



News from Synod

Meeting on 17 March 2018
at St John's, Wideopen

Synod in Community



St John's URC in Wideopen is now part of the new church grouping known as Four Churches in One Place. Our meeting was inspired by the opening worship led by the church group with Waves Community Choir.

Friends from Wideopen, Horsley, Hexham and Ponteland United Reformed Churches joined together to share their gifts, leading us in worship with beautiful readings and

prayers with which to focus upon our day and lives as churches in community.

Mission in Community

Unknowingly, both our speakers had chosen Proverbs 31 with which to guide our thoughts.

Throughout the day, our Moderator, Revd Dave Herbert, drew upon song and prayer to inspire and encourage our worship and conversation.



A Synod in Community

We know our Synod has a mission heart, and our speakers from Hope for Justice and Action Foundation were warmly welcomed by Synod members.



Rachel Jobes explained how Hope for Justice rescue and restore those who have been trafficked. It was difficult to hear of the oppression and slavery which is taking place all around us, and we were moved by the sadness and pain we witnessed. Rachel would like to run Hope Sundays in our churches to raise awareness of the signs of trafficking and to explain what we can do to help. Please contact Rachel at www.hopeforjustice.org to find out more.



Action Foundation Chief Executive Julian Prior talked about the ways in which housing and support projects in Newcastle, Gateshead and Sunderland continue to support the estimated 300 destitute people living on our streets. He used a video clip of our own Andy Lie (Synod Ecumenical Officer) to show how spare rooms can offer a temporary respite for someone who needs a warm place to stay. Action Foundation provides all the support their hosts and churches may need including legal and safeguarding assurance. If you or others in your church feel drawn to offer a shelter to someone who is without a home, or if you know someone who has a property to rent to Action Foundation so they may give people without a home somewhere safe to stay and a secure foundation, or if you feel challenged to use your church properties in this way, please contact Julian Prior at www.actionfoundation.org.uk.

Way Forward

Dave reminded us all that a *Way Forward* is so much more than structures. He encouraged us to look for gifts in others, to see how being church differently is a journey into

deepening our discipleship and faith. We rejoiced in hearing how 29 people have stepped out to take part in the Growing Leaders course.

Our first church groups came in to being at Synod as we affirmed churches joining together in Mid-Northumberland and north and west of Newcastle, with new church groups to be known as Mid-Northumberland and Four Churches in One Place, respectively. We hope others may feel encouraged to see it can be done! We look forward to welcoming others as we all continue our journeys in to new ways of 'being church'.

Safeguarding



Geraldine Sands, our very friendly Safeguarding Advisor came to assure all our churches that she is here to help! Geraldine knows safeguarding can feel daunting, particularly if your church is small, it seems just too overwhelming. Geraldine's latest newsletter can be found here:

<http://urc-northernsynod.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/1802-news-update-northern.pdf>

Please give Geraldine a call on 07427 857495 and have a chat about how she can support your church, or perhaps

you are a church which could buddy-up to encourage others? if this would work for you, it's fine with us!!

News in Brief



- Synod welcomed Revd Sue Fender who is to be inducted in to Teesdale and Hartlepool. Sue's first induction service was snowed off, so we wish her well as plans continue for her induction service to take place at St George's, Hartlepool, on 7 April.
- The Synods of Scotland, Yorkshire, Mersey, North Western and Northern are collaborating upon a toolkit to help churches 'let go' of buildings and find new places in which to worship.... They are also putting together all you need to know to about 'streaming' or relaying your services to folk at home or in other churches.... Watch this space!
- Five churches across the Synod are being supported by the Children and Youth Work Committee to recruit young interns to work alongside them. We are grateful to Methodist friends, who have freely offered their experience and learning of this path.



- Synod committees will see some change too, with the Ministries and Development Committee welcoming Ron Forster as convenor, and Stephen Collinson stepping in to the role of convenor of our Pastoral Committee. We are very grateful to Ron and Stephen and thank their predecessors, Hilary and Grant for the commitment and wisdom they have brought to the Synod.



- DBS day!! If you want to know more about DBS checks, or to meet others working on safeguarding in URC churches, come along to our Safeguarding Network on Saturday 14 April in Durham. Contact Wendy at the

Synod Office for details (0191 232 1168, wendy.watson@urc-northernsynod.org).

- Places and days of interest for the coming months include: *Changing Places* a new course at the Keld Centre to be held on 29 October – 2 November, A course to offer advice should the worst happen in your community. *Responding to Congregational Trauma* on 29 September will be led by Revd Dr Carla Grosch-Miller, and will provide training upon how a church can respond to local tragedy or disaster. Places are limited – please contact Wendy at the Synod Office.
- If your church would like an independent facilitator to help your meetings about church groups run smoothly, contact Alastair Forsyth from the Northerly Synods Facilitation Team via the Synod Office on 0191 232 1168.

Footsteps



Synod members all received a copy of the Synod Community Toolkit, 'Footsteps', and were given a demonstration of the website and interactive resources, all of which are there to help churches with the Way Forward.



By the time you read this, every church will have received newsletters and information about Footsteps. If you want to find out more, go and click on www.footstepstoolkit.com right now!

Have you seen Elijah and Naomi?



Q: What comes next after TLS?

A: Stepwise!

Stepwise is the new modular course which will be coming on line in 2018. Take a look www.urch.org.uk/stepwise to find out more.

