

## REPORT FROM SYNOD MINISTRIES

Synod Ministries Committee (SMC) met on 19<sup>th</sup> July at East Croydon, our first meeting in person since the outbreak of the pandemic, and our first with Sue Eardley as Secretary. We said goodbye to Rev Dr Paul Dean as Ecumenical Officer, and congratulated the new Synod Clerk, Martin Hayward, as well as thanking his predecessor Russell Furley Smith who will continue to be invited in his new role as Convenor of Synod Council. As ever we give thanks for the huge amount of service and ministry that does not even make it to such a report such as this, where we bring headlines and broad-strokes.

We noted both the **Synod Deployment Day** in April and the **Ministers Day** in July; opportunities to engage and discuss and discern God's will. The latter was well attended by Local Church Leaders, less so by Stipendiary Ministers of Word and Sacrament, and we explored possible reasons for this without full conclusion.

**Administrative Support** The warmly received request to Council for administration support to areas was raised both at the Deployment Day and at SMC. The Moderator explained it was within the staffing review to ensure appropriate recruitment and support. Some job descriptions had been proposed. If Synod Council have any news on this then Synod Ministries Committee would be happy to receive information (NB it is fully recognised the need is not in all areas but where there is a need this is felt acutely).

**The Days of Prayer** were encouraged, and were encouraging, and will have continued over the summer.

Rev Lance Stone was noted as having transferred back to the URC roll from the Church of Scotland. The possible pioneer ministry at Brighton was welcomed. With the moving on of the SCM SE London Evangelist post holder the decision was confirmed to not seek a replacement.

It was noted that two upcoming Ordinations or Inductions were planned at Cornerstone Uckfield, and Hassocks, Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath.

The reports from the Pastoral Committees brought a range of issues, with joys and challenges. Some fellowships are struggling to comprehend and cope with the responsibilities of good governance, including financial, safeguarding, and buildings. Help is available from the Synod Officers and it was noted it is better to ask for help than just ignore or go off on a tangent. When things go wrong it puts extra pressure on the Pastoral Committees. Some issues are very time consuming, some require high levels of diplomacy and, at times, confidentiality.

The situation at Giggs Hill is ongoing, as is the issue of a Certificate of Limited Service.

Both **WKESA** and **EKESA** had voted to join together to create a single Synod AREA, subject of course to Synod Council agreement; this was, however, warmly commended by SMC.

The initial review of the **Synod Policy on Lay Presidency** raised some concern that we are not entirely in step with the more recent decisions of General Assembly. So we were delighted that the national Sec for Ministries, Nicola Furley Smith, accepted an invitation to come and speak at our meeting. This proved very helpful, and the policy will be further reviewed at the next SMC meeting, probably again in the Spring, so that a revised policy can be brought to Synod Together in 2024. Further to SMC a small group met to discuss the implications on **Lay Preaching and Worship Leading** in the Synod, which is not covered by a separate Synod Policy but where common use and understanding of terms will be helpful going forward.

Two **Sabbaticals** were approved. Hopefully short reflections will be included in next years The Gathering.

The current Convenor of SMC was appointed for a further term.

**Pastoral care** – A short discussion took place. Many in Ministry are feeling tired and lacking in support. Although raised at Synod Council any solution is unlikely to fit all ministers in all situations. Some ideas were proposed as follows:

- Many ministers set up a support network of lay, family, friends to call upon.
- Local / Area ministers meetups for coffee / lunch can ease stress, share ideas.
- Meeting ecumenically makes it clear you are not alone.
- Independent pastoral supervision (e.g., CMCS) is arranged by most ministers.
- LCLs don't have supervision but may need similar support sessions.
- "Good mates and access to counselling".
- Synod Pastoral support role ceased after one term – no reflection on David Skitt but the model did not work.
- Spring School. Gatherings, other events brining ministers together.
- Retired Ministers can be hard to track down.
- All are aware life is difficult; - We are all companions on the journey one with another so - Give and receive pastoral support to each other.