

WEST THAMESMEAD COMMUNITY CHURCH

Back in 2016, in reviewing the ecumenical landscape in Thamesmead, our then Moderator, the Revd Nicola Furley-Smith, with the Anglican Archdeacon and Methodist Chair for that area at that time, felt that part of Thamesmead was not being well served by the Church. In Southern Synod, there was a fund available for mission in that part of London, and the decision was taken to set up a 5-year “pioneer” project, led by the URC, to develop a fresh expression of ecumenical church in the West area of Thamesmead.

The Revds Sally and Andrew Willett were called to this ministry and West Thamesmead Community Church was planted in 2017. Initially, activities were run from the Manse, but they soon moved to the local Primary School for their Sunday afternoon meeting. From there the church has grown and developed.

West Thamesmead Community Church is now an established local church and entering a new phase of life. It is moving from its status of “project” to “church” in its relationship with the denominations who began the mission. After conversations with the Diocesan Ecumenical Advisor, this transition is effectively made by West Thamesmead Community Church being seen wholly as a URC rather than seeking to be constituted as a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP). They would still be part of the wider Thamesmead ecumenical framework¹ but would only be responsible to the URC.

This decision has been led by the URC continued commitment to West Thamesmead Community Church with the provision of ministry to the church in a joint pastorate with Charlton URC, and the recent successful application of West Thamesmead Community Church to the Synod’s Strategic Mission Fund. However, it also relates to the complexity of constituting a LEP in this situation, and, at this time, there not being the right support available in all our ecumenical partners to complete this work. In addition, we are in the fortunate position that when West Thamesmead Community Church was planted, the URC recognised it as a church from day one giving it a church number! This was not reciprocated by our ecumenical partners in Thamesmead.

This proposal comes with the support of the Bishop of Woolwich, the Archdeacon of Lewisham and Greenwich, and the Circuit Superintendent of the Lesnes Abbey Methodist Circuit.

We bring this resolution to Synod Together, therefore, to give thanks for the journey that has led West Thamesmead Community Church to this point and to allow an administrative change in how the church is recognised in the wider URC.

Resolution:

Southern Synod gives thanks for the ecumenical work in Thamesmead and the partnerships that enabled the planting of West Thamesmead Community Church. As

¹ The Thamesmead ecumenical framework has evolved over the life of ecumenical partnerships in Thamesmead. It relates to how the mainstream denominations work collaboratively across Thamesmead, with the three churches (West Thamesmead Community Church, St Paul’s Church and the Church of the Cross) supporting and seeking each other’s wellbeing as together they serve the people of Thamesmead.

West Thamesmead Community Church establishes itself formally as a local church, the Synod recognises it wholly as a local church of the United Reformed Church, while still being part of the wider Thamesmead ecumenical framework.

Revd Dr Elaine Colechin, South London Synod Area Leader

Revd Cristina Cipriani, Ecumenical Officer for Southern Synod

Frank Liddell, a Director (URC Representative) of the Thamesmead Christian Community