
Synod Council Report

Since Synod Together last convened in October 2019, Synod Council has met 3 times - the first in person on 3 December 2019 and twice by Zoom on 21 May 2020 and 22 September 2020.

- 1. Synod Together** It was very disappointing that the meeting on 13 March had to be cancelled. The focus of that meeting should have been on the current environmental crisis. We don't want to lose sight of this important topic and will be exploring how to raise awareness and encourage action within the Synod.
- 2. New Moderator** We are pleased that having agreed a job description and person specification, interviews were carried out on 15 May involving representatives from the Synod and the national Church. This resulted in the nomination of Revd Bridget Banks to be our new Moderator which was confirmed by Mission Council meeting virtually in July. One cause for concern is that a suitable manse for the Moderator has yet to be purchased.
- 3. New Synod Clerk** An advert was circulated to Churches in our search for a new Synod Clerk and following interview it was agreed to appoint Revd Russell Furley-Smith as the new Synod Clerk for Southern Synod for a period of 5 years (renewable) with effect from 1st October 2020. We are grateful to Purley URC for releasing Russell from 25% of his time there to enable him to take up this post.
- 4. Korean Ministries** Ms So Young Jung's post as Mission Partner has been reviewed and it was agreed to renew her post until 2023. Revd Suk In Lee's post is currently under review and recommendations will be brought to the next Synod Council meeting.
- 5. Training Development Officer** Revd Andy Twilley's post has been reviewed and it was agreed to renew his appointment until 2026. The review team noted the impact that he has had on the Synod including the successful running of the Lay Preacher's courses.
- 6. Rayalaseema** It has now been agreed that the loan originally made to the Diocese of Rayalaseema should now be regarded as a grant since there is no way in which the loan can be repaid to Southern Synod. The Church of South India will administer the funds, awarding grants to the Diocese of Rayalaseema for mission projects. Annual reports have been requested as to how the money is being used.
- 7. Lockdown and Beyond** At our meeting on 21 May there was a lengthy discussion about the consequences for churches resulting from the current pandemic. A letter was subsequently sent out to churches to make an initial assessment of how they viewed their

future. The majority of responses were encouraging. These have been shared with Synod Area pastoral committees.

8. **Mission Projects** Synod Council received a paper on Mission Projects from Martin Hayward, the Synod Mission Development Officer. Developing mission projects where there are clear mission opportunities and people locally with the vision is an exciting alternative to simply closing churches. Explorations are currently taking place at Walton-on-the-Hill where there is the opportunity of working with the school next door, the local Anglican Church and the community. Further work is to be done, particularly to ensure that they don't become resource hungry.
9. **Racial Justice Advocate** Sharon Henriquez has been representing Southern Synod on the national racial justice network across the URC. A number of others are interested in this important area and we are currently seeking to arrange a Zoom meeting to take things forward.

10. **News of Churches:**

West Langdon URC, Dover has closed. Their final service was on 1st December 2019.

Christ Church URC, Leatherhead - They have decided to close their premises at the end of the year. They are exploring to see if a fellowship may continue to meet after that time.

Gomshall URC has closed. Their final service was held on 27th September 2020

St Mark's, Hastings has closed. A closing service was held on 24th May.

We give thanks for the faithful witness of these churches and those who have served in them over the years and hold members and friends of these congregations in our prayers as they find alternative fellowships to join.

11. **Convener** It was agreed that I should continue to serve as Synod Council Convener and a Synod Officer for one year.

Thanks should be expressed to the office staff, field staff and officers who have worked tirelessly in responding to the current crisis. At present there are no plans to re-open the Synod Office.

Our next meeting will be held on 9th December 2020.

Revd George Watt
Convener Synod Council
October 2020

