

Synod Strategy

1. Introduction

The Synod Structures report in 2010 boldly declared that we strive always to be ‘Christ’s people ... transformed by the Gospel ... making a difference.’ This is why we exist, and as this vision becomes reality we seek to be a foretaste of the kingdom of God, which is justice and joy. With a renewed ecumenical focus we are driven by the Synod Mission Criteria which undergirds all our thinking. The Synod’s mission is to encourage and enable local churches in God’s mission. By God’s grace, we want to encourage growth in depth and breadth.

2. **The Synod exists** to encourage, challenge and resource the life and mission of the local church or clusters of local churches within the geographical area of Southern Synod of the United Reformed Church, its people and buildings.

3. **The Synod Mission Criteria states the purpose of Synod as:**

This Synod

- is committed to looking for new opportunities for being the church in the geographical area of the Synod
- is committed to supporting and resourcing the local churches to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ
- is committed to caring pastorally for its local churches, ministers and staff
- is committed to supporting and resourcing local churches to provide relevant, inspiring and engaging worship
- is committed to being aware of the economic, political and social context of life in Southern England and will seek to help local churches address the implications of these issues for their life and work
- is committed to the proper care and administration of its resources through its personnel, finances and buildings
- is committed to the wider of church of God through the United Reformed Church nationally, ecumenical relationships and the world church
- is committed to addressing issues of justice, peace and the environment
- is committed to regularly reviewing its life and mission in light of the above criteria always seeking the prompting and guidance of the Holy Spirit

4. These are complimentary to the full functions of Synods as shown in The Manual at https://www.urch.org.uk/images/the_manual/B_The_structure_of_the_URC_18_10_17.pdf

5. **Growth is never accidental.** We grow in breadth and depth because of the grace of God. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit we will discharge these responsibilities by helping each local church discern their role in God’s mission by

- a) Being transformed by the Gospel
- b) Making new disciples
- c) Serving the people of the geographical area known as Southern Synod

6. **Transformed by the Gospel.** The Catch the Vision Prayer declared that we seek to be Christ's people transformed by the gospel, announcing good news to the poor proclaiming freedom for those in prisons of wealth, poverty, disease and disorder committed to making a difference to the world's kingdoms as we live Christ's kingdom.

We need to allow ourselves to be transformed by the Gospel in order to live a life close to God. This means taking risks as we become more honest with ourselves and more honest with God by

- encouraging a sound prayer life through Walking the Way resources on the Synod website and the Mission and Vision Newsletter;
- encouraging growth through training provision regardless of age or ability which supports a variety of ministries: training elders or accrediting lay preachers or simply encouraging people to learn more about being the people God intends them to be; this may include MAD Days, Stepwise, Working with Small Groups and Growing Discipleship to give confidence;
- helping each local church discern their role in God's mission by nurturing a vision which is attainable through the LMMR process;

7. **Making new disciples.** A disciple is someone who follows Jesus Christ. With him as our companion and guide we can travel through life differently, and we hope others will share the adventure with us. We want to be more faithful in our discipleship and allow God to shape our priorities and values by developing our faith and the faith of those we encounter. The Christian gospel is good news and we need to find new ways of telling the story, of explaining the faith and giving a reason for the hope that is in us by

- making good use of the rich resources of paid staff and volunteers especially the Children's and Youth Development Officer (CYDO), Ecumenical Development Officer, Mission Officer and Training Development Officer;
- addressing the needs of local churches by looking at ways the Synod can ease the lack of lay preachers and treasurers within our Synod;
- ensuring good pastoral care is given to local churches and ministers through the care and attention of Synod Areas and United Area;

8. **Serving the people of the geographical area known as Southern Synod.** If we are to be transformed by the Gospel, then we need to be active in making a difference in the world by witnessing to God's love and justice. Working in partnership with others who are transforming people's lives we will need to seek to address the global issues confronting society so that every person of God may flourish by

- helping each local church discern its priorities by informing, stimulating and supporting through the provision of financial resources to support the mission of local churches through investment in buildings, facilities and projects;
- providing high quality speedy advice on a variety of issues for local churches when they feel out of their depth especially easing administrative burdens.

9. Over the next five years the priorities of the Southern Synod will be:

1. Supporting Walking the Way as the cornerstone of our planning and activity.
2. Encouraging local churches to review their local mission and ministry and to identify their own priorities within Walking the Way.
3. Working for an equitable use of resources within the Synod and across the URC.

10. These priorities will be reviewed every three years so that this becomes a Living Document. The above lists are not exhaustive. However, it is important to remember to do a few things and to do them well - the 7th mark of a healthy church.