



SOUTHERN SYNOD PROFILE

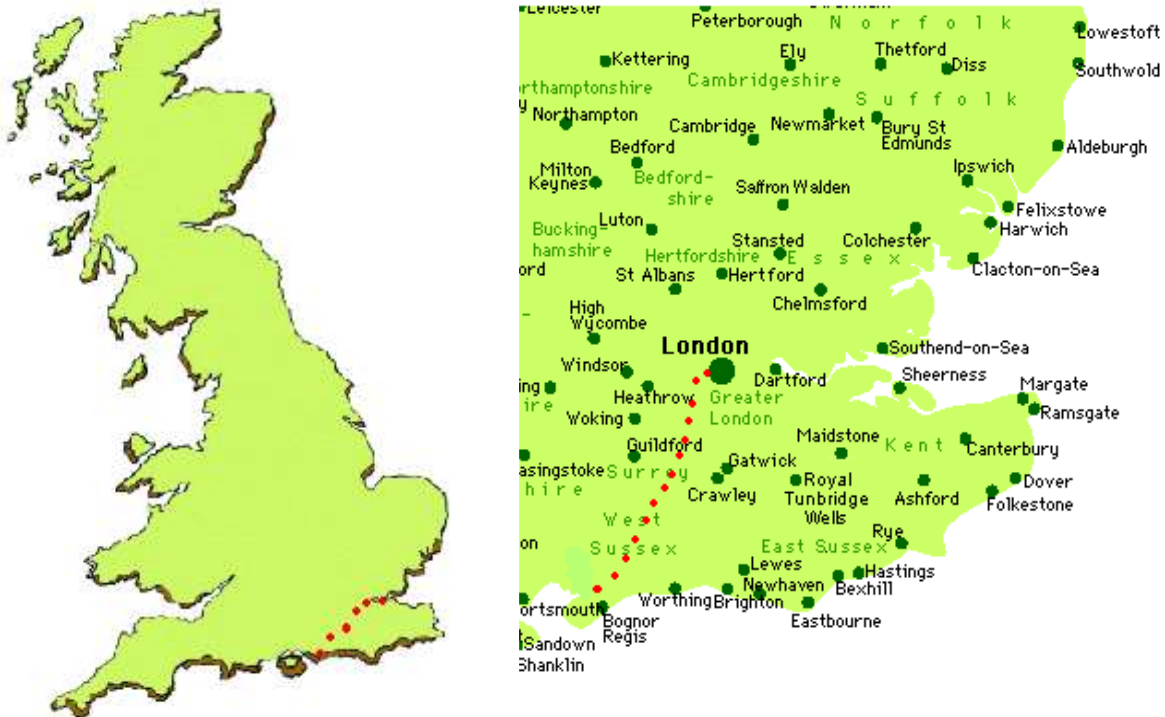
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INTRODUCTION

Southern Synod is one of the 13 Synods of the United Reformed Church; 11 for England, 1 for Scotland, and 1 for Wales. In fact, Southern is Synod 11 and the largest.

The Synod serves 160 churches situated in the far south-eastern corner of England (on the map below to the east of the red dotted line and south of the River Thames) with a large coastal boundary that stretches from the Thames estuary in the north, bearing east through the Medway Towns and then alongside the Straits of Dover finally curving around the edge of the English Channel westwards through Hastings and Eastbourne as far as Bognor Regis and Chichester.



Covering something in excess of three thousand square miles of England, Southern Synod takes in the whole of Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex, the eastern portion of Surrey and the twelve London Boroughs south of the Thames. It's as varied and stimulating as anywhere. There are new towns, two of the Government's south east 'growth areas' (Ashford and Thames Gateway) but also ancient settlements that welcomed St Augustine. There are thriving metropolitan centres and dying sink estates. There are wealthy suburbs and seen-better-days Victorian towns. There is glorious downland to trudge for personal renewal and derelict brown field sites to transform for community regeneration. There are commercial docks and ports of entry for tourist and refugee alike. There is an International Airport for those living for tomorrow and historic Cinque Ports for those who also have an eye for yesterday. There are genteel seaside resorts with easy rides for wheelchairs and cool-as-cool nightlife centres with perilous rides for the jet set. There are Cathedral cities and centres of learning. There is the eastern stretch of the Pilgrim's Way and the western end of the Eurostar line. And each in their own way adds colour and texture to the picture of Southern Synod. Each shapes life. Each offers. Each demands. Each is part of the Kingdom. Each provides context for mission. Each beckons out of the Synod a response, a message, an authentic witness.

London plays a significant role in the life of Britain, and not least therefore in the affairs of Southern Synod. The capital influences who we are and how we experience life, with its heady juxtaposing of wealth and poverty, of high culture and narcissism, of multi-cultural collaboration and all-too-near-the surface racism.

Southern treasures the place that its London churches have within its life and work, especially as enthusiastic Christians from other parts of the globe increasingly people these urban congregations, bringing a life and hope that had previously begun to disappear.

Of course, not every community in Southern is close to London. It's a long way from East Wittering. Through vast swathes of monochrome, middle class Kent it seems that London's multi-culturalism is more than a world away. For millions in Surrey it's the place to escape from come 5:00 pm. For the many who think small is beautiful it's the sleeping giant 'out there'. Serving a Synod of such disparate characteristics care is needed to give balanced focus to London and not-London when setting the Synod's priorities and programmes.

Europe also sets more than a geographical boundary for Southern. European Union enlargement has brought renewed emphasis upon issues of free trade, open borders and increasing integration, bringing both promises and threats that stir the feelings of Europhile and Europhobe alike. The Kent coast is one of the gateways to the continent making the south east of England familiar with asylum seekers from countless countries, many of whom have sacrificed everything for 'the good life' here. It stretches the resourcefulness and hospitality of a people already under strain in the most populous part of Britain.

Contrary to popular opinion, though the southeast is home to some exceptionally privileged and financially rich people (many young professionals in particular) there is not unbounded wealth in the Home Counties, especially as the credit crunch continues. Statistics show that some of the poorest wards in England are to be found in areas like Medway and Hastings, and that, *per capita*, people in the South East are amongst the least well paid in Britain, once the cost of living has been taken into account. First time buyers, low paid key workers and fixed income pensioners seriously struggle. These factors raise the issues of how to enable and enrich community.

The Southern Synod of the URC recognises that, with the whole church, it exists is to engage with the world which shapes the lives of its members. It is called to be a foretaste of the Kingdom of God which is 'justice and joy', 'challenge and choice'.¹

Coastal and country, city and suburban, our context and lifestyles vary considerably but all of us in our own ways are striving to be "Christ's people transformed by the Gospel, making a difference", as the United Reformed Church puts it.

We are on a journey into new ways of being the Church in an ever-changing world. We believe God is still speaking: calling, using and sustaining the Church as doers of God's mission and that is the source of our purpose and hope. Our task is to pray, love and live in such a way as to become Christ to those around us. So we continue in Southern Synod on our missional discipleship.

¹ Bryn A. Rees 1911-83 (Rejoice and Sing 200)

SYNOD OFFICE

The Synod Office is at East Croydon United Reformed Church. It remains the focus of the Synod's central functions and the base for the Moderator, the Synod's administrative, finance and property staff and the core Committees and Trust. Local churches may wish to make initial contacts with their Area Officers, but they are also encouraged, whenever necessary, to contact the Office. The offices are within 3 minutes of East Croydon Station.

Southern Synod functions in four (4) areas called **Synod Areas** and two (2) **United Areas** to which some authority and powers have been devolved. It must be stressed that there is still one Southern Synod, but meeting and functioning in areas and coordinated by its central committees.

The Synod still has **one** Moderator, whilst the Areas have Area Leaders.

SYNOD AND TRUST OFFICERS AND STAFF

Synod Officers

Moderator	The Reverend Nicola Furley-Smith
Clerk (Honorary)	The Reverend Derrick Sena Dzandu-Hedidor
Treasurer (Honorary)	Mr Ian Fleming
Convener, Synod Trust (Honorary)	Mr Alistair Wilson

Synod Office Staff

Finance Officer and Trust Secretary	Mrs Catherine Kingdom
Finance and Property Administrator	Mr Simon Harding
Moderator's PA & Office Manager	Mr Nick Foulger
Office Administrator & Synod Clerk's PA	Miss Lauren Kane

Field Staff

Children's and Youth Development Officer	Mrs Cathy Glazier
Development Officer for Education & Learning	The Revd Dr Richard Goldring
Mission Officer	Mr Martin Hayward
Property Officer and Assistant Trust Secretary	Mr Guy Morfett
Training and Development Officer	Vacant
Administrative Support for:	
Children's and Youth Development Officer	Synod Office Administrator
Mission Officer	Synod Office Administrator
Development Officer for Education & Learning	Synod Office Administrator

The Synod staff work with appropriate Synod Committees, servicing them as necessary. They also work closely with the relevant finance and property people in the Synod and United Areas (S/UA) and develop their relationships with Area Meetings and local churches. They offer support to S/UAs and local churches as necessary and appropriate - and local churches should feel able to turn to them for help.

SYNOD TOGETHER

There are two **“Synod Together”** Meetings, normally in the spring and autumn. Exceptionally, Synod Together meetings may also be called for special purposes or if business requires it. A special one may be called in a General Assembly year before Assembly is held. Meetings are normally chaired by the Synod Moderator.

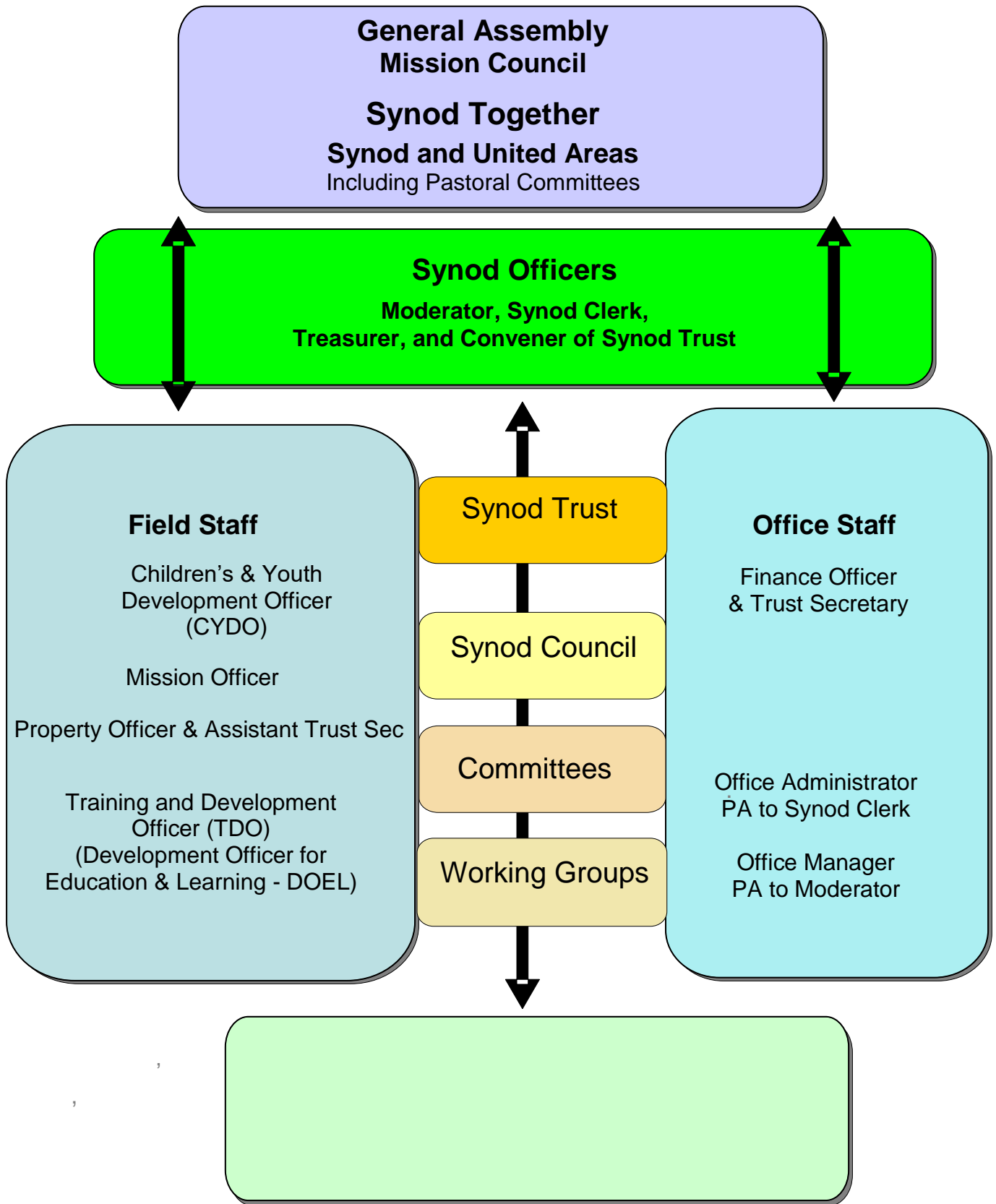
Membership

Membership of Synod Together is as stated in the URC Manual Section B ‘The Structure of the URC’ para 2. (4) (a) to (j). Following the demise of district councils and the formation of Synod and United areas in 2010, Synod agreed to the addition of Area Leaders, Treasurers and Administrators from each Synod/United Area, who is not already a member of Synod, on a cooption basis. Synod has agreed that local churches with more than 200 members may send an additional representative elder (i.e. to Synod/United Area and Synod Together meetings).

Central Structures

1. The URC (Southern Synod) Trust Ltd (“The Trust Company”)
2. Synod Council (with Nominations)
3. Synod Officers
4. Synod Finance Committee
5. Synod Ministries Committee
6. Synod Property Committee
7. Other Committees/Task Groups:
 - Candidates & Students
 - Children & Youth Work
 - Church & Society
 - Deployment
 - Ecumenical Development
 - Lay Preaching
 - Listed Buildings Advisory Committee
 - Local Church Leadership
 - Mission Fund
 - New Growth Fund
 - Synod Planning
 - Spring School Planning Group
 - Turn the Tide
 - Urban Network
 - Water in the Desert - Strategic Ministries
 - World Church & Mission

SOUTHERN SYNOD ORGANISATION OVERVIEW



SYNOD AREAS AND UNITED AREAS

1. Synod Areas

There are **four** Synod Areas (**SAs**), viz.

1. **East Kent Synod Area (EKSA)** – 21 churches;
2. **South London Synod Area (SLSA)** – 58 churches;
3. **Surrey & Sussex Synod Area (S&SSA)** – 32 churches; and
4. **West Kent & East Sussex Synod Area (WKESSA)** – 30 churches.

The Synod Areas have the delegated powers of Synod in most matters which are exercised in collaboration with Synod Officers and staff to retain the sense of being one Synod. However, some concerns are coordinated centrally, particularly in relation to **deployment, finance, property and Trust matters**. Each SA is adequately represented on these bodies and takes clear recommendations to the appropriate body. The central Committees dealing with these matters set out guidelines to assist SAs and their Officers in their tasks and ensure there is a fair and consistent approach to these matters. This process of collaboration then leads to informed decisions being made centrally and in partnership, within the context of the whole Synod's resources and expertise.

The key committee in each Area is the **Pastoral Committee**, responsible for dealing with vacancies, interim moderator appointments, concurrence in calls, ordinations and inductions, lay preachers, deployment, support of mission initiatives, grouping, oversight visits, candidates & students, strategic ministries, ecumenical matters, care of ministers (serving and retired; widows and widowers) and CRCWs, resignations, Local Mission and Ministry Review - LMMR, etc. As stated previously, the Pastoral Committees too carry out their work in consultation with the central Ministries Committee and other structures of Synod as necessary.

Because of the need to weigh resources over the whole of the Synod, decisions on deployment of ministry, grants and loans, mission and regeneration projects are made by the relevant Synod Committees, based on recommendations and advice from the SAs.

The Area personnel are:

1. Area Leader
2. Area Administrator
3. Area Treasurer
4. Area Pastoral Committee Convener(s)
5. Area Property Adviser

Each Area is free to set up such committees, working groups or individual co-ordinators or posts as it considers necessary to deal with the concerns of the churches in the Area. In some cases a convener or post-holder works in an informal network with similar personnel from other Areas, co-ordinated at Synod level. Among these other concerns are such things as mission, youth and children's work, church and society, world church, training, etc.

2. United Areas

There are **two** United Areas (**UAs**) made up mainly of Methodist and United Reformed Churches, viz.

1. **Central Sussex United Area (CSUA)** – 27 churches [15 URC or M/URC; 12 Methodist] and
2. **South West Sussex United Area (SWSUA)** – 10 churches [5URC or M/URC; 5 Methodist].

Although these function very much as the other four Synod Areas there are some inevitable differences in the way they work, dependent on the terms of their constitutions. Steps are taken to ensure adequate consultation with those concerned and to keep the Liaison Group with the Methodist South East District informed of developments.

SOUTHERN SYNOD MISSION CRITERIA

[As accepted by the January 2010 Synod]

The Synod (local churches, committees, groups, ministers, Officers and staff, etc.) are committed to supporting, nurturing, encouraging and challenging the local churches in their calling. Several documents have been supported by the Synod in the fulfilment of these roles over the years e.g. The Five Marks of Mission.

However, in January 2010 Synod, under God, has affirmed the following Mission Criteria to further its responsibilities specifically for Southern Synod.

The Criteria are largely in line with the Denomination's Mission Committee's Criteria contained in Vision2020. It is hoped that the document will be a useful tool when getting a church to consider mission.

It has to be stressed that

- a) the document cannot be taken in isolation. It has to go alongside the Synod's Mapping Exercise and the Deployment policy and undergirds all Synod work and thinking;
- b) the process is an evolving one which will require the local church and Synod to reassess what it understands its mission to be in light of the mission criteria.

Equal support has been given by Synod to the "The Synod Priorities" (which aims partly to fulfil the Mission Criteria). This is continually being updated by Synod field staff as the work of the Synod evolves.

This Synod

1. is committed to supporting and resourcing the local churches to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ
2. is committed to caring pastorally for its local churches, ministers and staff
3. is committed to supporting and resourcing local churches to provide relevant, inspiring and engaging worship
4. is committed to looking for new opportunities for being the church in the Synod
5. 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
6. is committed to the proper care and administration of its resources through its personnel, finances and buildings
7. is committed to the wider church of God through the United Reformed Church nationally, ecumenical relationships and the world church
8. is committed to addressing issues of justice, peace and the environment
9. 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.

The local church

1. is committed to encouraging and enabling people to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ
2. is committed to caring for people both inside and outside its own community
3. provides relevant, inspiring and engaging worship which is accessible to people new to church life
4. is outward looking and is actively seeking to reach new people
5. is committed to serving its local community through a variety of programmes and activities
6. is committed to resourcing its life and mission through its personnel, finances and buildings
7. is committed to the wider of church of God through the United Reformed Church nationally, ecumenical relationships and the world church
8. is committed to addressing issues of justice, peace and the environment
9. 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.