received these invites then please let Sharon know.

Due to popular demand there will be another Church Safeguarding Coordinator away day on 21st September 2024 at Fleet URC, please save the date and more details will follow.

Synod Safeguarding Reference Group (SRG)

The group continues to meet termly with the purpose of having oversight of the safeguarding issues within the Wessex Synod, the team also update policy as needed, share news from the National Safeguarding Committee and plan the roll out of changes across the synod.

The SRG this past year have focussed on:

- The continued monitoring of the Synod Strategic plan adapted from the national plan.
- A full review of the Synod Safeguarding Policy.
- The development of the safeguarding report that is submitted to Synod Executive and Trust meetings to ensure it captures all the information they would be required to receive.
- How best to capture training data for the synod on which we await some guidance from the central safeguarding team but in the meantime are recording at a synod level.
- Reviewing the complex cases being managed by the SSO that need a critical friend.

The group has decided that we would benefit from another member who would be someone outside of the URC but with a sound safeguarding knowledge at a strategic level, if you know of anyone who would be suitable please contact Sharon Barr.

Finally, did you know that Safeguarding Sunday this year is the 17th November 2024? If your church does not recognise this day, then please encourage them to do so. The URC produce Worship Notes for that Sunday with a safeguarding theme and the organisation 31:8 also produce a wealth of resources for services and for children and young people's work. It is a great opportunity to create and develop a positive safeguarding culture and start conversations about our responsibility to keep people safe at church.

Sharon Barr

Wessex Safeguarding Officer On behalf of the Safeguarding Reference Group

safeguarding@urcwessex.org.uk

URC (WESSEX) TRUST LIMITED REPORT

This report updates Synod since the last report and includes a summary of the decisions made at meetings of the Wessex Trust held on Zoom on 23 November 2023 and on 15 February 2024.

1. Trustees

David North, the Synod Treasurer, was elected as a Trustee on 23 November 2023; Revd Dr Michael Hopkins was elected on 15 February 2024 to serve as a Trustee from the date of his taking office as Synod Moderator. This meeting of Synod will be asked to confirm these elections, as well as that of Bridget Micklem (elected on 22 June 2023). Synod will also be asked to confirm the re-election on 15 February 2024 of Revd Dr Romilly Micklem as a Trustee and convener of the Trust.

There continue to be vacancies for Trustees. As reported to numerous previous Synod meetings we would like to strengthen the Trust board with HR experience, but in general Trustees are not expected to have specialised knowledge: common sense, patience and a willingness to help local congregations are the key attributes.

Trustees are asked to attend typically five meetings a year. We are currently meeting three times a year in person in Southampton and twice a year on Zoom.

Please have a chat with the Convener or Deputy Convener if you would like to find out more about being a Trustee and the importance of this role in the life of our Synod.

2. Grants, loans and permissions

The Trust has made the following grants, loans and other commitments, and given permissions in the following matters. Unless otherwise stated, grants are made from the Church Mission Fund, and loans are made from the Trust's General Fund and are repayable over five years with interest at 3% per year. 'Net Zero' scheme grants are also made from the Trust's General Fund. (All grant figures given below are maxima, not necessarily the amount actually paid out.)

Church / Ecumenical partner	Decision
November 2023	
Winchester: United Church	£2,000 payment from the General Fund towards fire safety works already undertaken by the church
Rowlands Castle: Church on the Green	£2,000 grant awarded towards the cost of boiler replacement
February 2024	
Churches Together in Oxfordshire	£960 grant from the General Fund approved for 2023 (belatedly, following some email issues)
Ringwood: Trinity United	Extended to 31 December 2024 the interest- and repayment-free period of the loan offered in April 2023, because the associated works were delayed for several months
Ringwood: Trinity United	£1,500 grant awarded from the General Fund to help the church meet higher energy costs ('Energy Crisis' funding)
Rowlands Castle: Church on the Green	£750 grant awarded from the General Fund to help the church meet higher energy costs ('Energy Crisis' funding)
Woking	£170,000 'Net Zero' grant awarded from the General Fund towards the replacement of a copper roof with insulated aluminium
Woking	£10,000 'Net Zero' grant awarded from the General Fund towards the cost of insulating the sanctuary roof
United Church of Zambia, Lusaka Presbytery	£1,500 grant awarded from the General Fund to support the Presbytery's cholera epidemic relief programme

3. Other property matters

- **Listed Buildings Advisory Committee (LBAC):** The LBAC plans to publish in the summer a process flowchart and a handbook for churches which have listed buildings or are in conservation areas. This will provide a useful reminder of churches' responsibilities and hopefully clarify any ambiguities about the processes that churches need to follow.
- **Manses:** A new manse at 4 Covent Close, Abingdon has been purchased for the Abingdon: Peachcroft Christian Centre for £555,000 and is being prepared for occupation by a minister of the Baptist Church. Following the relocation or retirement of ministers, one manse has been let at 26 Queens Road, Swanage and one manse is being prepared for sale at 73 Granville Way, Chatsworth Park, Sherborne. Three manses have been re-let at 20 Ridgeway Road, Salisbury, 18 Harwood Gardens, Old Windsor and 5 Rotha Field Road, Oxford.
- **Registration of church buildings:** The General Register Office has registered Salisbury, Romsey: Abbey URC and Winchester: United Church for the solemnisation of same-sex marriages and is processing an application from Farnham: The Spire Church.
- **Property disposals:**
Liss: The church has decided to close and its final service will be held on 28 April 2024. Arrangements will be made for its disposal in due course.

16 St. Martins Drive, Walton-on-Thames: The former manse was sold on 8 March 2024 for £800,000.

42 Lewington Court, 591 Hertford Road, Enfield: The former investment property was sold on 29 February 2024 for £100,000.

4. Finance

- **2023 Year End and Audit:** The Trust Finance team is in the final stages of preparation for the 2023 audit, which we hope will take place imminently. Preliminary year-end figures suggest that expenditure exceeded income by roughly £869,000, due to a hiatus in property sales. This demonstrates very clearly the Synod's reliance on selling buildings in order to cover its costs.
- **Annual Report and Accounts for 2022:** a PDF copy of the 2022 Annual Report and Accounts is available for download from the Charity Commission website [here](#). Please let the Convener know if you would like to receive a paper copy.
- **Church Mission and Special Reserve Funds:** A number of unused loan and grant balances and expired grant awards were 'written back'. As at 31 March 2024, the available balances in these funds are as follows:
 - Church Mission Fund: £63,223
 - Special Reserve Fund: £413,247
- **United Reformed Church Ministers' Pension Fund (URCMPF) deficit funding:** Under the schedule of payments to the URCMPF deficit recovery programme (endorsed by Synod in Resolution 5 at the meeting on 12 March 2022), the Trust is due to make the next payment of £1,200,000 before the end of October. This will bring the Synod's payments to this programme to a total of £3,600,000. I would remind Synod that a further £5,400,000 is scheduled to be paid in annual instalments over the period 2025–2030.
- **'Energy Crisis' Funding:** As I have previously reported, the Trust has not been inundated with requests from churches for transitional support to help them adjust to higher energy bills. We have had just two applications, both recorded in this report. **The Trustees have therefore decided that the focus of support from the Synod's funds for energy-related grant requests should be 'Net Zero' projects. The 'Energy Crisis' funding pool will be re-purposed**

accordingly, to encourage churches facing higher energy costs to work to reduce consumption and move towards the URC's target of 'Net Zero' by 2030.

- **Climate Emergency ('Net Zero') Grant Funding:** We continue to make grants of up to 50% of the overall cost for projects that very significantly reduce a church's carbon footprint. If your church is considering a project or programme aimed at achieving a dramatic reduction in carbon emissions, please contact your Wessex Trust Property Officer at an early stage. The standard building works application form and process should be used for applications for this type of grant. Churches will need to provide additional information showing how the project will lead to step-change improvements in efficiency and reductions in CO₂ emissions. **Please note that replacement of a gas boiler with another gas boiler (however efficient) is unlikely to qualify.**

5. Other matters

- **Grants, loans and permissions application process:** The Trust hopes to produce a new grants booklet for churches, which will update and bring into one resource document the previous editions of a number of booklets.
- **Charitable status of churches:** I would once again remind churches that are not registered in their own right as charities, that they do not have a charity number. **You cannot use the Trust's charity number if you are asked to provide one.** The URC has provided a letter from the Charity Commission which churches can offer to organisations requesting a charity number, available here:

<https://www.urcwessex.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Letter-from-Charity-Commission-for-Excepted-URC-charities-in-England-and-Wales.pdf>

Alternatively, if your church is registered for Gift Aid, some organisations will accept an HMRC registration number instead of a charity number.

• CHURCH ACCOUNTS

A great deal of progress has been made in getting accounts from the Synod's churches: thank you. **That said, we are still missing up-to-date accounts from a good number of the Synod's churches**, so when your church's accounts have been inspected, please do remember to send a copy to the Trust or Synod offices, preferably by email, **each year**. Charity regulations require the annual production of accounts, and you will have to provide them in support of any application to the Trust if they have not already been supplied.

Romilly Micklem, Convener

trustconvener@urcwessex.org.uk

Mission House Proposal – Live, Learn and Serve

A long road to where we are now.....

The idea of a Mission House Project was brought to Synod around 2017 who agreed to the principle and asked for it to be explored further. The idea came out of Children and Youth Work Committee (CYCW) around 2015 later being taken on by Mission Development Group (MDG) in 2018 initially with a view to the Poole area and/or the Welbourne Garden Village development. MDG reported to synod in March 2020 that the plans were progressing. COVID changed the plan. It is interesting to note that other Synods have progressed with their own versions of the Mission House, using lessons learnt from our research and proposals.

The Vision remains the same, the scope has changed.

We would like to run a Pilot Mission House to provide individuals with a structured experience of ministry as well as providing churches with the extra support and drive needed to develop. We would source a property (current vacant manse, or new purchase) in a logical location in the Synod which is in good travelling distance to a church who fits into the above criteria. This property would provide the accommodation for a group of up to three workers, either looking to start training, or looking to test their calling in this area of work with a view to embark on training.

The synod offers a great deal of support for the many practical issues our local churches face in the form of its training and development teams, property officers and legal and financial support, but they are, at best, fleeting – short term injections of expertise and encouragement when what many churches need is dedicated, and committed, personnel to help develop their many mission opportunities. Young adults can often have this desire to be involved, to take responsibility, to work as agents of change but, all too often, the systems are not in place to support them.

This proposal is an attempt by the Synod to partner willing young adults with appropriate churches to enable both to flourish and grow as well as the chance to explore fresh expressions of church.

A Mission House candidate is not a church's response to the need to undertake mission but is a focus for the development of that mission within a local church.

We are aware that there has been an increased interest from individuals looking for opportunities to work in a church context and undergo alternative training, because they are not suited to conventional full time courses due to learning styles or personal circumstances.

A seed tray for a Grow Your Own culture

The Ginger Group, although long gone, continues to bear fruit across the URC through the lives of those whose faith was deepened and vocations nurtured as a result of being part of that programme. Similarly, an experience of living in community for a young person is a formational, seminal experience as a young Christian.

The Synod is committed to engaging with churches who wish to revitalise their mission and investing in local mission and evangelism.

In preparing this proposal the task group met with many other similar projects to learn lessons.

The Rationale – Investing in local church Mission and developing new leaders

There is recognition that several local churches have the passion, and ministerial vision for developing and investing in their children's, youth, family and community work, often with a good foundation of current work and volunteer teams. However, in many cases these churches are not in positions to recruit full or part time workers, but without this dedicated input are unable to progress their provision of work further. The proposal originally came out of discussions at Synod Pastoral Committee (South West) concerning the pastoral care towards our churches in the Poole

area, however, with the closure of 2 of those churches, the emphasis has now changed. **The church which showed most interest in working with young people in this way was Broadstone URC who also have a clear vision and a strategic plan for mission.**

Broadstone URC has a Manse on its property which would be an ideal base for the Mission House. They also have a strategic plan that has enabled growth in their mission and ministry, even during and since COVID. They provide regular activities where families are being encouraged to be part of events and acts of worship; These include midweek groups and Sundays. The mission house workers will be part of a wider team of people to help plan and run existing projects as well as develop new areas of ministry such as youth work and school's work. Potential for further growth and ministry includes:

- **Older Young People.** Developing further the ministry with pre-teens and teenagers. None of the churches in Broadstone cater for this age-group – their activities are generally centred around younger children and their families.
- **Developing family ministry.** To begin to disciple families.
- **Working with schools and wider community.** The opportunities are there in many local schools, but the church lacks capacity to do more.
- **Other opportunities.** There are also opportunities to work alongside a worker at Canford Heath URC, The workers would also be required to support Synod level events such as Camp and Big Day Out.

Recruitment

Their formal appointment (employment) would be with the Synod, who could provide some of the vocational training, and/or mentoring. Because the young people will be living in the grounds of Broadstone, the cost in expenses will be minimal.

The synod would also benefit from being able to utilise the expertise within the delivery of synod events.

Workers within the mission house will be 'in-post' for the duration of their training (up to 2/3 years, based on current courses at Oasis College).

There is scope for someone living locally to remain with their family in their own home but be a full participant in the house project.

Funding and Administration

The project should be fully funded through the Synod.

Costings overview

	147,502.92
<i>Set up costs</i>	<i>30,599.00</i>
<i>over three years</i>	<i>116,903.92</i>

We would pay the workers an hourly rate.

The workers will pay rent and cover their own bills.

Project costs can be claimed back from the church.

The Project management group will also, look to source other funding through Synod, and a large grant from the Discipleship Development Fund.

Mission and Outreach Committee have overview of the project and will provide evaluation and feedback reports to synod at the April and October Synod meetings each year.

Ruth White (CYDO-S) / Mary Thomas (DSO-S)

cydo-s@urcwessex.org.uk / dso-s@urcwessex.org.uk

April 2024

Resolution 2

Wessex Synod approve the commencement of a Mission House Pilot Project in Poole from September 2025.

Including:

- Asking Wessex Trust to underwrite the set-up costs of establishing the mission house in the Broadstone Manse.
- Approving the annual expenditure of the project.

MINISTRY AND MISSION FORMULA PROPOSAL

Responding to feedback & the task group's own discussions

We would like to begin by thanking everyone who provided feedback both at the last Synod meeting and outside of it. If you have not had an individual reply by the time this paper comes out, please rest assured that your input was considered and that we are aiming to reply to all e-mails prior to the April Synod meeting.

The levy on churches' reserves attracted significant feedback. Several churches felt that prudence was being penalized by pursuing a levy on unrestricted reserves. Others felt it was an incentive to restrict or obfuscate funds held in order to put them outside the reach of the levy. Some churches noted that they could potentially afford to give more but would rather do so voluntarily.

It was also noted that we do not have an accurate picture of funds held at local church level, as a significant number of churches have not met the legal requirement of sharing their annual accounts with the Synod [This number is reducing, and we thank all those who have sent in accounts since the last meeting – e-mail them to treasurer@urcwessex.org.uk].

After some discussion, the task group decided that there will be no reserve levy in what we propose for 2025. We may need to revisit the topic in future but hope that by then all local churches will have provided accounts so that an accurate picture can inform future discussions.

The impact of change – some churches noted that the suggested reduction in their M&M contributions under the new formula would be a major relief; others expressed concern that any increase was not affordable. Some graciously suggested that they could afford to keep offering more, even if the formula proposed a reduction.

Considering all this, the group agreed that we should phase any changes in over three years. We also agreed to propose a “base” and “ideal” amount to each church for year 1. This would give us scope to reduce the impact of increases and give those who felt able to give more (for example, maintaining their giving at the current level even if the formula proposed a decrease) a concrete suggestion to base their discussions upon.

We further agreed that review after the 2025 offers were in from the churches was essential.

Banding – some churches expressed concern that if they were at the upper end of their membership band, this created a disincentive to add more members, because of the cost impact of going into the next band up. The task group will use its discretion to try and avoid overly dramatic changes in any given church's contributions from year to year, for example by spreading them out. We also note that the current formula has a cost impact for every new member added, whereas the proposed new one allows for growth in membership numbers within a band without a cost impact.

What we are being asked for / balancing the national budget

Our February proposal was drawn up prior to an exact request being made from London. We now know that Assembly Executive, on behalf of General Assembly, has agreed a plan to balance the national budget by 2030 (Substantial deficits have been the case in recent years and our reserves cannot fund these indefinitely).

In order to do this, Synods are being asked to maintain their M&M totals at the 2023 level until 2030. Simultaneously, significant cuts are being made to the budgets of the various committees and bodies reporting to General Assembly; however, the idea is that the number of stipendiary ministers remains the same¹.

The numbers are summarized below. It is important to note that the overall total Wessex is being asked for will remain the same whether or not we adopt a new formula. If the new formula is not adopted, then as in previous years, a uniform percentage increase will be applied to the figures from the existing formula in order to produce the total being requested for 2025.

Year	Amount from churches	Amount from Wessex Synod central funds	Total
2023 actual	1,641,012	210,000	1,851,012
2024 estimate	1,640,000	135,516	1,775,516
2025 according to new formula	1,707,081 ²	142,000	1,849,000

Synod normally contributes to the M&M fund with the intention of covering the cost of stipendiary ministers who are working in Synod-level posts rather than serving local congregations. There are three such ministers.

In February 2023, Synod made a one-off contribution of an extra £100,000 to the M&M fund which is visible in the numbers above. We may well make an additional five-figure top-up contribution in 2024 to help get the budget-balancing process started. However, as discussed in February, Synod cannot afford to keep putting extra money into M&M on a permanent basis unless we reduce our spending on other things (e.g. grants to local churches, centrally employed workers and staff etc.). Such a trade-off is a decision the Synod could make but is beyond the scope of this proposal, so this proposal assumes that Synod's central contribution remains calibrated to paying for the three stipendiary ministers occupying Synod-level posts.³

¹ More precisely, the maximum number of stipends we are able to fund each year will remain the same, so if sufficient candidates for the ministry are available, numbers will stay the same too.

² This figure assumes that the average offer from churches is mid way between the base and the ideal.

³ Those three ministers are our two DSOs and our Trust Convener. The Synod Moderator is appointed by the General Assembly and so does not count towards this total.

The new formula in detail

The churches are banded by membership into the following bands:

	Membership Bands		Band factor	TOTAL churches in band
	Upper	Lower		
Band 1	500	150	3.90	1
Band 2	149	100	3.00	2
Band 3	99	80	2.50	9
Band 4	79	70	2.25	3
Band 5	69	60	2.00	7
Band 6	59	50	1.65	9
Band 7	49	40	1.30	9
Band 8	39	30	0.95	10
Band 9	29	20	0.60	17
Band 10	19	15	0.40	13
Band 11	14	9	0.20	15
Band 12	8	0	0.15	14

The amount a church in any given band is asked to offer is their band factor multiplied by the per-church number, which is £17,140. The per-church number is chosen to make the overall total reach the amount being requested from the Synod.

The “base” and “ideal” numbers for each church are then derived as follows:

- The “base” number is 1/3 of the way towards the number from the formula, reflecting the phasing-in of the formula over three years. So for churches with a proposed decrease, the base number is their 2024 number minus one third of the total decrease. Likewise for increases.
- The “ideal” number is as follows:
 - For churches where the new formula proposes a decrease, the ideal number is the 2024 number - the church is asked to consider continuing at the current level while inflation reduces the amount in real terms.
 - For churches where the new formula proposes an increase, the ideal number is the 2024 number plus 1/2 of the increase – in other words, churches with an increase are asked to consider phasing it in faster than the baseline of 1/3 per year from 2024-27.

The per-church number and the bands may need to be reviewed in future years depending on church closures and rises and falls in membership numbers, to keep the overall total the same.

Note: See Appendix A for Church Figures

Adjustments made since the draft considered at February's Synod meeting

1. The membership bandings have been updated using the 2024 yearbook figures for membership
2. The per-church number has been adjusted from £17,000 to £17,140 to reflect the church closures and reductions in membership which necessitate a higher input number to reach the target total
3. The reserves levy has been removed

Two examples

Fictional Street URC's 2024 MAM amount was £25,000

The new formula calculates £20,000 for their membership band.

This is a drop of £5,000. Dividing this by three (i.e. by the three years of phasing in) gives £1,667

Thus the "ideal" 2025 figure for Fictional Street URC is £25,000 – i.e. continue at their current level. And the "base" figure is £23,333 which reflects implementing 1/3 of the reduction in the first year.

Made-Up City URC's 2024 MAM amount was £10,000.

The new formula calculates £12,000 for their membership band.

This is an increase of £2,000, which is £667 per year over three years.

Thus the "ideal" 2025 figure for Made-Up City URC is £11,000 – i.e. implementing 50% of the increase in the first year. And the "base" figure is £10,667 – implementing 1/3 of the increase in the first year.

The decision Synod is being asked to make

The resolution being considered is to adopt the new formula, with phasing in of the changes over three years. The MAM task group will review after the first year's numbers are agreed.

Timetable

24 April	April Synod meeting
Early May	Letters (e-mails) go out to churches asking for their M&M offers for 2025
Mid July	Deadline for responses
End of August	MAM task group reviews feedback from any churches unable to make an offer in the requested range and agrees a consistent plan for all such cases
September	Deadline for Wessex to submit draft figures to London to allow the 2025 budget to be drawn up.

Closing thoughts

No proposal to redistribute MAM contributions will please everyone. This is a difficult problem with no easy answers. However, if the URC is to continue doing God's work as a denomination, we need to fund the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, and do so in a way which acknowledges the changes we face over the coming years.

The resolution being considered is to adopt the new formula, with phasing in of the changes over three years. The MAM task group will review after the first year's numbers are agreed.

Resolution 3

Synod Meeting agrees to adopt the formula outlined in the Report from the Ministry and Mission Task Group, with phasing in of the changes over three years and tasks the Ministry and Mission task group to review after the first year's numbers have been agreed.

Appendix A

Figures for non LEPs

Non-LEP churches		Members (2024 Yearbook)	Band	2025 base request	2025 ideal request	Amount from new formula	2024 request (old formula)
9A01	BLANDFORD	12	11	9,221	10,404	6,856	10,404
9A05	BOURNEMOUTH, EAST CLIFF	10	11	1,200	1,200	3,428	1,200
9A06	BOURNEMOUTH, IFORD	40	7	12,380	13,570	17,140	10,000
9A13	BOURNEMOUTH: SOUTHBOURNE	100	2	19,626	21,147	25,710	16,584
9A20	BROADSTONE	78	4	37,615	37,853	38,565	37,140
9A22	CHRISTCHURCH, SOMERFORD	17	10	7,173	7,332	6,856	7,332
9A24	CHRISTCHURCH, BURTON GREEN	12	11	4,743	5,400	3,428	5,400
9A28	FORDINGBRIDGE	38	8	13,425	14,354	17,140	11,568
9A29	LYMINGTON	52	6	24,603	25,523	28,281	22,764
9A33	PARKSTONE	20	9	9,332	9,570	10,284	8,856
9A34	POOLE, THE BEACON, CANFORD HEATH	52	6	18,056	18,684	20,568	16,800
9A36	POOLE, SKINNER STREET	11	11	3,143	3,214	3,428	3,000
9A38	WEYMOUTH, RADIPOLE	32	8	14,660	15,066	16,283	13,848
9A43	MERE	8	12	3,257	3,600	2,571	3,600
9A47	SWANAGE	55	6	26,419	26,885	28,281	25,488
9A48	VERWOOD	37	8	14,412	14,880	16,283	13,476
9A49	THREE LEGGED CROSS	5	12	1,257	1,586	2,571	600
9A50	WAREHAM	16	10	7,663	8,067	6,856	8,067
9A52	WEST MOORS	14	11	5,477	6,501	3,428	6,501
9A55	WEYMOUTH, HOPE	16	10	7,736	8,176	6,856	8,176
9A61	BOURNEMOUTH, RICHMOND HILL	91	3	46,445	48,242	42,850	48,242
9A62	BOURNEMOUTH INTERNATIONAL	67	5	23,961	26,541	34,280	18,801
9A99	BOURNEMOUTH, TRINITY	46	7	11,897	13,208	17,140	9,276
9B05	CHANNEL ISLANDS, GUERNSEY	12	11	-	-	3,428	0

Non-LEP churches		Members (2024 Yearbook)	Band	2025 base request	2025 ideal request	Amount from new formula	2024 request (old formula)
9B11	HYTHE	108	2	51,236	51,282	51,420	51,144
9B13	ABBEY, ROMSEY	61	5	39,851	42,636	34,280	42,636
9B14	BRAISHFIELD, Romsey	12	11	2,982	3,094	3,428	2,759
9B15	SALISBURY	67	5	28,637	30,048	34,280	25,815
9B16	BROAD CHALKE	5	12	-	-	2,571	0
9B18	SOUTHAMPTON, BITTERNE	26	9	12,642	13,821	10,284	13,821
9B19	SOUTHAMPTON, BITTERNE PARK	25	9	12,114	13,029	10,284	13,029
9B21	SOUTHAMPTON, ISAAC WATTS MEMORIAL	33	8	17,076	17,472	16,283	17,472
9B22	SOUTHAMPTON, PEARTREE GREEN	19	10	8,527	9,362	6,856	9,362
9B33	SOUTHAMPTON CHAPLAINCY	1	12	5,753	7,344	2,571	7,344
9B98	SOUTHAMPTON, AVENUE ST ANDREW'S	60	5	34,379	34,428	34,280	34,428
9B99	CHANNEL ISLANDS, JERSEY	22	9	5,828	6,942	10,284	3,600
9C02	FAREHAM	66	5	34,989	35,343	34,280	35,343
9C05	GOSPORT, ST COLUMBA	32	8	12,892	13,740	16,283	11,196
9C06	HAVANT & EMSWORTH	61	5	29,045	30,354	34,280	26,427
9C08	HAYLING, SOUTH HAYLING	84	3	21,904	22,856	25,710	20,001
9C10	ISLE OF WIGHT, RYDE	20	9	10,408	10,470	10,284	10,470
9C12	ISLE OF WIGHT, SHANKLIN	86	3	39,611	40,421	42,850	37,992
9C16	PETERSFIELD & LISS	92	3	38,883	39,875	42,850	36,900
9C17	PORTSMOUTH, BUCKLAND	28	9	11,404	11,964	10,284	11,964
9C23	ROWLANDS CASTLE	11	11	1,607	2,062	3,428	696
9C28	WARSASH	25	9	4,540	5,976	10,284	1,668
9C34	PORTSMOUTH, MILTON	24	9	5,351	6,584	10,284	2,885
9D02	BASINGSTOKE	72	4	37,093	37,461	38,565	36,357
9D04	TADLEY	20	9	10,706	10,917	10,284	10,917
9D11	FLEET	50	6	25,595	26,267	28,281	24,252
9D13	ELSTEAD	10	11	3,103	3,184	3,428	2,940

Non-LEP churches		Members (2024 yearbook)	Band	2025 base request	2025 ideal request	Amount from new formula	2024 request (old formula)
9D15	GUILDFORD, PORTSMOUTH ROAD	57	6	36,547	40,680	28,281	40,680
9D16	GUILDFORD, WESTBOROUGH	43	7	26,127	28,050	22,282	28,050
9D17	GUILDFORD, NORMANDY	19	10	8,877	9,888	6,856	9,888
9D19	GUILDFORD, WONERSH	5	12	3,257	3,600	2,571	3,600
9D24	HINDHEAD, BEACON HILL	18	10	10,591	12,459	6,856	12,459
9D27	WALTON ON THAMES & WEYBRIDGE	83	3	45,531	46,872	42,850	46,872
9D54	WOKING	219	1	64,402	65,013	66,846	63,180
9E03	BANBURY	31	8	12,724	13,614	16,283	10,944
9E05	BRACKNELL	38	8	19,612	21,276	16,283	21,276
9E08	HENLEY-ON-THAMES	95	3	45,443	46,740	42,850	46,740
9E11	OXFORD, CUMNOR	20	9	9,988	10,062	10,284	9,840
9E13	MAIDENHEAD	41	7	22,683	22,884	22,282	22,884
9E14	MARLOW	27	9	17,442	21,021	10,284	21,021
9E17	MARSH GIBBON	6	12	3,057	3,300	2,571	3,300
9E18	TWYFORD (Bucks)	13	11	4,925	5,673	3,428	5,673
9E19	HUNGERFORD	18	10	7,965	8,520	6,856	8,520
9E22	ASTON TIRROLD	31	8	12,228	13,242	16,283	10,200
9E23	OXFORD, COLLINWOOD ROAD	18	10	9,269	10,476	6,856	10,476
9E25	OXFORD, MARSTON	13	11	8,031	10,332	3,428	10,332
9E26	OXFORD, ST COLUMBA'S	57	6	32,535	34,662	28,281	34,662
9E32	READING, GRANGE	21	9	11,561	12,200	10,284	12,200
9E33	READING, PARK	96	3	40,533	41,113	42,850	39,375
9E34	READING, ST ANDREWS	55	6	31,827	33,600	28,281	33,600
9E42	THATCHAM	42	7	22,321	22,340	22,282	22,340
9E43	TILEHURST	24	9	12,915	14,230	10,284	14,230
9E44	OXFORD, WHEATLEY	48	7	18,787	19,661	22,282	17,040
9E45	BRILL	6	12	1,993	2,138	2,571	1,704

Non-LEP churches		Members (2024 yearbook)	Band	2025 base request	2025 ideal request	Amount from new formula	2024 request (old formula)
9E47	WINDSOR	24	9	11,748	12,480	10,284	12,480
9E52	READING, CAVERSHAM PARK	16	12	2,983	3,094	3,428	2,760
				1,385,757	1,457,147		1,374,867

Figures for LEPs

As per the February draft of this proposal, rather than deal with the complexity of adjusting our (many and varied) arrangements with our partner denominations, we have elected to request a straightforward 4% inflationary increase on the existing figures from each LEP. These are in table below.

LEP or similar		2025 request	2024 request
9A17	BRIDPORT	15,600	15,000
9A26	DORCHESTER	11,232	10,800
9A41	RINGWOOD LEP	32,448	31,200
9A42	SHAFTESBURY LEP	1,248	1,200
9A46	SHERBORNE	1,248	1,200
9A57	FERNDOWN	1,560	1,500
9B26	TOTTON Trinity	1,248	1,200
9B28	WINCHESTER	45,440	43,692
9B31	CHANDLER'S FORD, ST FRANCIS LEP	852	819
9C03	BISHOPS WALTHAM	520	500
9C18	PORTSMOUTH DRAYTON	0	0
9D05	CAMBERLEY	41,808	40,200
9D08	EGHAM	20,152	19,377
9D10	FARNHAM	32,261	31,020
9D12	GODALMING	49,313	47,416
9D32	BORDON, ST. MARK'S LEP	520	500
9D51	BASINGSTOKE, CHINEHAM CHRIST CHURCH	1,518	1,460
9D53	ELVETHAM HEATH LEP	4,608	4,431
9E01	ABINGDON, TRINITY	2,371	2,280
9E06	FARINGDON U/M	1,248	1,200
9E22	OXFORD, BLACKBIRD LEYS LEP	555	534

LEP or similar		2025 request	2024 request
9E38	TWYFORD (Berks)	12,480	12,000
9E39	WOODLEY	4,680	4,500
9E41	THAME	10,400	10,000
9E46	TRINITY, LOWER EARLEY	3,657	3,516
9E48	BANBURY, ST FRANCIS LEP Banbury	622	598
9E49	ABINGDON, PEACHCROFT	1,753	1,686
		299,342	287,829