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## Synod Council Report

This is my last report to you from Synod Council. We continue to look for new opportunities to be transformed by the Gospel, to make new disciples and to serve the people of the geographical area known as Southern Synod. I want to especially thank those who have walked the way with me on Synod Council over the past 8 ½ years as Moderator for their kindness and patience as I have tried to develop and realise the Synod's vision and strategy through the implementation of the Synod Mission Criteria by offering theological insight, having a clear awareness of priorities, and facilitating open discussion within the synod to produce realistic and agreed objectives.

**Deployment Strategy: receding or reseeding? Being Church, not running church.**

### **1. Church Growth and Development for Southern Synod [Part 1].**

The last time we looked in depth at our deployment strategy was in June 2015. We noted then that the challenge we faced in the URC over the next few years is that there will be about 25% fewer serving ministers available. This is due mainly to retirements but we have seen a gradual number of serving ministers also leave the URC. Alongside that, we acknowledge that we have become a church of fewer members with a higher age profile in about the same number of congregations. Stipendiary ministry is becoming a scarce resource to smaller congregations in almost the same number of local situations.

Southern Synod's current Deployment Policy has seen various revisions since its inception in 2008. The most important of these has been its work on establishing a set of mission criteria and questions in order to make a realistic scoping recommendation. In 2015 Synod Together agreed to place deployment into the hands of the Synod/United Area Pastoral Committees. The recommendation remains largely based on mission opportunities although other factors such as finance, membership and geography are important also as they will tell something of a church's story.

At present Southern Synod has 47 stipendiary ministers to 147 local churches and two mission projects although the figure should be 45. By 2022 the number will be 37.

We know that scoping as we do it now is not sustainable without either creating large pastorates or leaving some churches without ministerial oversight. It is always very difficult to tell a church that they cannot have stipendiary ministry. We have asked some questions both of Synod Ministries Committee and ourselves to help us look at a deployment strategy which takes us to 2022. This is the start of a conversation and a small group will be set up to help us into the future.

## **2. Synod Grants and Loans.**

Synod Council received a full report from the Grants and Loans Task Group with Terms of Reference, a guide to applying for financial support, a flow chart detailing the path that requests for financial assistance will take and a simple application form. The Synod Treasurer will deal with this elsewhere on the agenda.

**3. Partnering with the Presbyterian Church of Korea.** We are pleased that our links with the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) are going from strength to strength and on 23<sup>rd</sup> September we welcomed the Revd. Dr. JunSoo Park to work in a multicultural context in London at St. Andrew's URC, Balham with Synod directed work. Synod Council requests Synod Together to agree that the PCK should our Mission Partner under the URCs Global and Intercultural link.

**Resolution: Synod Together agrees that our URCs Global and Intercultural link be with the Presbyterian Church of Korea.**

## **4. Safeguarding Lead.**

I am pleased to announce that we have appointed a new Safeguarding Lead shared by Thames North Synod. Once references and DBS checks have been done we will inform the churches of the name person and how to contact them.

**5. Moderatorial Vacancy.** A good deal of our time at our last meeting have been spent on discussions around the Moderatorial Vacancy. This will be dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

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