

Synod Ecumenical Officer



How can I help?

To contact the Synod Ecumenical Development Officer please email:

ecumenical@urcsouthern.org.uk

For further information about my role, please read on:

What is offered?



As the United Reformed Church's Denominational Ecumenical Officer (DEO) for the URC Southern Synod my purpose is **to equip local churches for ecumenical encounter** that "they may all be one." The mandate is from John's Gospel where Jesus' calls his followers to unity, "that the world may believe." (John 17:21)

The door shown here is that of the Holy Sepulchre / Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem. The church at that place commemorates the cross and empty tomb of Jesus. Even in such a place unity does not obtain without effort and commitment. My role in Southern Synod includes working within and through the councils of the church **to promote, encourage and undertake ecumenical engagement with the whole people of God.**

My work with local churches and Synod/United Areas, includes offers of help when Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs), Covenanted Partnerships (CPs) and Ecumenical Sharing Agreements are being set up or reviewed. As in the picture (which shows people in conversation with a wide horizon in view) I seek to offer friendly accompaniment.



The ecumenical landscape has changed and Churches Together in England now encourages more flexible patterns of ecumenical cooperation. As part of a network of Ecumenical Officers in the URC and other denominations, I offer advice concerning the possibilities outlined in **Churches Together in England's Toolkit 'A Flexible Framework for Local Unity in Mission'**. These include Working Agreements, Partnership Agreements and Constitutional Agreements. As the toolkit emphasizes, 'local cooperative



working grows out of relationships.' The role of an ecumenical officer is to provide advice where needed, or in answer to questions to point to someone or somewhere that can help. For example, the updated

website of Churches Together in England (www.cte.org.uk) is a good place to look for documents and guidance.

Work with Southern Synod includes deputising for the Moderator on ecumenical matters, giving advice and encouragement where needed, acting as an advocate for ecumenism at all levels and participating in meetings of Synod, including its Ministries Committee, Staff Meetings and Training Team.



Work with the wider United Reformed Church includes attending ecumenical conferences and consultations representing the URC or intermediate bodies. I am Convener of the URC Accreditations Sub-Committee (CRCW/SCM) and in that role I am a member of the URC Ministries Committee.

Along with the Southern Synod Moderator I attend several Church Leaders' meetings including one in Kent and two in London. I participate in the Executive and Big Gatherings of



Churches Together in South London (www.ctslondon.org.uk). In the absence of a County Ecumenical Officer for Sussex, I am CTE's contact person, keeping in touch with Sussex mainly through Central Sussex United Area meetings and meetings with Ecumenical Officers of other denominations. A Methodist/URC Liaison meeting exists between Southern Synod and the Methodist SE District, and from time to time staffing consultative meetings take place between East Kent Synod Area and the Canterbury and East Kent Methodist Circuit.

Local ministry experience complements the role. The task of Synod Ecumenical Officer is combined with local ministry as URC Minister in Ashford, and as a Methodist authorized presbyter in the South Kent Circuit serving two Methodist congregations. In Ashford I work collaboratively with a Methodist presbyter giving oversight to the two congregations that make up the United Church Ashford LEP.



Past ministry also informs my role as an Ecumenical Officer. I have served in four pastorates, all having an ecumenical dimension such as the experience of shared sacramental ministry in an

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Anglican/Methodist/URC LEP, or the four years when I served as a Cathedral Free Church Ecumenical Chaplain. At one time I was a co-chair of a branch of CCJ, and for a decade I was a member of the London Policy Group of

the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel.

I have encouraged overseas ecumenical links in the pastorates I have served, exchanging with the Reformed Church in Hungary and the Presbyterian Church USA, and supporting Methodist links with West Africa.

Fieldwork in Jerusalem and the West Bank, assisted by an invitation to participate in the scholars' program of the Tantur Ecumenical Institute, led to a doctorate from King's College, London, in Ecumenical Theology.

A photograph taken when I was staying at Tantur shows the stairway from the Kidron Valley which it is possible Jesus walked on his way to imprisonment, trial and the cross. It is a reminder of the commitment involved in walking the way of Jesus. The path is not always easy and there are reversals along the way, but mission and ecumenism are at the heart of the gospel. Jesus prayed "may they all be one". It is our task to help fulfil that prayer, "that the world may believe".

