



NORTHERN SYNOD MEETING

Saturday 7 October 2017

10.00 am – 4.00 pm

**St Aidan's
United Reformed Church
Hencotes
Hexham NE46 2EQ**



AGENDA

09.15	Coffee and Refreshments	St Aidan's URC
10.00	Welcome	Moderator
10.05	Worship	led by St Aidan's URC
10.15	Minutes and Matters Arising	Trust Officer: Andrew Atkinson
10.20	A Time of Prayer	Revd Meg Robb
10.25	News of People and Places	Synod Clerk: Melanie Campbell
10.30	Mission Council Update	Synod Clerk: Melanie Campbell
10.35	Trust Report	Convenor: Revd James Breslin
10.50	Committee Updates	Convenors
11.30	News from Holy Island, Grindon and Keld	Representatives from Holy Island, Grindon and Keld
11.40	Jigsaw Pieces and Vintage Messy Church	Synod Children's Work Advisor: Hannah Middleton
11.50	Prayer Gift Bags	Mission Committee Convenor: Revd Meg Robb
12.00	Carousel and Coffee	Synod Executive
12.20	Lunch	
13.10	Luther 500	Revd Helen Drummond
13.20	The Role of Chaplaincy	Northumbrian Industrial Mission Chaplaincy Team Leader: Fiona Usher
13.40	<i>Synod Way Forward</i>	Synod Clerk: Melanie Campbell Revd Meg Robb Synod Mission Enabler: Revd Jane Rowell
14.00	Facilitation: Listening & Reconciliation Service	Yorkshire Synod: Alastair Forsyth
14.15	Christian Aid	Christian Aid: Jan Simmonds
14.35	West End Refugee Service	Project Director: Lindsay Cross

14.55	Lessons from Uganda, and other news	Revd Dr Grant Wilson
15.05	Invitation to March 2018 Synod Meeting	St John's URC, Wideopen
15.10	Moderator's Reflections	Moderator
15.20	Closing Worship	St Aidan's URC

Dear Friends

Many of you have been in touch to enquire about our Moderator Dave Herbert's recovery, and we have passed on your kind thoughts and prayers to him. At the time of writing, Dave's return to work is not known, although we hope he will be back with us soon.

Our Synod meeting this autumn will be held at St Aidan's United Reformed Church in Hexham. You can find directions to the church with some helpful suggestions for parking, on the back page of this book of reports. St Aidan's is a fully accessible venue, and has a lift as well as external ramp to connect both floors.

We will be welcomed with refreshments from 9.15 am, and teas and coffees will be available during the lunch break also.

Our meeting has two themes which intertwine and weave throughout our time together; a theme of growth and gifts, supported by a theme of prayer and understanding. We hope you will find blessings and laughter in the fellowship together, and spaces for quiet and reflection to strengthen your way.

If you have a question for any of our committee convenors, please feel free to submit it before the meeting, as it helps us to prepare well.

If you find you are unable to attend, your church can be represented by another voting member. Please get in touch with the Synod Office, to let us know about any alternate arrangements.

This Synod pack contains:

- This book of reports
- Minutes of our meeting on 11 March 2017 and further minutes

Synod members receiving paper mailing will also find:

- Voting cards
- Expenses forms (please give these to Wendy at reception)
- A form to confirm your preference for receiving Synod papers. (Please return your completed form to the reception desk. If you have already received your papers by email, you do not need to complete it).

Those receiving electronic mailing should collect voting cards and expenses forms from the reception desk in the hall on arrival. These are for Synod members only.

A PDF version of these papers will also be available to download from the Synod website.

Large print versions of these papers are available from the Synod Office, please let us know if you would like a copy.

Synod Meetings are open events, and all are welcome to join us. I look forward to seeing you on 7 October, and if there is anything we can do to make sure your Synod is as enjoyable and comfortable as possible, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

With best wishes

Mel

Melanie Campbell
Synod Clerk

melanie.campbell@urc-northernsynod.org

0191-232 1168

The United Reformed Church Northern Synod
4 College Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8JJ

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH (NORTHERN PROVINCE) TRUST LIMITED

Chair: Revd James Breslin

Treasurer: Revd Dr Tony Haws

The Trust enables, supports and resources the work of the Synod and local churches by:

- funding the running of the Synod, its meetings, committees and office
- awarding grants to support property, mission, training and youth work in local churches
- employing staff to carry out the day-to-day work of the Synod, and provide help to local churches
- advising the Synod and local churches on legal, financial, property and employment matters
- dealing with legal and property issues on behalf of the Synod and local churches
- helping the Synod to find a good balance between spending and saving

People

[Resolutions 1-2]

We are pleased to welcome Revd David Grosch-Miller to the Board. Subject to the resolution today, he is to become our new Convenor from the conclusion of today's meeting. We would welcome enquiries from church members, elders and ministers (both male and female) with some financial, property, legal or management experience, who might be interested in joining us.

Funding the Running of the Synod

We express our thanks to churches for making regular payments for Synod levy, mission4life and Ministry & Mission.

Following the changes to grants policy made by Synod in March, churches will no longer be asked to donate an additional 10% of Synod levy to mission4life. The Mission Fund is now large enough to make more generous grants, so there is no longer a clear correlation between donations and small mission grants. However, if churches would like to make donations in future, please contact our Finance Officer, Helen Hogg, in Synod Office.

We encourage churches to aim to make regular payments towards the Synod levy and M&M, but recognise that churches can face difficulties, and would encourage them to get in touch as soon as they can see there might be a problem.

Legacy

The Trust is grateful for a bequest of £3,300 from the estate of John Gibson, late of Seaham.

Fundraising

In recent years, the subject of fundraising has been in the media spotlight because of some bad practices. In response, the Charity Commission has published *Charity*

Fundraising: A guide to trustee duties (CC20), which can be downloaded from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charities-and-fundraising-cc20>.

The key principles for Elders and others responsible for church charities are:

- planning effectively
- supervising your fundraisers
- protecting your charity's reputation and other assets
- complying with fundraising law
- following recognised standards
- being open and accountable

There is also now a Code of Fundraising Practice, although much of this is aimed at larger charities that engage in direct marketing (contacting individuals from a database by post, telephone or email), pay professional fundraisers, or work with commercial partners. High upfront costs of poorly-planned fundraising can significantly reduce the benefit to the charity. If done badly, each of these has the potential to harm potential donors or the charity's own reputation.

The Trust has considered these matters for its own work, and has produced a brief policy statement, to guide anyone fundraising on behalf of or in aid of the Synod or any of its projects.

Fundraising Policy

Introduction

The Trust funds its work from a number of sources, principally from:

- Investment income
- Rental income
- Property sales
- Contributions from local churches to general operating costs and to ministry and mission costs in ecumenical situations
- Donations

Consequently, the Trust is unlike many charities in that it carries out very little fundraising.

The only *public* fundraising done in the Trust's name is in support of the Synod's partnership with the Presbyterian Church of Mozambique and occasional projects. Some of this is done by the World Church Subgroup of the Synod Mission Committee, and some by local churches and individuals.

Collections are sometimes taken at Synod meetings and services or occasionally by appeal through our networks for specific items, usually in aid of other charities.

Accordingly, the Trust has chosen not to register with the Fundraising Regulator, although it is aware of the Regulator's Code of Fundraising Practice.

Practicalities

The Trust recommends that whenever such small-scale fundraising as is described above is proposed, those organising it bear in mind the following points.

1. For each appeal, there should be a **fundraising plan**, setting out:
 - a. the purpose of the appeal
 - b. the sum to be raised, and how to deal with missing or exceeding that target
 - c. the likely costs of fundraising
 - d. how the appeal will be run, over what timescale, and by whom
 - e. any guidance or training to be given to fundraising volunteers
 - f. any financial, safety or reputational risks
2. The following **fundraising methods** are considered suitable:
 - a. Public events (such as coffee mornings, quizzes, games, meals, etc)
 - b. Sponsored challenges
 - c. General appeals for donations through website, social media, *Synod E-News* church magazines
3. The following **fundraising methods** are considered less suitable, and have added legal and regulatory requirements:
 - a. Lotteries and gambling (other than a raffle on the day at an event)
 - b. Dangerous or high risk events
 - c. Direct marketing of individuals by telephone, email or post
 - d. Door-to-door or street collecting
 - e. Persistently badgering individuals
 - f. Using commercial partners or professional fundraisers
4. Anyone proposing to fundraise on behalf of or in aid of the Trust is requested to inform Synod Office
5. **Appeal literature** should include:
 - a. the Trust's name, contact details and registered charity number
 - b. details of the Trust's complaints procedure
 - c. how to donate (eg, in person, by post or to the Trust's bank account)
 - d. the likely cost of the appeal

- e. a clearly explanation of the purpose of the appeal and how funds will be applied in the case of a surplus or failure to meet target

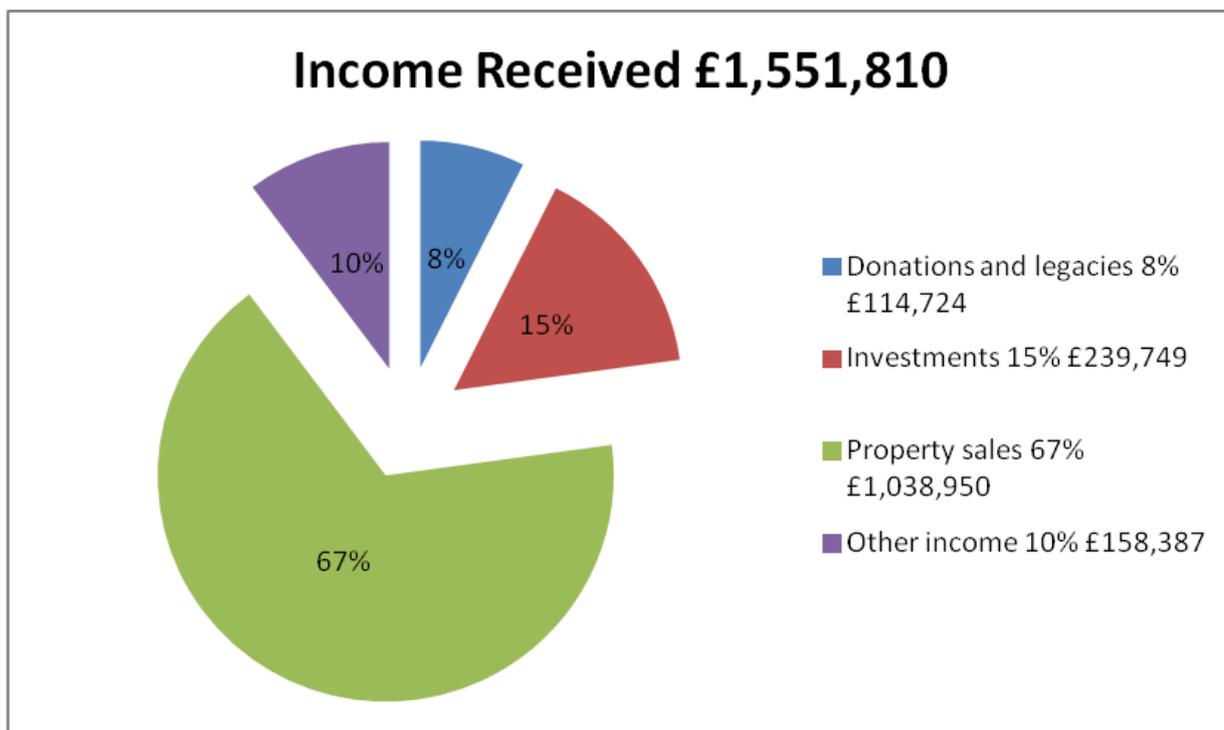
Adopted on: 7 September 2017

We recommend that local churches consider these matters, and perhaps produce their own policies along similar lines. This could cover both general fundraising and appeals for specific purposes. In the case of a local church, in most cases there will not be a registered charity number, as most churches are currently excepted by law from being registered.

2016 Accounts

A balance sheet and statement of financial activities is given. A full set of accounts for 2016 can be obtained on request from the Synod Office.

During the year, total funds increased by £1,577,978 (2015: £88,564), to £10,575,927. Expenditure was lower than income during 2016, and net gains on investments of £714,949 also contributed substantially to the increase in funds.



THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH (NORTHERN PROVINCE) TRUST LIMITED

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2016

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Endowment funds £	Total 2016 £	Total 2015 £
Income and endowments						
Donations and legacies	3	86,748	27,976	-	114,724	214,283
Other trading activities	4	-	-	-	-	340
Investments	5	212,721	27,028	-	239,749	202,388
Other income	6	1,184,183	13,154	-	1,197,337	637,032
Total income and endowments		1,483,652	68,158	-	1,551,810	1,054,043
Expenditure						
<i>Raising funds</i>						
Fundraising expenditure	7	-	-	-	-	914
Investment management	7	8,003	1,097	-	9,100	3,380
		8,003	1,097	-	9,100	4,294
Charitable activities	8	601,785	68,608	-	670,393	1,124,713
Other expenditure	13	-	9,288	-	9,288	10,201
Total resources expended		609,788	78,993	-	688,781	1,139,208
Net gains on investments	14	615,340	99,609	-	714,949	173,729
Net incoming resources before transfers		1,489,204	88,774	-	1,577,978	88,564
Gross transfers between funds		(2,233)	2,233	-	-	-
Net movement in funds		1,486,971	91,007	-	1,577,978	88,564
Fund balances at 1 January 2016		7,718,367	1,079,582	200,000	8,997,949	8,909,385
Fund balances at 31 December 2016		9,205,338	1,170,589	200,000	10,575,927	8,997,949

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year.

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH (NORTHERN PROVINCE) TRUST LIMITED

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2016

	Notes	2016		2015	
		£	£	£	£
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	15		815,539		970,621
Investment properties	16		210,000		210,000
Investments	17		8,399,777		7,367,232
			<u>9,425,316</u>		<u>8,547,853</u>
Current assets					
Debtors falling due after one year	19	5,001		6,001	
Debtors falling due within one year	19	53,704		20,210	
Investments	20	1,114,000		367,000	
Cash at bank and in hand		197,549		341,266	
		<u>1,370,254</u>		<u>734,477</u>	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	21		<u>(45,775)</u>		<u>(25,586)</u>
Net current assets			<u>1,324,479</u>		<u>708,891</u>
Total assets less current liabilities			<u>10,749,795</u>		<u>9,256,744</u>
Provisions for liabilities	22		<u>(173,868)</u>		<u>(258,795)</u>
Net assets			<u>10,575,927</u>		<u>8,997,949</u>
Capital funds					
Endowment funds	24		200,000		200,000
Income funds					
Unrestricted funds	25		9,205,338		7,718,367
Restricted funds	26		1,170,589		1,079,582
			<u>10,575,927</u>		<u>8,997,949</u>

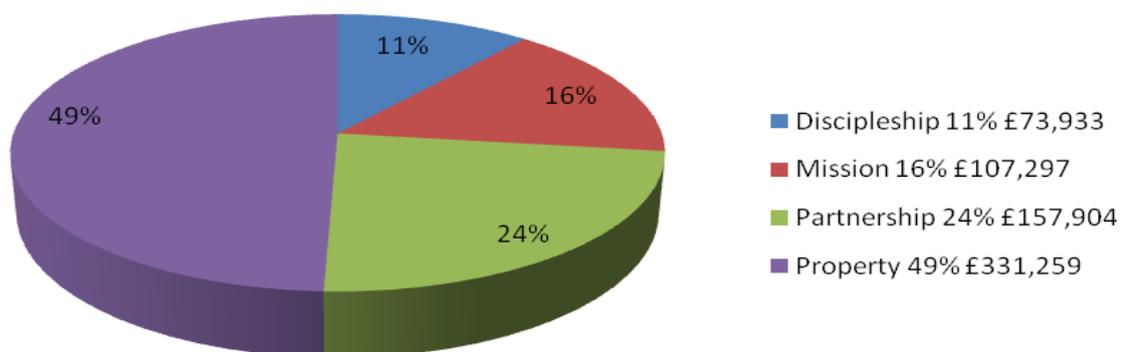
The accounts were approved by the Directors on 6/12/16


 J.A. Breslin
 Trustee


 A.P. Haws
 Trustee

Company Registration No. 134549

Charitable Activities Expenditure £670,393



Church Accounts

Churches are requested to continue to send a copy of their full annual accounts each year to the Synod Office, once they have been signed off.

Church Treasurers are reminded that where funds are raised or donated for a specific purpose, these should be accounted for in a separate *restricted* fund and spent only on that purpose. There does not need to be a separate bank account, as long as the fund is kept separate in the church's financial records.

Current Year Projection (2017)

Projected income for 2017 is higher than budgeted. There is a projected surplus of £361 anticipated at this time although this is dependent on property sales, investment income and actual expenditure up to 31 December 2017.

General Fund Budget for 2018

[Resolution 3]

Notes on budgeted income:

- Local church levy has been increased by the rate of RPI at the end of July 2017. The amount per member has increased from £30.36 (2017) to £31.45 for 2018. The membership figure used in the calculation is 2,372, being the figure used to calculate M&M contributions
- Investment income is based upon the income received up to August 2017

Notes on budgeted expenditure:

- Ministries & Development budget has been increased. Provision has been made for national Ministers' gathering, Scottish Christian Women's Convention and Keld Resource Centre training
- Contribution to inter-Synod resource sharing remains at £20,000 for 2018

- The five Northerly Synods are working together on a new phase of their collaboration in 2018, and it is anticipated that each synod will contribute £5,000 towards task group expenses, travel, accommodation and events
- No increase has been applied to the churches' contribution to the Northumberland pulpit supply scheme in 2018, which remains at £10 per member. Accordingly, the General Fund budget will need to be subsidise any overspend during the year

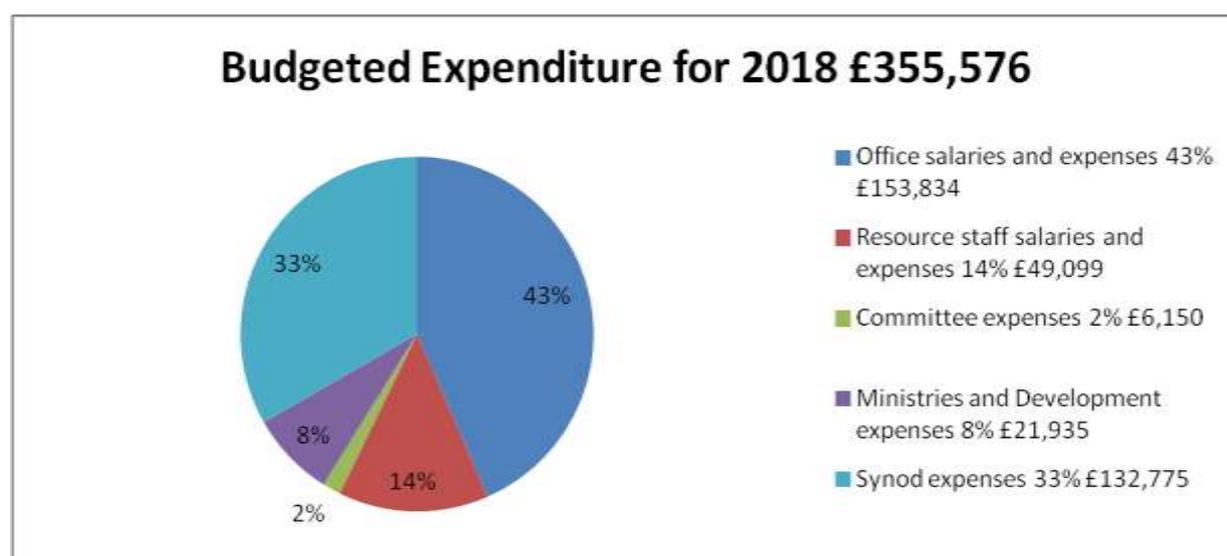
Summary:

- Expenses in the budget have decreased for 2018, and the projected surplus on the overall budget is £4,023. Synod Way Forward expenditure is not included in the General Fund budget as a separate fund is to be set up to manage these costs

The United Reformed Church - Northern Synod				
Income and Expenditure to 31 August 2017 and Proposed Budget for 2018				
	Actual to 31/08/2017	Projected to 31/12/2017 (Full year)	Budget 2017	Budget 2018
Income				
Synod Levy Contributions from Churches	(58,939)	(76,841)	(76,841)	(74,599)
Investment Income	(115,000)	(210,000)	(190,000)	(190,000)
Income from the Sale of Buildings		(28,000)	(45,000)	(95,000)
Legacies and Other Income	(3,470)	(3,400)		
Total Income	(177,409)	(318,241)	(311,841)	(359,599)
Expenditure				
Salaries				
Office Staff	94,250	141,500	142,834	145,130
Resource Staff	26,936	40,500	39,974	41,860
Expenses				
Office Staff	129	400	600	550
Resource Staff	2,032	2,900	5,125	4,050
Synod Clerk	1,079	1,800	2,000	2,000
Treasurer	260	400	400	350
Training				

Office Staff	1,052	3,200	8,000	6,500
Resource Staff	403	1,200	4,000	3,000
Office Expenses				
Rent, Utilities, Stationery, Equipment, Postage	17,606	32,500	33,350	36,100
Depreciation Fixture and Fittings		2,000	1,800	2,200
IT Support	2,781	3,800	3,600	4,500
HR Advice and Expenses	130	400	1,000	750
Sundry Expenditure	292	400	450	450
Advertising		100	800	400
Legal Expenses				
Audit and Support Costs	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
Legal Fees General	6,715	10,000	13,000	10,000
Committee and Meeting Expenses				
Ministries and Development	5,374	8,000	21,935	27,935
Committee Expenses	2,463	5,000	6,000	5,800
Safeguarding Group and Network		200	475	500
Synod Meetings	423	1,000	1,100	1,200
Synod Costs and Consultations	83	500	1,200	1,000
Moderator Meetings	34	350	500	450
Holy Island Management			150	
Events				
Children's Advisor Events	46	400	2,000	1,000
Mission Enabler Events	181	800	1,500	1,500
Moderator Events	28	400	1,500	1,500
Safeguarding Advisor Events		500	1,000	1,000
Grants				
Ecumenical Grants (NECAT)	4,000	4,000	4,000	
Support Grants	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Children and Youth Work Grants	650	1,200	1,200	1,200
Discipleship				
Lay Preachers' Books and Sundries	177	500	1,000	600
Pilgrimages/Synod Organised	310	430	300	400

Events				
Partnership				
Resource Sharing Contribution	10,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
General Assembly				1,000
URC Youth Assembly			300	300
5 Northerly Synods Task Groups	(868)	1,000	1,000	5,000
Northerly Synods Listening and Reconciliation	8,184	8,500		
HR Advice for Northern Synod Churches		500	1,200	1,100
URC Big Day out and Anniversary Expenses			1,000	
Northumberland Pulpit Supply		2,000	2,000	2,500
Moderator's Pastoral Expenses	79	500	500	750
Safeguarding Consultant/Expenses	6,583	10,000	14,000	12,000
Synod Way Forward General Expenses			8,000	
Contingency			4,000	
Total Expenditure	202,413	317,880	363,793	355,576
NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT	25,004	(361)	51,952	(4,023)



Synod Levy Contributions from Churches 2018

<u>Church</u>	<u>Membership</u> (as at 31.12.16)	<u>Multiplier</u>	<u>Contribution</u> £
Alnwick	85	31.45	2,673
Amble	24	31.45	755
Battle Hill	4	31.45	126
Berwick	45	31.45	1,415
Billingham	23	31.45	723
Blackhill	16	31.45	503
Boldon	24	31.45	755
Chester-le-Street	27	31.45	849
Crook	10	31.45	315
Crookham	13	31.45	409
Darlington: Northgate	84	31.45	2,642
Durham: Waddington St	60	31.45	1,887
Erskine & St Cuthbert's	28	31.45	881
Gateshead: Cromer Avenue	43	31.45	1,352
Gateshead: Denewell Ave	45	31.45	1,415
Glanton	12	31.45	377
Great Bavington	9	31.45	283
Guisborough	22	31.45	692
Hartlepool	66	31.45	2,076
Hebburn	15	31.45	472
Hexham	67	31.45	2,107
High Heaton	61	31.45	1,918
Horsley	19	31.45	598
Jesmond	47	31.45	1,478
Keld	4	31.45	126
Kenton	41	31.45	1,289
Kingston Park	18	31.45	566
Longframlington	21	31.45	660
Low Row	9	31.45	283
Monkseaton	148	31.45	4,655
Newcastle: St James's	32	31.45	1,006
North Shields	113	31.45	3,554
Northallerton	44	31.45	1,384
Nunthorpe & Marton	48	31.45	1,510
Ponteland	68	31.45	2,139
Redcar	21	31.45	660
Robert Stewart Memorial	31	31.45	975
Roker	37	31.45	1,164
Rothbury	35	31.45	1,101
South Shields: St Margaret's	29	31.45	912

South Shields: St P & St J	27	31.45	849
Stamfordham	12	31.45	377
Stanley	19	31.45	598
Stockton	41	31.45	1,289
Sunderland: St Bede	15	31.45	472
Sunderland: Stockton Road	39	31.45	1,227
Warkworth	28	31.45	881
West Denton	53	31.45	1,667
West End	39	31.45	1,227
Wideopen	63	31.45	1,981
Wooler	52	31.45	1,635
SOUTH EAST NORTHUMBERLAND			8,334
Ashington	12	31.45	
Bedlington	36	31.45	
Blyth	29	31.45	
Morpeth	114	31.45	
Newbiggin	6	31.45	
North Broomhill	5	31.45	
Seaton Delaval	41	31.45	
Widdrington	22	31.45	
NEWCASTLE CENTRAL & EAST CIRCUIT			4,780
Benton	36	31.45	
Heaton	21	31.45	
Gosforth	95	31.45	
TYNEDALE CIRCUIT			598
Bellingham	8	31.45	
Falstone & Kielder	9	31.45	
Wark	2	31.45	
Total Contributions	2372		74,599

Investment Manager

Following a quinquennial review of our investment manager, the Trust has appointed CCLA in place of UBS. Members of the appointing group were impressed by CCLA, which manages investments for churches, charities and local authorities. Their past performance was very good, their fees very reasonable, and equally importantly, their ethical stance includes active engagement. At a recent meeting of the Synod, strong representations were made that we should move towards a policy on ethical investments which was more “hands on.” We believe that CCLA’s policies in this respect meet that desire. The Trust is using the COIF Charities Deposit Fund and the COIF Charities Ethical Investment Fund.

Investment Pool

The Trust is working on restructuring its investment pool, with the help of our professional advisors, to provide a sounder basis on which to look after funds for local

churches along with its own funds. Hopefully the move to CCLA will enable a simpler solution in the long run, although it has delayed progress in the short term.

Awarding Grants

Grants are available from various Synod committees the help churches and individuals with:

- church property repairs and refurbishments
- manse property repairs and refurbishments
- mission activities
- lay training and education, including Training for Learning and Serving
- education for ministry
- children's and young people's events and travel

Below is a summary of awards made by the Trust and its subgroups since the previous meeting of Synod. Further grants have been made by other Synod committees.

Churches are encouraged to give as much information as they can to enable committees to fully understand their plans and their financial position, so that appropriate support can be given. This would include, for example, copies of quotations. This year, we have been glad to see that many churches have been thinking about their reserves, and producing policies aimed at achieving an appropriate level.

<u>Recipient</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Grant</u> £
General Fund		
East Cleveland Group	Ministerial expenses	1,882
St Andrew's Dawson Street LEP, Crook	Support	1,000
Crookham	Support	3,400
Erskine & St Cuthbert's, Belford & North Sunderland	Support	600
Property Fund		
Berwick	Window painting and memorial plaque regilding at Horncliffe	433
Denewell Avenue, Gateshead	Roof maintenance and repairs	680
Keld	Repairs	5,910
St John's, Wideopen	Car park resurfacing	5,113
Waddington Street, Durham	Fire alarm and emergency lighting	1,803

St Andrew's, Kenton	Asbestos removal	475
Rothbury	Roof repairs	10,260
Manse Fund		
St James's, Alnwick	Upgrading windows and doors	23,016
TOTAL GRANTS AWARDED		54,572

A bridging loan of £2,870 was made to Grindon Mission Project to help with cash flow in their refurbishments, which was repaid soon afterwards.

Advising the Synod

Synod Office is open from 9.30 to 5.00 Monday to Friday as a first port of call for information, advice, resources and signposting. We are here to help!

The Trust and its subgroups are also able to help churches as part of their overview of legal, financial, property and human resources issues across the Synod, and to provide access to professional advisors where appropriate.

We will continue to circulate Help & Advice bulletins on subjects that may be relevant to churches, when time allows.

Heritage Lottery Fund

It was disappointing that the Heritage Lottery Fund chose to discontinue its grants for places of worship scheme this summer. However, more general grants are still available from the HLF for historic buildings and monuments (www.hlf.org.uk/looking-funding/what-we-fund/buildings-and-monuments/places-worship).

Dealing with Legal and Property Issues

Our property consultants, Sanderson Weatherall, are continuing with the second cycle of condition surveys of local churches. Manses continue to be visited periodically and on changes of ministry by our Manse Subgroup. The reports from these surveys and inspections are made available to the relevant local churches, with a view to highlighting issues and helping churches to programme their maintenance so that small defects can be tackled before they become major problems, together with some ballpark costings. We have recently sought to make the condition survey reports easier to read, with a summary sheet highlighting significant items.

Our Property Subgroup has resolved to seek competitive quotations on the appointment of contractors for works costing more than £3,000, or on the appointment of estate agents for properties for which it is responsible. Churches may also find it useful to establish a threshold of this sort. We have also drawn up and circulated a list of recommended property contractors, and would encourage churches to let us know of others that could be added.

Compliance Questionnaire

We are grateful to those churches that have returned Part A of this year's compliance questionnaire, along with supporting documentation where requested. We would urge those churches that have not yet responded, to do so.

Although the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 do not specify a time frame for portable appliance testing, annual testing is good practice and is the frequency currently recommended by the Trust and indeed by Edward Insurance Brokers.

Hiring of Churches and Halls

Members may recall that the Trust has asked all churches with premises for which it is trustee to indicate whether they wish to accept delegated authority for hiring them out to third parties. This new procedure arose from legal advice obtained by the United Reformed Church centrally. We understand that some churches may not in fact hire their premises to third parties, or may need further information before deciding how to proceed. Churches should contact our Trust Officer, Andrew Atkinson, if they have not yet responded.

We are grateful to those churches that have returned their schedules summarising third party hirings over the first six months of this year, and would request those that have not yet responded to do so.

Killingworth Christian Council

[Resolution 4]

This body was set up ten years ago when the Church of the Holy Family LEP closed, to make grants for Christian, social and recreational purposes and the relief of poverty in the Killingworth area. The Trust considers that the time may now have come to wind up this charity, and accordingly recommends this to Synod.

Oxclose LEP, Washington

[Resolution 5]

Members may recall that Synod, by resolution 17/26, authorised the Trust to determine the legal and financial steps necessary to enable Oxclose to become a single denomination church, and to negotiate with ecumenical partners accordingly.

There were two issues to deal with: the termination of the local ecumenical partnership, and the termination of the sharing agreement for the building of the church centre. Synod's agreement was readily given to the former, enabling Oxclose to become a Church of England Parish from 1 September. Although negotiations are not yet concluded on the latter, we have met with our Methodist colleagues and agreed a way forward. The capital contribution of the United Reformed Church was small, and therefore it seems sensible to follow the lead of the Methodist Circuit.

Ecumenical Matters

Following on from the previous two items, we draw Synod's attention to the often unseen work involved in unravelling the financial and legal aspects of ecumenical arrangements when they come to an end. Although in many cases the financial returns to us are small, the combination of our meticulous record-keeping and highly competent staff has meant that the URC regularly acts as the lead agent in sorting out

quite complex arrangements. The winding-up of those LEPs created in the early years of the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969 is often difficult, as each one was created from first principles, and therefore their constitutions and sharing agreements were unique.

Resolutions:

- 1. Synod appoints David Grosch-Miller as a Director of the United Reformed Church (Northern Province) Trust Limited, to serve from 7 October 2017 to 31 December 2019.**
- 2. Synod reappoints Tony Haws and Mike Louis as Directors of the United Reformed Church (Northern Province) Trust Limited, to serve from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2020.**
- 3. Synod affirms the budget for the year ending 31 December 2018, and agrees to the levy, which is the equivalent of £31.45 per member.**
- 4. Synod resolves to approach its ecumenical partners with a view to winding up the Killingworth Christian Council, and sharing the balance of its funds between them, and requests the Trust to facilitate this.**
- 5. Synod recognises Oxclose as having ongoing ministry as a single-denomination church. As their former partner, we support that ongoing ministry, following a pattern established in the dissolution of an earlier Anglican-Methodist LEP. This is to take “our share as a mortgage in perpetuity with no repayments and no interest... establishing our share of the building when/if it has to be sold at any time in the future.” Synod requests the Trust to facilitate this.**

SYNOD EXECUTIVE

Synod Clerk: Melanie Campbell

There have been three meetings of the Synod Executive Committee since the March Synod meeting. In June, we held an additional workshop to compile responses to the Frequently Asked Questions which arose from our *Way Forward* consultation events. If you haven't yet seen these, you can find the FAQs here: <http://urc-northernsynod.org/a-way-forward-faqs/>.

Church Secretaries' Network/Way Forward Consultation Events

We held three consultation events across the Synod, and each was well-attended, with over 100 responses provided to a series of questions. We used the information we gained in April and May to shape our discussions in June and July. This has meant a significant proportion of our development time together, has been devoted to arrangements for the *Way Forward*. Much has been happening, with some churches getting in touch to explore their local groupings, and others holding discussions to agree their next steps.

A *Way Forward* Fund has now been established, which will be open from January next year, and a grants application form will be available on the Synod website.

As our *Way Forward* developments are a continuously changing picture, we will be updating Synod with the latest details at the meeting in October.

Walking the Way

You may have come across the denomination's *Walking the Way*, which centres upon a theme of personal discipleship. Members of Synod Executive have participated in the consultation event to shape its development, and *Walking the Way* has also featured in Mission Council discussions. We are looking forward to the suite of resources which will become available next year. If you wish to find out more details they can be found here: <http://urc.org.uk/wtw.html>.

Mission Enabler

[Resolution 6]

In 2014, Synod welcomed the suggestion that our mission and development capacity be strengthened. Since that time, we have appointed a full-time post for Mission Enabler which is shared with the North Western Synod, which absorbed the scoping for this post. We also created a shared Discipleship Enabler, however no appointment was made for this post. We subsequently decided as a Synod, to buy and customise any additional training support needed.

Jane Rowell is our Mission Enabler, and many of you have met with Jane who is supporting churches to develop their unique future in their communities. Two factors have combined together to help us understand that Jane has a full-time role here in the Northern Synod; firstly the *Way Forward* requires good facilitation and support for it to happen well, and Jane's skills have been invaluable in this respect, and secondly we amicably agreed with friends in North Western Synod that their requirements were well in excess of the half-time support that was available to them from this post. For these reasons, we are recommending to Synod to adopt this post as a full-time role within Northern Synod.

Refugee Appeal Fund

Resources have been shared with refugee agencies across the Synod, and the fund has now closed. A total of £3,938 was raised, including Gift Aid.

Synod Committees

Updates from our committees are a standard item on the Synod Executive agenda; this is so we can support the committees in their work and look to find ways for each committee to complement the work of another. For example, the Ministries & Development Committee is arranging training events in response to a need which arose during discussions at Pastoral Committee. You will find more details about the committees' activities within this book of reports.

Data Protection

Both the Synod and the Trust will be reviewing their data protection arrangements in preparation for the new General Data Protection Regulation (known as the GDPR),

which comes in to force in May 2018. The GDPR will apply to churches too. It could be helpful for churches to check what they may need to do to become compliant; details can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-reform/>. We also hope to offer further guidelines about how churches will be affected later in the year. In the meanwhile, it would be wise to ensure church elders are familiar with the changes ahead.

Safeguarding

Synod Executive received and agreed the recommendations presented by Geraldine Sands in her annual report in January this year. This information was shared at the March Synod meeting. The subsequent request to churches to complete the safeguarding returns has presented a mixed picture. Many churches have acknowledged and placed an emphasis upon ensuring our churches can be known as safe places to be. Yet, there remains a concern for some churches which appear to have insufficient safeguarding arrangements; these churches will be a priority for support. Please see Geraldine's report on pages 28-31 which can be taken to your church and elders' meetings and added to your church magazines to explain the value of safeguarding and give some helpful advice.

Nominations

[Resolutions 7-8]

Synod Executive is pleased to nominate Maureen Shepherd from Warkworth United Reformed Church as Synod representative to Mission Council.

We remain in search of a convenor for our Ministries & Development Committee, and a shared convenorship of the Children's & Youth Work Committee. The Trust continues to invite individuals who are interested in supporting its work, to get in touch.

General Assembly

Nominations for Synod representatives to General Assembly in 2018 are: Jean Degenhardt (Jesmond URC), John Drew (St Columba's URC, North Shields) and Wade Sherman (St James's URC, Alnwick). Our Mission Council representatives Tony Haws, Joan Grindrod-Helmn and Maureen Shepherd, will also represent the Synod, together with the Moderator, Dave Herbert. Melanie Campbell (Synod Clerk) will attend as an observer. We have two places for ordained ministers of word and sacraments, and we encourage those who may not have attended Assembly recently, to consider this. At the time of writing, we are awaiting notification of the exact quota of representatives; this means it could be necessary to vary the nominations or the proportion of lay to ordained representatives. When further details are received, any changes or additional nominations will be shared with the March Synod meeting.

Mission Grants

Since Synod last met, the following grants have been awarded:

- Roker URC – A small grant of £1,300 was awarded to support holiday club activities

- Stamfordham LEP – A small grant of £500 was agreed towards costs of the holiday/youth project for this year only, on condition that the grant is spent entirely on materials and expenses, the work is publicised as an ecumenical project provided under the wing of the LEP, and feedback is received on the progress and learning points gained from the initiative
- Falstone & Kielder URC – A small grant of £230 was awarded towards costs of attending the Messy Church event at Newcastle Cathedral
- Faith in our Communities – A grant of £7,000 was awarded to support their work with churches, recognising other denominations have previously offered financial support

Property Sales and Lettings

Further to resolution 17/13, Synod Executive has followed up the revision of policy on property sales and lettings by reviewing and amending past property resolutions to harmonise them with the new policy, where appropriate. For the avoidance of doubt, Synod Executive has also confirmed that Synod resolution 17/12 relates only to those situations which were pending at the date of the Synod meeting of 11 March 2017.

In addition to the swathe of revised property resolutions, Synod Executive has also given approval for the sale of the manse at Marton, and the letting of both manses at Stockton. The full wording of all these resolutions can be found in the further Synod minutes sent with this book of reports.

Synod Executive is also considering a request for an extension of the lease at Horsley, and is to seek further information before making a decision.

Next Meeting

[Resolution 9]

Our next Synod meeting will be held at St John's URC, Wideopen, on Saturday 17 March 2018.

Resolutions:

- 6. Synod affirms the 100% scoping of Revd Jane Rowell within the Northern Synod, and her appointment as full-time Mission Enabler within Northern Synod with effect from 7 October 2017.**
- 7. Synod confirms the appointment of Maureen Shepherd as a Synod representative to Mission Council with effect from May 2017 to November 2020.**
- 8. Synod agrees the nominations of Jean Degenhardt, John Drew and Wade Sherman to attend General Assembly in 2018 together with Mission Council representatives Tony Haws, Joan Grindrod-Helmn and Maureen Shepherd, subject to any further amendment notified to the Synod Clerk, and notes that any amendments will be brought to the March 2018 Synod meeting.**

- 9. Synod resolves to next meet at St John's United Reformed Church, Wideopen, on Saturday 17 March 2018, or at such other place and time as may be convenient.**

NORTHERLY SYNODS

Synod Clerk: Melanie Campbell

Synod Executive oversees our engagement in the collaboration between the synods of Scotland, Yorkshire, North Western, Mersey and Northern. To date the collaboration has put in place:

- Common HR policies and procedures in each of the five synods
- A team of trained facilitators to help churches to undertake change, well
- Two shared safeguarding roles; Geraldine Sands who works across Northern and Yorkshire Synods, and a new appointment shortly to commence across Mersey and North Western Synods
- Shared newsletters and communications
- A shared understanding of each synod's approach to changing patterns of deployment and ministry, challenges relating to the use of buildings, inventive and helpful ways to develop gifts of lay leadership, and differing ideas for strengthening work with children and young people

It is these last themes which are creating the platform for the next phase of collaboration, extending our shared work upon common interests. This could now involve cross-synod working with committees. A planning group is considering developments within Ministry, and task groups have been established for Children and Youth work, Letting Go of Buildings, Lay Leadership, and Information Technology. The task groups will commence their work in October and November. There will be a 48-hour event in January 2018, at which we hope to agree our next priorities, full details of which, will be reported to the March 2018 Synod meeting.

MISSION

Convenor: Revd Meg Robb

Over the last 6 months, the Mission Committee has covered much. Firstly, it was good to be part of the Face to Face programme, when CWM students from across the world came to Britain to discover more about the URC. After the group of students met for a while near Birmingham, two students came to Northern Synod and, in the main, worked as volunteers at the West End Refugee Service. They also visited churches and activities across the Synod, and we are grateful to those who helped and hosted in any way. We are grateful to Jane Rowell, our Mission Enabler, for coordinating this.

We have lost two members of our committee as Ron Forster and John Paul have gone into retirement, and we thank them for their input in the past. Ron was the Synod representative on the Assembly Mission Committee, and we are grateful to Chris Eddowes for taking on this role and keeping the link.

Gratitude is expressed to congregations who contributed to the appeal for Syrian Refugees. This has now helped refugees across our Synod.

Some of our members have worked within the Faith in Communities project, which operates in County Durham. We also have representation on the committee for Northumbrian Industrial Mission.

This year is the 25th anniversary of Commitment for Life, and there are churches within our Synod who support this. CforL is being reviewed at present, and it is good to inform you that £337,480 was raised last year. However, the work goes beyond raising money to alleviate poverty within our world, as CforL intends to challenge big pharmaceutical companies about how they distribute medicines in other lands, persuading banks to invest in renewable energy rather than in fossil fuels, and in ensuring that products sold by supermarkets selling fair trade goods are, indeed, paying fair prices to producers.

It is also good to report that forty people have signed up for the *Growing Leaders* course within our Synod, which, of course, comes out of the *Way Forward* process. Mission Committee also wished to promote prayer regarding this process and prayer in general, and gift packs with items promoting prayer are to be distributed to every church within Synod.

Where ecumenism is concerned, it is with sadness we report that Oxclose LEP (Local Ecumenical Project), in which the URC was a partner, has now become purely Anglican. There is some concern regarding SENEA (South East Northumberland Ecumenical Area), which now has only one URC minister. However, it is good to report that three non-URC ministers from within the Synod serving in LEPs or Ecumenical Areas are to attend the *Welcome to the URC* course this year.

Regarding World Church, there is nothing further to report regarding Mozambique, although Dave Herbert has had some correspondence with folk there. He was also investigating a relationship with the United Church of Christ in the USA.

Concern has been expressed that ministers of the URC taking part in protest regarding social, racial and global justice could be facing disciplinary action by the URC. Often police arrest people who do take part in such protests. It seems hard that members and ministers need to consider this before following their consciences.

Commitment for Life

Advocate: Chris Eddowes

This year sees the 25th Anniversary of Commitment for Life as part of the URC's witness in the wider world. It's perhaps time to remind people of its beginning and aims.

In 1973, General Assembly adopted a resolution on a World Development Programme incorporating the 1% Appeal or 'a penny in the pound of disposable income'. A further resolution widened the brief of the World Development Programme to include: political action; education; financial appeal and cooperation with Christian Aid and the World Development Movement to produce promotional literature. (The World Development Movement is now named Global Justice Now).

In 1991, the 1% Appeal was renamed Commitment for Life. It focused on 3 core partners: India, Middle East, Zimbabwe. Most funding went to the partners, but also included monies for promotional and information resources for the supporting churches.

It covered 3 principles entitled: More than relief, We benefit too, Power to end poverty.

Commitment for Life, in its present format, was launched in 1992.

Since then there have been changes in the partner countries: India, Palestine, Brazil and Zimbabwe and, the four supported at present: Bangladesh, Central America, Israel/occupied Palestinian territory and Zimbabwe.... but the commitment has not changed.

It doesn't always mean help with food production, though at this time of climate change this is a huge problem, particularly in Bangladesh and Zimbabwe. It also works empowering ordinary people to have a say in their own futures. As one man said to the team who visited Zimbabwe recently, "People come and bring food, and then they don't come. You come and bring hope."

Having supported such major campaigns as Make Poverty History and IF, CforL has always been in the forefront of working for justice. Present campaigns from Global Justice Now are: Trade Democracy (particularly with Brexit), Migrants Welcome Here and Access to Medicines. The main Christian Aid emphasis is on The Big Shift, encouraging the big banks to invest in renewable energy, rather than fossil fuels.

None of this work would be done without the contributions from ordinary people like you, committing to help.

A review of Commitment for Life is taking place, and here are some of the latest facts. Contributions have been in the region of £500,000, but recently there has been a decrease and 2016 raised £337,480. Of the 1,426 churches in the denomination, 33% are CforL churches – 475.

If you are a CforL church, thank you and please keep committing! If you're not, could you consider joining in? The commitment is individual, not really a church one, though it's much easier to give all together, so even if your church is not included, you could be.

For further information – contact Chris Eddowes.

CHILDREN'S & YOUTH WORK

Convenor: Sandy Ogilvie

Since the last Synod meeting, the committee has accepted the resignation of Mrs Lucy Cooke. Lucy's contribution will be missed but we are hopeful that others will be willing to join us.

The committee has made grants to support the young people from St George's, High Heaton, to visit Uganda, and supported the Staying Alive holiday camp in Seahouses over the summer.

Hannah Middleton continues to be busy as our Children's Work Advisor and is currently:-

- advising three congregations to apply for the Child-Friendly Church Award
- helping with the launch of "Little Fishes", a toddler group at St George's, High Heaton
- supporting a group at West Denton exploring setting up Messy Church
- reviewing the URC's role in our continuing commitment to Staying Alive
- developing her schools assembly work.

Please remember that Hannah is here to advise any local church on its children's work.

Youth Placements

Following the discussion at last Synod about creating work opportunities for young people, the committee approached all local congregations to ascertain if there was any appetite for the committee, with Synod backing, to develop a work placement scheme. To date, eleven congregations have expressed an interest and are developing their ideas. If you are not one of the eleven and would like to explore this further, please let me know by the end of October (sandyogilvie@talktalk.net).

It is hoped that firm proposals can be agreed with each congregation by the end of 2017, with the intention of offering year-long part-time paid placements (either 5 or 15 hours per week) from next summer to any young person between the ages of 16 and 23. The placements will primarily be the responsibility of the local church. However, we are aiming to provide a package of Synod-led support to those running the scheme, and we hope to include three residential weekends over the year for all placementees (!) to meet, have some fun and fellowship and time for reflection.

SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

Safeguarding Advisor: Geraldine Sands



**NORTHERN SYNOD
SAFEGUARDING UPDATE;
SEPTEMBER 2017**

Dear Ministers and Elders

I am writing to provide an update on safeguarding arrangements in churches across Northern Synod and to remind you of safeguarding training opportunities that are still available during 2017. It would be helpful if this letter could be disseminated widely within local churches, and taken to church meetings.

In an email distributed to churches last month, the URC Safeguarding Good Practice Guidelines were used to clarify the centrality of safeguarding to our Christian faith. In short, these guidelines describe how our commitment to safeguard children and adults at risk, is part of our broader commitment to be a loving community, offering a welcoming environment in which people can flourish, safe from harm.

I have been in post as Synod Safeguarding Advisor for just over a year now and I have seen a great deal of progress with local church safeguarding arrangements in Northern Synod. One highlight for me was on 22 May 2017, when a group of fourteen church safeguarding leads came together at Jesmond URC for a network meeting. The meeting enabled us to learn from each other and share progress and information. There was an impressive level of knowledge, experience and enthusiasm amongst the attendees.

Church safeguarding returns

These were sent out just before Christmas 2016, and a reminder was circulated last month for any churches who had not sent information back during the initial timeframe. The template seeks assurance that churches have the 'building blocks' in place for safeguarding, such as a safeguarding policy and identified safeguarding leads. Where returned templates demonstrate churches are struggling, I have made contact to offer advice and support.

At the time of writing there are still eighteen churches from which we have not received a returned template. I will be contacting these churches over the winter months, if a response is not received in the Synod Office in the next few weeks. If you know that you are one of these eighteen churches, please give your safeguarding arrangements some consideration and contact me if you need specific advice or support. If you have a very small congregation, consider contacting a church geographically close to you to see if you can work together to establish a policy and safeguarding leadership. Safeguarding covers children *and* adults at risk, so if your congregation does not include families with children, you still need safeguarding arrangements in place.

Managing offenders and others who pose risk within church

When I attended the Northern Synod Meeting in March 2017, I spoke about Covenants of Care for sex offenders within church congregations. Part of my role is to support churches to establish and monitor these arrangements which both protect the offender and safeguard members of the congregation. To date there is only one such covenant in place across Northern Synod. I therefore encourage you to get in touch with me if you are aware of an individual in your church for whom we should establish a Covenant of Care.

Safeguarding training opportunities

Across Northern Synod, we train collaboratively with the Methodist Church. There are different levels of training available as set out below:

FOUNDATION MODULE: This training is for all those in church who work with children or adults at risk (vulnerable adults), and its main aim is to raise awareness of safeguarding and help people to be able to identify safeguarding concerns and know where to report them.

FOUNDATION MODULE REFRESHER: This is a version of the foundation module which can be used to update safeguarding training. Foundation training should be updated every three years if you work with children or adults at risk in your church.

LEADERSHIP MODULE: This training aims to enable church safeguarding leads, ministers and other leaders in churches to develop a deeper understanding of their role and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and to develop confidence in carrying out this role.

I have been circulating dates of training courses, and working closely with the Methodist Church to co-deliver the Leadership Modules. Some courses that are due to take place over the next few days/weeks are listed below. If you have not seen flyers and booking forms for these and would like to attend, please contact me via email. Course dates for Winter/Spring 2017-8 will be circulated shortly.

- **Foundation Module:** Saturday 25 November, venue tbc
- **Foundation Module Refresher:** Wednesday 11 October, 2pm @ Trinity Church, Wallsend, NE28 8SA and 7pm @ Coxlodge Methodist Church, Kenton Road, NE3 4PA
- **Leadership Module:** Thursday 19 October, 10am-4pm @ Cullercoats Methodist Church, NE30 3LJ.

To ensure that more Foundation Modules are available, we are training Foundation Module Trainers across Northern Synod. These individuals will work collaboratively with colleagues in the Methodist Church to provide training in local churches. Ideally, they should be drawn from our group of church safeguarding leads, thus having some existing knowledge about safeguarding and preferably having undertaken the Leadership Module. About six people have come forward to be trained as trainers and a course has been scheduled to take place on **Saturday 28 October 10am-4pm at St John's URC, Wideopen**, to prepare them for this role. If you are interested in joining this training session please let me know as soon as possible via email.

Therefore, until our Foundation Module trainers are ready to schedule courses, we will inevitably not be able to meet demand for training. I have suggested to local churches that if they have an urgent need for Foundation Module training, please contact the relevant local safeguarding boards which will provide free online safeguarding awareness training. Although this will not be tailored specifically for the church context, it will give a useful baseline.

Domestic Abuse in churches

A free three-and-a-half-hour training session is taking place on **2 December 2017 11am until 2.30pm at St Columba's URC, York**. It is entitled *Domestic Violence Happens in Churches too*. The national organisation *Restored Relationships* will be

delivering the training for both Northern and Yorkshire Synods. Their purpose is to support churches to recognise and respond to domestic abuse and to acknowledge that it is a critical safeguarding issue. We have been able to book Mandy Marshall to lead the training. Mandy is the organisation's co-director and international trainer, so it promises to be a very enlightening session. This is open to safeguarding leads, ministers and other interested church members. If you are interested, and have not yet seen the flyer and booking form, please do get in touch with me.

I hope this update is helpful to you and your church. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like further information on anything in this letter.

Contact: Geraldine.sands@outlook.com

MINISTRIES & DEVELOPMENT

Convenor: Revd Hilary Collinson

The committee has received several requests for grants from lay people to attend training/development events, which have been approved. We have also been approached by others hoping to run events, or attend them later this year and into next year.

We have agreed in principle to give the following grants:-

- To those attending the Women's Convention in Scotland for 2018.
- Helping to fund the Growing Leaders course spearheaded by the Mission Enabler, Revd Jane Rowell.
- Funding for our places at a joint venture between our Synod, Yorkshire Synod and Keld Resource Centre, who have secured funding from The Lady Hewley Trust for a pilot event to see how this might work in practice in the next three years. At the time of writing, no details are available but it is hoped information will be available for Synod.
- In line with past practice (re Summer School) we are underwriting the cost of ministers and CRCWs attending the national 'Ministers' Gathering' being held April/May 2018. No Summer School will be held in 2018, but the Retreat is scheduled as normal.

However, these will not take all the resources available to the committee, so if you have a request please contact the Convenor for a discussion about you or your Churches'/Cluster development needs.

A 'Funeral Workshop' has been arranged for the Northern part of the Synod on 4 November at Alnwick URC.

It had been hoped to have some other 'Workshop outlines' available for people to access, but this has not been possible to produce yet. These would cover weddings and baptisms in the first instance.

The Convenor and Synod Clerk have attended a day of consultation regarding 'Walking the Way'. This included a brief outline of the new offering in place of TLS,

currently called 'Stepwise'. Details will be circulated when the scheme is being offered – September 2018 is the current proposed start date. It is envisaged that it will be accessible to individuals and small groups in congregations as well as a more formal pathway for other aspects of Church life.

PASTORAL

Convenor: Revd Dr Grant Wilson

The work of Pastoral Committee has been overshadowed recently by our Moderator's ill health. We are praying for Dave's swift recovery.

Vacancies and Retirements

As previously announced, Revds Elaine Brown and Gordon Brown, Ron Forster and John Paul have all retired since our last meeting. Revd Joan Ross is due to retire on 30 September. We thank them again for their ministry, and wish them well in retirement.

Following these retirements, many churches in Synod are in vacancy. Vacancies have been formally declared in North Northumberland, North Shields, and Hartlepool & Teesdale. Further vacancies will be declared as church groupings are agreed, within the context of the Synod *Way Forward*.

Pastoral Friends are currently: Revd Rachel Poolman (Berwick), Revd Alasdair Pratt (Belford), Revd Joan Grindrod-Helmn (Wooler), Revd Gordon Connacher (North Shields), Revd Helen Drummond (Gateshead), Revd Barry Hutchinson (Hartlepool), and Revd Hillary Collinson (East Cleveland).

Revd Peter Rand is Pastoral Link for North Tyne.

Interim Moderators are: Revd Rachel Poolman (North Northumberland), Revd Kay Alberg (Morpeth, Widdrington and Great Bavington), Dr Andrew Graydon (North Shields), Mrs Jackie Haws (West Denton), Dr Ann Sinclair (Wideopen, Ponteland, Horsley and Hexham), Revd James Breslin (Gateshead), Mr John Drew (Waddington Street, Durham, and North West Durham), Revd Ken Harris (Stockton, Billingham and Thornaby), and Revd Julie Martin (Hartlepool).

Pastoral Committee are grateful to all who serve Pastoral Friends, Pastoral Links and Interim Moderators, and particularly to Revd Ken Harris, who had intended to step down but has indicated his willingness to continue to serve beyond the end of the year.

The committee notes with concern the difficulty of finding people to fill these roles, and the problems of ill-health currently affecting the level of support that can be provided to churches in vacancy.

A training course for Interim Moderators will take place in the Synod Office on Saturday 14 October, beginning at 10.00 am, followed by lunch.

The Moderator and Jane Rowell visited churches in Sheffield city centre to see team ministry in action there. Their informal way of working together seemed to work well in practice, although it appeared to be based on a model of ministry more traditional than the one we hope to see implemented here, with a limited role for lay leaders at the moment.

Pastoral Committee asks Synod to resolve that, as groups are formed, the churches in those groups will cease to be a part of their current Mission Partnerships. Those Mission Partnerships will however continue in existence until all the churches that currently belong to them have withdrawn.

Lay Presidency

Pastoral Committee agreed to recommend Susan Rand for authorisation for lay presidency for approval. As she is based in South East Northumberland, the ecumenical area will be responsible for her authorisation.

The committee is seeking someone to undertake training for lay presidency following Revd Dr Matthew Prevett's request to step down.

Section O – The Ministerial Disciplinary Process

Synod is still looking for members prepared to serve on panels for any future disciplinary investigations under Section O, and is trying to make contact with anyone who has served previously so that training can be brought up to date.

Work with Those Living with Dementia

Revd Dr Matthew Prevett

Dementia is an increasingly prevalent part of our life as a society. With the age profile of many of our churches, this will become more prominent within our fellowships. Northern Synod has sought to be proactive with this, and has been looking at what is happening in our churches for those living with dementia and exploring how we might be able to provide assistance to churches. A number of places are already providing opportunities for those living with dementia, while some are looking at how they can engage more fully with this health and social issue as a fellowship.

There has recently been a survey circulated to churches to find out what is taking place and to find out about what might be of use to churches in the Synod. It is anticipated to run some dementia information sessions, linked with some opportunity to think about how to be dementia-friendly churches later in the autumn, and then to follow this up with resources – where wanted – for those who may want direction in this area.

(From a Northern Synod Minister looking at dementia work in Northern Synod revdmatthewprevett@gmail.com)

Resolution:

10. Synod resolves that churches whose membership votes to become part of a local church group, will cease to be a part of their present mission partnership from the date of the formation of such a group.

GRINDON MISSION PROJECT

David Whiting

A voice, a heart, a spirit, a place

In my last report, I referred to the development of the church building. We had at that stage stripped the sanctuary of its pews. The pews have been utilised to provide cupboard space for storage. On one of the internal side walls, a mural has now been painted by a local artist.

Although the church building can still be used for worship (during August and September three baptisms took place), the space can now also be used by user groups. So, one group can meet in the sanctuary and another group in the hall. There are toilets for both sides of the building as well as two spaces for providing food and hot drinks.



There are people involved with the project who seem to have the gift of getting things done for little or no cost. Recently, new chairs and tables have been obtained from local universities. The development of the building continues and we have been provided with funding for fitting solar panels to the roof.

In addition to work in the building, work in the garden continues. It has become an important resource for the community. A play house and a greenhouse have been put in the garden and there is also some external storage space.

Messy Church meets in the building on a monthly basis. In September, the group built a boat in the sanctuary hall, and we heard the story of the Apostle Paul's shipwreck. In

October, we will celebrate a Messy Harvest.

Most mornings during the week, there are activities for the young including a group using music, another doing dance and baby massage. There are various garden groups – 'John's Garden Group' grows vegetables and flowers. It is an informal group that meets in the garden every Friday over a hot drink and a snack. There is a ballet group which even provides for sit down ballet! There are also long-standing groups such as Pantastic, which is a steel band, A690 (a youth group going by the name Church Youthy) and a couple of choirs, the Northern Youth Choir and Jubilate. A full list of user groups can be found on the project's website (<http://sunderlandurc.org.uk/grindon/>) and ongoing news found on its Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Grindon-Church-Community-Project-975898879123540/?fref=ts>).

We rely exclusively on unpaid volunteers – this includes our administrator Kati Whiteoak, who does a terrific job keeping the project running. At the time of writing, two of our volunteers are seeking to raise money through a sky dive.

LOCAL MISSION & MINISTRY REVIEW

Administrator: Revd Joan Grindrod-Helmn

The visits for 2017 have been completed, and almost all reports are now finalised. This year, the teams went out to: Jesmond, West End, Robert Stewart Memorial, Amble, Alnwick and Warkworth. A big thank you to those churches who hosted our visitors, for their hospitality and hard work. Also a thank you to our teams of Partners and Companions. LMMR requires a big commitment on their part, but so often they come back saying how much they have enjoyed the visits they have made.

For 2018, we have another list of churches that Pastoral Committee has approved for visitation. This year, we will be sending out the letters to the churches in early November rather than February, to give churches a bit more time to prepare for the visits. The LMMR teams will be meeting this year to start thinking about the future of LMMR as the Synod moves into *A Way Forward*.

If anyone would like to join our wonderful teams of visitors, please contact Joan!

TRAVEL DIRECTIONS

ST AIDAN'S UNITED REFORMED CHURCH HENCOTES – HEXHAM – NE46 2EQ

By train:

Trains leave Newcastle Central Station at 08:24 and 08:54, arriving in Hexham at 08:59 and 09:38. The most direct route is via Alemouth Road, Hallstile Bank (quite steep), Market Place, Beaumont Street and Hencotes. A gentler alternative turns briefly left out of the station and follows a broad curving path to the right of the Station Inn, crossing Chisholm Place and into Wentworth Place, continuing into Hallgate, to Market Place then as before.

By road:

Leave the A69 at the Bridge End roundabout, turning left on the A6079 Rotary Way, crossing the Tyne and two roundabouts into Alemouth Road, then turn left into the large Wentworth car park. **Please note that if you park in the WHITE bays, you can stay for free all day.** There is access either to Wentworth Place in the top corner of the car park or to Alemouth Road at the foot. Then continue as above.

For those who need to be nearer the church, turn right at the second roundabout on the A6079, following Station Road round into Priestpopple B6305, Battle Hill and Hencotes. Just as you reach the church on your right, immediately after the trees of Sele Park, turn left opposite to park at St Mary's School. St Aidan's will have parking stewards at the church to direct people to the school.

