

Southern Synod
Autumn Synod Together Meeting, Saturday 18th October 2025
East Croydon URC - 10.30am to 1.00pm

Southern Synod Ministries Committee

Report to Autumn Synod Together October 2025

Introduction

The Southern Synod Ministries Committee (SMC) meets quarterly to receive reports from the Synod/United Pastoral Committees, from 'Field' officers, the Students and Candidates Committee, Lay Preaching Advocate and the Deployment Sub-Group. We note and interpret for Synod churches the decisions and policies from General Assembly National Ministries Committee and Synod Council, and encourage engagement with and between local churches to discern their mission and vision.

Simon Loveitt, CRCW in Brockley, was appointed Convenor in March 2025, and led the meeting in July. With the appointment of Jo Patterson as Mission and Discipleship Officer and Charisa Hunter-Crump as Training and Development Officer the committee is at full strength pending appointment of the Moderator.

Pioneer and Ecumenical posts

Our meetings in April and then July explored the opportunities available from General Assembly's development of Ecumenical and Pioneer posts, and Areas are working up proposals to enable swift agreement and submission of an application should the opportunity arise.

Sacraments Policy

After a long period of development this revised policy reflects national policy, and has been discussed at SMC, agreed by Synod Council and is being presented to Synod Together

Deployment Sub Committee

The Deployment sub-committee has continued to oversee the rollout of spiritual leadership training for elders, with all areas now having hosted sessions. Our new TDO, Charisa will be incorporating the elder training into her future programme.

Visionary Companions (VCs) continue to support those churches in transition from a Minister to explore the model of future leadership. Every church is different in its situation and the support it needs in terms of mission, spiritual leadership and practical action to thrive. With the appointment of the MDO and TDO, valuable feedback from churches and a development day in September, work is in hand to strengthen the process for identifying, matching and supporting VCs and churches as they approach and undergo the period of transition.

Deployment Policy Review

Three years on from agreement of the Synod Deployment Policy it is appropriate to review what is working well and any gaps, including how it is communicated to local churches.

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A task and finish group comprising field officers and a representative from each Synod Area has met to review the current policy, and identify gaps and is working on a revised policy.

Priorities for SMC

In the light of the Synod strategy, in April the committee reviewed its priorities following a list generated in October 2024. The emerging theme was “Sharing Joy” with element around

- Communications
- Equipping the Saints
- Supporting local churches
- Links with wider local communities
- Experience Explaining Expression
- Managing compliance.

Lay preaching

The Training and Development Officer, Charisa, has been working with the Lay Preaching team to develop a locally recognised worship leader course, based on StepWise, starting in 2026 and has already had several expressions of interest. There is a lay preacher training day on October 11th led by Charisa

The database of lay preachers has been refreshed and is now being maintained by the Secretary to Ministries to enable both central and local communication. Details of Pulpit Supply Secretaries are also now available and the list is being updated regularly. A briefing for the role has been drafted both for support to those in the role and clarification of elders responsibilities in overseeing the provision of worship.

Children and Young People

The committee receives regular reports on the work Tom Hackett is doing with our young people, and the provision by Tom of fully funded (free) Youth Mental Health First Aid training to any members of Southern Synod is an excellent opportunity for churches to provide practical support and understanding to those young people in our communities.

The committee was delighted to note the appointment of Tawonga Mtika from Gillingham URC as Southern Synod Youth Executive representative taking over from Zeerak Shahbaz who was in the post for two years.

Safeguarding

The Interim Safeguarding Officer for Thames North and Southern Synod areas has provided the committee with valuable updates on her work and it is good news that she remains in the Synod having been appointed as Southern Synod's own safeguarding officer.

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Synod areas

Area reports provide an opportunity for the committee to hear the experiences of local churches. Many are in transition without permanent ministers and the Field Officers and Administrators are providing valuable support in the short term to identify opportunities for mission and support for practical needs pending a more focused structural review of the resources and support needed...

Sue Eardley - Secretary to SMC, 5th October 2025