



The
United
Reformed
Church

News from Synod

Meeting on 11th March 2017 at
West End United Reformed
Church Newcastle

Friends from West End United Reformed Church pulled out all the stops to offer a warm welcome to synod. Refreshments included scones with soup and a roll on offer at lunch time.



A Synod Way Forward

Synod members discussed the help churches may need as a *Way Forward* starts to take shape. There will be consultation events on 29th March, 7th and 8th April to consider church groups.

The Welcome Directory



Jon Green the Development Officer from the Welcome Directory told us how the organisation is there to smooth the path for people leaving prison as they look to find a church with whom to settle as they re-build their live in the community.

Money matters

Synod Trust Officer Andrew Atkinson introduced the new synod grants scheme which is much more flexible and makes it easier to apply for any type of synod grant. Find more details on the synod website: resources/grants.

We heard about credit unions in our region and how Churches can apply for a synod grant of up to £5000 to match fund any financial

contribution they make to their local credit union.

There's a new policy for Property Sales and Lettings which returns more money back to churches. More information on the website.

Safeguarding

Geraldine Sands, synod Safeguarding Advisor explained her role and met people over lunch to answer their questions about safeguarding in churches. If you have a question for Geraldine she can be contacted on 07427 857495. Full details of churches safeguarding responsibilities can be found on the synod website, and Geraldine asked for churches to get in touch with her if they become aware of any convicted offenders in their congregation.



If only they knew

Dan Morell, Moderator of Youth Assembly told us how children and young people comprise a third of the denomination. He challenged us to support three more young people to attend General Assembly in 2018 and asked us to think how church life could involve more young people, the coffee mornings, the different groups, could all involve younger people if they are asked....perhaps we could be radical and ask what would it take for our church to extend a welcome to young people.....does church have to be on a Sunday?



Churches and schools

We heard from Stephane Bommel about the benefits of links between churches and schools. Stephane is a head teacher and he told us how important our support for young people can be; our grants and children's workers can 'ignite passion, inspire limitless potential and embrace difference'

Hannah Middleton invited churches to make just one link with a community group or school before Synod meets again in October. Watch out for a jigsaw piece in a church near you!

St George's United Reformed Church in Hartlepool has been re-awarded a Child Friendly Church Award.



Feasts and Festivals

Revds James Breslin and Dr Carla Grosch-Miller explained why the 500th anniversary of Luther's theses and the 100th anniversary of the ordination of Constance Coltman matter so much today. These events are being marked in a year-long celebration; more details of how churches can be involved can be found on the URC website, and we were reminded about Ella Gordon the first Presbyterian woman minister was ordained in Newcastle.



News in brief

- Partnership in mission grants were agreed for Northumberland Industrial Mission, North East Churches Acting Together and jointly to St John's and Ponteland URCS.
- We agreed a new nominations process. If anyone is interested in working more closely with synod please get in touch with Mel on 0191 232 1168
- Lay presidents were authorised and Revd Dr Carla Grosch-Miller was formally welcomed in to synod.
- Oxclose United Reformed Church will be ceasing to be an LEP and becoming a single denomination Parish Church.
- A meditative garden is being created at St Cuthbert's Centre on Holy Island. We were reminded how the most northern Gertrude Jekyll garden is to be found there and perhaps links could be made between the two.
- There's lots going on at Keld with open days and reflective events – more details from the synod website.
- St Aidan's URC extended a warm invitation for synod to meet in their church in Hexham on 7th October 2017 – they are planning the refreshments already!



Dave encouraged us to think about planting churches and starting new things; he said patterns of worship naturally come to an end and we can begin to think about new beginnings. He reminded us of the riches we have and encouraged us to share our vocation to reach out in Jesus' name to a hungry and seeking world around us, we can be confident that we are on the right tack as we move in to the future filled with God's presence and call.