
Report from Synod Ministries Committee

The theme of this Synod Together is one of CELEBRATION and indeed we have much to celebrate in this jubilee year. Look around and see just how much “ministry” is going on, in so many ways. We hear of this in each Synod Ministries Committee (SMC) and yet so often fail to give thanks and share the good news stories. The everyday, week in week out service offered to God and our communities offered by so many; local ministry, wider ministry, national ministry, international ministry, full time stipendiary ministry and ministry woven like golden threads through work and family commitments. We are mightily blessed by so many folk offering ministry in so many diverse ways.

So, at this Synod Together let us truly reflect on what ministry we see across the Synod. Imagine the faces of those you know who are offering ministry in its manifold diversity – and CELEBRATE and give thanks!

If you eavesdropped into any SMC meeting you would hear of new candidates offering themselves for a variety of recognised ministries, EM2 ministers moving on to EM3 ministry (EM1 are ordinands training, EM2 are ministers in the first three years after leaving training, and EM3 ministers are those who have completed the tasks expected of them in their initial years of ministry). You will also hear of Local Preachers, and Elders, and Special Category Ministers, and a whole host of other ministries. We might not hear of the ministries of local hospitality, or building stewards, or local administrators and a host of other ways of serving, but we know that this is the bedrock of local church life and do give thanks for it.

This is not to say that the Synod Ministries Committee is oblivious to the challenges that face us. Far from it. Much time and energy are exercised in trying to look to the future with realistic hope and vision, and to support churches at the present. Never far from our minds are the realities of local church life. Which is why Deployment still exercises our collective minds.

The Committee are aware that this is set against the national background, and the Church Life Review which is still ongoing. General Assembly (GA) received the update on this (N1) which says “There is a sense that the deployment of stipendiary ministry has become dysfunctional” so we must acknowledge that we in Southern Synod are operating in an imperfect world. With thirteen Synods we have thirteen different responses as each Synod is encouraged to set its own priorities and make difficult decisions in their own context and “resources are what they are”. It was noted in the Ministries Committee report to GA (H1) that the previous way of calculating figures was misleading and a “single, clear basis for calculations of minister numbers” was now in progress. Work in Southern Synod continues to ensure there is good information from each Synod Area to ensure we model this ourselves.

We continue to look at ways our new Synod Policy on Deployment can be shared and understood across the Synod, and the vital role that Interim Moderators play and how they can be better supported.

The Terms of Reference of both the main committee and the Deployment Sub-Group were reviewed at our meeting in July and were agreed at the recent Synod Council meeting and so will appear on the website soon (and indeed may already be there when you read this report).

One major change decided in July was the simplification of Local Preachers Assessments. We give thanks for the number of folk undertaking the Local Preachers Course and rather than a four-fold assessment we decided to move to a simple binary pass/fail assessment, with of course written encouragement and points to consider.

Come
Everyone
Let's
Encourage
Both
Robust
And
Tender
Every-person-ministry

In this year of Jubilee let us CELEBRATE what we have, rather than concentrate on what we do not have, and give thanks to the Lord.

Rev Helen Warmington 29/09/22