

**REVIEW OF SYNOD MODERATOR'S JOB DESCRIPTION INCLUDING ANY IMPLICATIONS FOR  
THE PASTORAL ARRANGEMENTS AND ECUMENICAL WORK OF THE SYNOD**

**Review Group Report to Spring Synod Together 11 March 2017**

**Pastoral Care for Ministers and Local Church Leaders in Southern Synod**

*Our brief*

In accordance with Section IV (2) of our Terms of Reference, we have considered the **strategy that Southern Synod might best adopt for the delivery of pastoral care of ministers and churches, and what future needs there may be for mutual support and supervision and how these things might best be delivered.** Again in accordance with those Terms of Reference we have also considered whether a Synod Moderator's Pastoral Assistant post should be created to assist with pastoral care of serving ministers, retired ministers, widows and widowers. We have *also* had regard to the pastoral needs of CRCWs and Local Church Leaders.

*Background*

We are also aware of the wide range of feedback received from the Synod-wide consultation in 2015, a little of which indicated that attention might usefully be given to the task above. It is not clear to us whether those commenting on these matters were aware that the Moderator's Job description (which we have reviewed and altered as a separate part of this subsequent task) did not speak to *any* specific pastoral responsibilities for serving or retired ministers; rather it referred simply to oversight responsibilities for all pastoral responsibilities which fell in the first instance to Synod Area Pastoral Committees.

We think it essential that anyone reading this paper and its recommendations has available to them the Proposed Job Description for the Moderator which we have prepared as a separate part of our brief. That document that is quite specific on those pastoral matters for which we propose the Moderator should have primary responsibility in future. But our brief does not allow us to stop there. We have to look at the wider picture too.

Despite the absence of any specific pastoral responsibilities for serving or retired ministers in the previous job description, we learned from the Moderator that inevitably there has been a considerable amount of pastoral work involved in discharging her wider responsibilities. So we took as our starting point the fact that there are some such responsibilities which are truly integral to the role of Moderator, and we sought to identify what they were. We then looked to see whether there were pastoral tasks that might be considered closely connected with her role as Moderator, but which might best be handled by others for organisational or legal reasons. In doing this we acknowledge with thanks the assistance we have received from the Moderator herself.

***Pastoral tasks in relation to Ministers and Local Church Leaders for which we consider primary responsibility must lie with the Moderator.***

We set out below the types of administrative and pastoral encounters with Ministers and Local Church leaders, for which we recommend that the Moderator should have *primary*<sup>2</sup> responsibility and hence that ought not to be handled in the first instance by anyone other than the Moderator.

1. Listening – no particular agenda;
2. Discerning gifting;
3. Information sharing;
4. Ministers' gatherings; Spring School, ONET days, Moderators' Ministers Days;
5. Movement of ministers to other pastorates including Exit interviews; working with Methodists in particular in relation to LEPs;
6. Illness of minister and family; phase return to work; occupational or psychiatric report;
7. Retirement including Retirement interviews;
8. Disciplinary – Section O and Section P (Capability).

***Pastoral tasks in relation to Ministers and Local Church Leaders for which we consider primary responsibility does not need to, or should not, lie with the Moderator***

However, it seems to us that there are a number of other types of Pastoral encounter in which it is either not necessary or not desirable for the Moderator to be the first point of contact or to have primary responsibility. Such matters include:

1. Training and Development which includes spiritual development, EM2, exploring call to ministry, what ministers need for ministry in 2017 and beyond;
2. Buildings problems of churches but most especially manses;
3. Matters where it is obvious that there may be a litigation risk for the Synod, and where therefore contact must be guided by legal advice;
4. Mediation, where specialist mediation skills may be required.

***How should the Moderator be supported in carrying out pastoral care?***

Our Terms of Reference required us to consider "whether a Synod Moderator's Pastoral assistant post [should] be created to assist with pastoral care of serving ministers, retired ministers, widows and widowers."

Naturally, in considering this aspect of our brief, we sought to understand whether there were lessons to be learned from the Synod's past experience of having a Synod Pastor post from 2006 to 2010. (Southern Synod is the only one to have created such a post and it was ended in 2011 for budgetary and other practical reasons.) Whilst there was deep appreciation and widespread praise for the way that role was conducted, we learned that by concentrating the pastoral responsibilities onto the shoulders of one person, the role so created was extremely stressful, and it also required a tremendous amount of time travelling. Also the role meant that there was some duplication of communication required with the Moderator.

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<sup>1</sup> For the avoidance of doubt, having primary responsibility does not preclude the subsequent involvement (at the invitation of the Moderator) of someone else with particular pastoral gifts or talents to assist in responding to a particular situation.

So we have not recommended that one person be assigned the role of Synod Pastoral Assistant or equivalent title. Nor have we concluded that the answer is to split the role to have *two* people carrying out such a role, (whether on a North/South split or an East/West one).

Instead we consider it would be more logical to determine where primary responsibility for pastoral care should lie for those within the grouping of “serving ministers [we add: CRCWs and local church leaders], retired ministers, widows and widowers”. And we believe that the obvious sub-set of that grouping for whom it is not obvious that the Moderator should be expected to have primary pastoral responsibility is retired ministers, widows and widowers, for we understand that there are currently 71 retired Ministers within the Synod, *not counting* widows and widowers. Thus the pastoral responsibility for this group of people is considerable if concentrated on one or even two people.

We set out below where we recommend primary responsibility for that grouping should lie.

**We recommend that *primary* pastoral responsibility for retired ministers, widows and widowers should lie with their local church.**

We have learned that a few **retired ministers, widows and widowers worship at *other* (i.e. non URC) churches, and for them we recommend that the *primary* pastoral responsibility should lie with the Pastoral Committee for the area in which they live.**

### ***Pastoral care for serving ministers, CRCWs and local church leaders***

We then considered the position of serving ministers CRCWs and local church leaders. A key pastoral consideration for each of them is where their own ministry is going, and their own need for support in their personal development. (For the avoidance of doubt we do not suggest that this is the only pastoral need that serving ministers and local church leaders will have.) It seems therefore wise for the Synod Training and Development officer to have a direct relationship with all serving ministers and local church leaders in relation to matters falling within their TDO role.

**We, therefore, recommend that the Synod Training and Development Officer should have responsibility for creating and maintaining a direct relationship with all serving ministers, CRCWs and local church leaders in relation to matters falling within the TDO role.**

In the event that significant pastoral issues arise in conversation between the TDO and serving ministers, CRCWs and local church leaders which appear to fall outside the responsibilities of the TDO, the TDO should ensure that the Moderator is made aware of them.

### ***Other matters with Pastoral implications that may end up with the Moderator***

We have learned that the Moderator can be called on to give considerable time to the pastoral consequences of some manse issues. This is not something that we would have expected or that we regard as either obvious or inevitable. Nor, given the need for the job description to deliver a manageable workload do we consider this situation should be left unreported. It is not our role to interfere with established practice beyond our terms of reference, but we do recommend that Synod Council should consider carefully whether

existing practice (and perhaps policy) requires re-examination, and/or whether foreseeable pastoral consequences of property related decisions should be the subject of some wider consultation before they are confirmed.

### ***Conclusion***

If that additional direct relationship by the TDO with all serving ministers and local church leaders is then taken with the Synod-wide role of the Moderator (see sub-sections 18-20 et al of the Proposed Job Description for the Moderator) then we see a significant sharing of the ongoing responsibilities that would otherwise fall to the Moderator alone. When that sharing of responsibility is coupled with the ability of the Moderator to draw in additional pastoral support as necessary (see footnote 1 above), and attention is given by Synod Council to the matter raised in the preceding paragraph, we believe that an appropriate balance of responsibilities for pastoral care can be achieved without overloading the Moderator.

We have discussed our conclusions with the Moderator who is supportive of them, and who considers that the resulting pastoral responsibilities which will fall directly to her can be managed, given her ability to draw in support from others for particular situations if and as necessary.

### **Members of Review Group**

1. Ms Linda Austin
2. Mr Sam Brown
3. Mr Nigel Macdonald, Secretary
4. The Revd Jennifer Millington
5. Miss Pam Tolhurst
6. The Revd Derrick Dzandu-Hedidor, Synod Clerk/Convenor