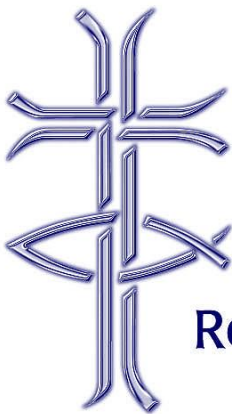


**Thames North Synod**

**ANNUAL  
COMMITTEE  
REPORTS  
2010**



*The*  
**United  
Reformed  
Church**

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## MODERATOR

### REPORT

Most people in regular jobs have an annual appraisal and Moderators are no different in this respect at least! Following my appraisal in 2010 Richard Mortimer (Deputy General Secretary) said, "you seem to be much more at peace and on the top of things" and that is how I feel as I reflect on the year but it was good to hear my evaluation confirmed! For me, the last year can be marked as one of consolidation and completion of a number of tasks and initiatives undertaken in previous years.

It was a great joy to lead twelve induction services in this one year. What a magnificent number! This means most declared vacancies are filled. In addition, I enjoyed leading and participating in many services, particularly a number of anniversary services and other celebrations. In all, this year, I have shared worship with about 40 congregations across the Synod. Also there have been visits to projects and other special gatherings.

All the Synod staff posts had been filled by the end of 2010. I am delighted in the creation of the Transitional Ministry post and more recently the renewal of the Urban Churches Support Group post. Revd Carole Elphick has been appointed Transitional Minister and we will induct her at the March Synod Meeting. Revd John Campbell was selected in 2010 for the Urban Churches Support Group and will take up his appointment later this year. My thanks go to Sandra Ackroyd who previously held the post and has done a tremendous work. Our churches are privileged to have a highly committed and qualified staff team to serve and support them.

A new feature was the gathering of ordained ministers in October for fellowship and sharing joy and concerns. The highly positive response this event received has led to us arranging a residential in 2011. I look forward to a constructive and meaningful engagement with ministers who play a crucial role in the mission and ministry of the Church.

I enjoy a good working relationship with the Synod Committees and Groups, particularly the Area Committees, and the people who serve on them. It is a great encouragement to hear comments that my presence, perspectives and advice are much appreciated. It is good to hear these expressions of trust and goodwill. Much of the work of the committees depends on the individuals and their voluntary service, which I value highly. However, the number of meetings which I attended is still very high (nearly 300) and I am seeking to address this issue.

The Moderator's Consultation, which was held on 8 May 2010, reflected on Synod's 4<sup>th</sup> goal "Foster a greater sense of covenantal belonging to the Synod by the local churches." The Synod's organisational structures along with 142 independent congregations can be challenging to the effective coordination between Mission and Management and in humanising the bureaucracy involved. However, I am encouraged to see even small steps being taken to reduce duplication and to increase coordination and communication between committees. The stewardship of God's resources of time, talent and money should undergird all our work.

The staff team have begun to use a God-centred contemplative approach to their meetings. It is a process developed by Mark Yaconelli, co-director of the Youth Ministry and Spirituality Project (YMSP) for running Christian business meetings. Experience has shown that when quality time is given to focus on God at the beginning of a meeting, the rest of the business gets done faster and quality of discussion improves. I recommend you try it.

The Synod has about 100 serving ministers (stipendiary and non-stipendiary) and lay-leaders all of whom need pastoral care for themselves. Providing this to such a significantly large number is demanding in both time and energy, it requires huge commitment but the rewards are also great. I believe our Synod has one of the best systems of pastoral care there is. However, in our growingly litigious society, there is increasing pressure to document telephone conversations, visits, the content of discussions and advice given as a proof of providing care, lest we are challenged. It is the sad but unavoidable fact that time spent on documentation reduces the time available for actual care.

It was a pleasure to be invited to write some Bible Studies for Reform and the first one appeared in December 2010. I count it a great honour to have been invited to be Moderator of the CTBI Mission Network. These two things in particular have made it essential for me find time to reflect on the Bible and on mission. This has been interesting and a real help to me in my work for the Synod.

2010 was a good year but it is over and as I reflect on past blessings I look forward with joyful anticipation to the things God is going to do in and through his people. Thank you all for your commitment to the work of the Kingdom of God, we are all vital to God's plan, each has a part to play.

*Andrew Prasad  
Moderator  
February 2011*

## SYNOD EXECUTIVE

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

- Act for Synod between Synod Meetings
- Ensure Synod Meeting decisions are implemented
- Act as managing trustee for synod funds and resources
- Act as employer for all synod staff
- Receive and act on reports, requests and resolutions affecting the synod from the wider church, including our ecumenical partners
- Support the Moderator, synod officers and synod committees as appropriate
- Review the terms of reference and objectives of synod committees and appointments
- Approve an annual a budget
- Monitor the spending of all committees which have delegated powers to make grants and loans from synod funds
- Approve the accounts and forward them to the Synod Meeting for receipt
- Initiate activities to help the work of the synod.

### MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE 2010

#### **Ex officio**

- The Synod Moderator
- The Synod Treasurer
- The Synod Assistant Treasurer

#### **Appointed by Synod**

- Ms Nneoma Chima
- Revd Maggie Hindley
- Mrs Georgina Siriboe
- Revd Jane Wade

#### **Elected**

- Revd David Bradburn
- Revd John Danso (*from March 2010*)
- Mr Andrew Glennie
- Mr Andrew Jack (*Minuting Secretary*)
- Mr Stephen Lane (*to March 2010*)
- Revd John Macaulay (*to March 2010*)
- Mr Keith Webster (Convenor)
- Mr Adrian West (*from March 2010*)

#### **In attendance**

- The Synod Clerk

### REPORT

The Synod Executive met five times in the year – four all day Saturday meetings in February, April, June and September and an evening meeting in November. The Executive has been aware of the gap that now exists between the Synod as an organisation and the local churches and so in September there was a new approach to the choice of venue for the meetings. The Saturday meetings will be held in each Area in turn and the agenda has been changed to include a meeting with the Area. This provides an opportunity for a joint meeting with not just members of the Area Committee but also representatives from the local churches. This joint meeting enables the Executive to learn at first-hand about the issues facing the churches in that Area and for the Area to learn about the role of the Executive. Over the course of eighteen months each Area will have been visited. This first meeting in September was in Chiltern Area and by the time I shall be writing the 2011 report five Areas will have been visited.

In past reports there has always been a statement on the lines of “*the Synod Goals continue to underpin our work*” followed by a listing of those goals. In May

the Moderator held the second consultation on the Synod's mission and goals and this was attended by the Committee Conveners and the Executive. The Executive had previously reviewed its role in this area and confirmed that it should be a "mission enabler" to ensure the availability of resources to encourage, facilitate and support the mission of the church within the Synod. This is a wide ranging brief within the context of mission to which can be added the implications and actions set out in "Bread to Spare" and Vision 2020.

### **Staffing and Personnel**

There were two changes in the membership of the Executive in March. Stephen Lane and John Macaulay each came to the end of their three year term and, as they did not stand for re-election, we welcomed John Danso and Adrian West as the two new members.

There was one departure amongst the staff during the year when in October Carla Watts retired and the Synod expresses its thanks for her work in providing advice and guidance on HR matters to both the Synod and local churches. In the future such matters will be handled using in-house expertise.

### **Finance**

The Executive agreed the accounts for the past year and the budget for the coming year.

### **Island House Community Centre**

The Executive, as the Island House Trustees, continues to take a close interest in the activities of the Centre in order to provide the appropriate level of support.

The Synod continues to face many challenges but we must continue to respond as God's people knowing that with God's help we can continue to take forward His message in our Synod.

*Keith G. Webster  
Convenor, Synod Executive  
February 2011*

## ECUMENICAL COMMITTEE

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

- Promoting local and regional ecumenism
- Providing expert advice on ecumenical administration
- Approving LEP constitutions, local covenants and sharing agreements on behalf of the Synod
- Encouraging ecumenical church planting
- Offering training events
- Making grants (within an agreed budget) to Sponsoring Bodies and ecumenical partnerships such as chaplaincies and sponsored posts

### MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE 2010

#### *Ex officio*

- The Synod Moderator
- The Synod Clerk
- The Synod Ecumenical Officer (convenor)
- Six regional ecumenical officers relating to the Ecumenical Sponsoring Bodies within the Synod:
  - Churchlink West London
  - Churches Together in North Thames,
  - Churches Together in East London (including Essex)
  - Churches Together in Hertfordshire
  - Bedfordshire Ecumenical Committee
  - Churches Together in Buckinghamshire
- Ecumenical Borough Deans:
  - Revd Tim Clarke (*Islington*)
  - Revd Brian Davison (*Redbridge*)
  - Revd Jonathan Dean (*Camden*)
  - Revd Hugh Graham (*Tower Hamlets*)
  - Revd John Macaulay (*Hackney*)
  - Revd Lythan Nevard (*Havering*)
  - Revd Michael (*Barnet*)
  - Revd David Varcoe (*Harrow*)

### REPORT

The committee continues its work to provide the necessary support and encouragement to existing Local Ecumenical Projects (LEPs) within Thames North Synod, a large part of this work is done in conjunction with Revd Bernie Collins who is employed as the Ecumenical Officer of Churches Together North Thames. This involves looking over and giving approval (on behalf of the Synod) to changes and revisions to LEP constitutions, and providing advice and encouragement for the formation of new LEPs where appropriate.

Additionally it keeps in contact and liaises with the County Ecumenical Officers within the Thames North Synod area and with our own ecumenical representatives on those ecumenical bodies. Earlier this year the Synod Ecumenical Officer also represented the Moderator in the interview process for a minister for the new ecumenical church plant at Wixams in Bedfordshire, and will be representing him at the induction on 6 February.

The committee remains anxious to establish a pool of those willing to participate in LEP reviews, and ask that each Area Committee identify a group of two or three (or more) people who would be willing to undertake this task on behalf of the Synod. Training will be made available, particularly for those who have not previously had experience of this valuable work.

*Hugh Graham*  
*Synod Ecumenical Officer & Convenor of Committee*  
*February 2010*

## FINANCE COMMITTEE

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee has responsibility for recommending financial strategy, policy and including internal controls in respect of all Synod Assets.

Responsibility for

- decisions on the management, sale and letting of the premises of closed churches,
- decisions on the purchase, sale and letting of dwellings for Synod purposes; and decisions on other properties in which the Synod has a financial interest
- the arrangement of insurance on all Synod properties, public liability and if appropriate, employer's liability insurance.
- the arrangement of loans for the purchase of cars and computers for use by ministers serving in the Synod.
- the investment of moneys in the Synod's Funds and Retired Ministers Housing Charity
- and for recommending a reserves policy for each fund or charity.
- the preparation of annual accounts for the various funds and in consultation with other committees a budget for the following year. Seek approval of Synod to the Budget
- the determination of allocation of expenditure between the various funds and charity.
- keeping the Welfare Committee informed of resources available for its use.
- determining the rate of interest to be payable on interest bearing loans made or to be made.
- specifying the terms on which grants and loans are made available and reporting of progress.
- it undertakes (with the assistance of Area Committees) the day to day management and maintenance of closed churches

### MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE 2010

#### ***Ex officio***

Synod Moderator  
 Synod Treasurer (*Convenor*)  
 Synod Clerk  
 Synod Assistant Treasurer  
 Synod Accountant (*in attendance*)

#### ***Appointed by Synod*** (*for expertise in finance and trust matters*)

Mr Peter Freeman  
 Mr Bob Marshall  
 Mr Tony Obi-Exekpazu  
 Revd Edward Sanniez  
 Mrs Christine Standring

### REPORT

The committee met on five occasions during the year dealing with most of the matters listed above the main responsibilities being as follows.

#### **Accounts and Budgets**

The 2009 accounts were prepared in their statutory format and finally approved by the Executive in June and accepted by Synod at the November meeting.

Like many former excepted charities the Synod had to formally register with the Charity Commission and this was achieved in April.

The committee presented a budget to Synod for 2010 which was approved and continued to monitor that during the year and presented an updated version in November with a forecast for the year. The likely final outcome for 2010 will show a

better result than budget, or forecast, and again although there will be a deficit on our normal income and expenditure this deficit will be covered by special receipts not anticipated at the beginning of the year.

The financial activities are now being monitored with the assistance of management accounts on a quarterly basis.

Discussions have been ongoing during the year as to how we deal with the resources available to us and to create a meaningful Reserves Policy.

### **Properties**

It has been a busy year for property transactions with the former church and the manse at Bushey being transferred to the Synod, two major property sales, the transfer of one property from the retired ministers pool of properties, the purchase of several and major works on others.

We have continued to monitor these properties and deal with matters as they arise, with the assistance of the Trust office, and where appropriate, rent reviews.

### **Inter Synod Resource Sharing**

We continue to contribute in what has become quite a detailed exercise. Obtaining information from 13 Synods, all structured in different ways, and reporting in a meaningful format to help us understand the needs of each other has proved difficult. Nevertheless the work continues and we make what we believe is a fair contribution and for several Synods they would not be able to afford even basic facilities without these voluntary arrangements. We are moving into another stage of discussions to see how these arrangements can be sustained in the longer term.

### **Investments**

During the year we have reinvested part of the cash funds available in anticipation of getting a better return on income and some protection from the effect of inflation. We have also acquired four new properties, three for post holders and one for a minister at Wixams to support an ecumenical initiative in a new development.

### **Other matters**

We responded to the appeal for financial support to the ministers' pension fund and £48k was sent in 2010 and a promise of £96k for each of the next two years. Consideration has also been given to a request for assistance with retirement housing and that will be met by loans or the equivalent.

With a considerable amount of property and other activity within the Synod it was agreed we now needed professional advice for our insurance cover and a broker has been appointed and we look forward to better cover and cheaper premiums.

### **Thanks**

Our thanks are due to Jean Wyber for the care and attention she gives as Synod Accountant and to all the members of the committee for sharing their expertise and common sense. A special thanks to Christine Standing who has completed her term on the committee and will be standing down.

*Brian Hosier  
Synod Treasurer and Convenor of Committee  
February 2011*

## GRANTS, LOANS AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee taking into account of the views of Area Committees with regard to any proposal appearing to have ecumenical, mission or pastoral implications, deals on behalf of the Synod with requests from local churches arising under the URC property trusts for approval for

- alterations to their premises,
- the sale or letting of any part of church premises,
- the sale, purchase or letting of manses, and
- the release of funds held in trust

As part of the management of Synod funds, and in accordance with Charity Commission schemes, the Committee acts on behalf of the Synod Executive to make grants and loans for building projects within an agreed budget.

Specifying within the parameters set by the Finance Committee the terms on which grants and loans are made available by the Committee and reporting of progress.

It undertakes the day to day management and maintenance of dwellings held for occupation for Synod purposes and of retirement housing, including the authorisation of such repairs as the Committee considers appropriate.

### MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE 2010

#### **Ex officio**

The Synod Moderator  
 The Synod Clerk  
 The Synod Treasurer  
 The Assistant Treasurer  
 The Synod Property Development  
 Worker

#### **In attendance**

The Synod Surveyor  
 The Listed Buildings Advisory  
 Committee Convener

Mr David Eldridge (*Convenor*)

Mr Mike Gould (*Secretary*)

Miss Cynthia Brown

*(Minuting secretary)*

#### **Elected**

John Payne (A)

Douglas Hogge (B)

*Vacant* (C)

Philip Read (D)

Edward Webber (E)

James Laurie (F)

### REPORT

Our budget for 2010, for grants to churches for small works, was £70,000. The sum remaining in the fund for facilities for the disabled was £10,275. In addition a special budget of £50,000 had been provided for pilot studies in connection with the scheme for the Synod's Renewal Strategy for our churches. In January 2010 we invited churches, in an article in 'Property Matters', to take part in a pilot aimed at testing how the recommendations in the Renewal Strategy document could be put into practice. Two Areas came forward with suggestions of groups of churches who may wish to take part in pilot studies. This work will continue into 2011 as will the budget offered for this work.

During 2010 the committee agreed grants to six churches in the sum of £63,000 plus £10,000 from the fund to provide facilities for the disabled. Loans were offered to five churches totalling £261,000.

Advice was offered to nine churches regarding plans for long term redevelopment of their buildings.

Release of funds held by Thames North Trust, was authorised on behalf of 15 churches, for a total of £1,430,000. Included in this total were the funds to purchase a manse and for three churches major repair costs.

In respect of repairs to Synod owned houses, repairs were authorised at a cost of £30,000 and for homes held under a separate charity for retired ministers' housing, £5,000

Lease arrangements for six churches, mainly to pre school groups, were authorised.

*Mike Gould*  
*Secretary*  
*January 2011*

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GROUP

### TERMS OF REFERENCE:

Recruitment and selection for leadership

Training (initial and continuing education) for leadership

Recommending a policy to the Synod Meeting for the deployment of leadership resources and monitoring its implementation

Enrichment of leadership vocations

Setting the Synod's training and leadership development strategy

Providing opportunities for sharing new thinking, theological reflection and emerging trends in ministry

Operating within agreed budgets

Overseeing and caring for candidates for the ministry and determining their eligibility for a call

Maintaining the Section O Synod Panel – the convener of LDG and the Synod Clerk are responsible for appointing Mandated Groups when a complaint against a minister warrants referral to the Section O process

Appointing non-stipendiary ministers on the recommendation of the relevant Area Committee

Accrediting lay preachers

Receiving the resignation of ministers and deciding upon appropriate action

Overseeing and supporting the work of the Training and Development Officer

Overseeing and supporting the work of the Silence & Retreats Coordinator

Overseeing and supporting the work of the Health and Healing Adviser

Overseeing and supporting the work of the Youth & Children's Work Development Officer

Receiving regular reports from the Area Committees and reporting their actions (declarations of vacancies, concurrence with calls, etc.) to the churches of the synod on a quarterly basis

Hearing representations from churches wishing to appeal against a decision of an Area Committee.

### MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE 2010

#### **Ex officio:**

Synod Moderator  
 Synod Clerk  
 Synod Treasurer  
 Candidates' Secretary  
 Training and Development Officer  
 TLS Coordinator  
 Lay Preaching Coordinator  
 Children & Youth Development Officer

Revd Dr Tony Haws (*Convenor*)  
 Mr Adrian West (*Secretary*) (to June 2010)  
 Mr Tony Thomas (*Secretary*)(from June 2010)

#### **Appointed by Areas**

Mr Tony Alderman (A)  
 Revd Edward Sanniez (B)  
 Vacant (C)  
 Mr Andrew Jack (D)  
 Revd Hugh Graham (E)  
 Revd Phil Nevard (F)

### REPORT

LDG was pleased to have a Training and Development Officer (TDO) in post after a long vacancy. The Revd Anne Sardeson started on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2010 enabling LDG to engage more actively in several projects that had been progressing very slowly.

Adrian West resigned as Secretary to LDG after a very long term in office. LDG members were very sorry to lose him and his extensive wisdom and knowledge. Fortunately Tony Thomas has taken up the post of Secretary. Following Anne Sardeson's appointment as TDO the Revd Phil Nevard has replaced her as the representative from Roding Area.

The Deployment Group completed its initial task and produced a draft report which was discussed at the September meeting of LDG. A slightly revised report was approved by LDG and Executive and distributed at the November Synod with the opportunity for some preliminary discussion. The report has been sent to local churches for consideration and will be discussed in greater depth at the March 2011 Synod.

A paper on Local Church Leadership was discussed at LDG during the Autumn. A revised version was produced for discussion at the March 2011 Synod.

LDG has recognised for some time the importance of implementing General Assembly proposals for Local Mission and Ministry Review. The TDO attended the URC meeting on LMMR in October and was able to report on progress in other Synods which was very variable but two or three Synods had made substantial progress in implementing the proposals. LDG decided that the size of the LMMR project required a strong steering group to design and implement a scheme for Thames North Synod. A steering group has been appointed with the intention that it should produce a report for consideration by Synod in the summer/autumn 2011.

Following the introduction of a new clause in the model Terms of Settlement concerning 'Renegotiation and Review' and taking account of points raised by the Deployment Sub-Group and in discussions by LDG on LMMR it was agreed that there should be greater consistency in setting Terms of Settlement. The Revd Hugh Graham was appointed to take responsibility for this task on behalf of LDG.

Following the success of the 'Joy in Service' Elders' Conference held in 2009, two Elders' Training Days were held in 2010. Over the two days about 145 Elders attended confirming that this was a very worthwhile activity. Plans were set in motion to hold a second weekend conference for Elders. This will be held at High Leigh in March 2011.

There has been a continuing strong interest in Training for Learning and Serving. The TDO and LDG continue to promote this programme which will be a key element for the training and development of Local Church Leaders.

LDG has continued to fulfil its key responsibilities for training Ministers under EM1, 2,3 and the TDO has given priority to promoting and adding breadth to this important activity.

LDG has noted that there is some demand for the recognition of Lay Preachers who are valued by local churches but not nationally accredited. Work is in hand to agree and establish a form of Synod accreditation.

*Revd Dr Tony Haws  
Convenor of LDG  
21 February 2011*

## MINISTRY AND MISSION COMMITTEE

### TERMS OF REFERENCE:

- To ensure that the synod achieves its M&M target through the application of a synod-wide formula based on the income and reserves of the churches
- To notify each church of its requested contribution
- To negotiate with those churches that ask for a reconsideration of this figure
- To receive information on changes to Assembly M&M policy and advise the Synod Meeting or its committees as appropriate
- To encourage churches that fail to meet their target, in consultation with the Synod Moderator, Area Committee and/or Synod Pastoral Consultants, as appropriate.

### MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE 2010

#### **Ex officio:**

Synod Moderator  
 Synod Clerk  
 Synod Treasurer  
 Assistant Synod Treasurer (*Convenor*)

#### **Appointed by Areas**

Mr Vic Russell (A)  
 Mr W Klesel (B)  
*Vacant* (C)  
 Mr Trevor Hahn (D) (*until March 2010*)  
 Mr Keith Berry (E)  
 Mr Mike Gould (F)

#### **In attendance**

Synod Accountant (*secretary*)

### REPORT

The Committee continues to be very grateful to the generous giving of the churches in the Synod to the Ministry and Mission Fund of the United Reformed Church. We would also like to thank church treasurers for providing the information we need to do our work. We appreciate that some of the deadlines are rather tight.

In 2010 our churches raised £2,272,705 for the fund. This was £16,045 less than we had hoped and came about because churches either found themselves in financial difficulties and had to adjust their giving or in the case of LEPs (Local Ecumenical Partnerships) needed to switch their contributions to another denomination following a change of supply of stipendiary ministry. The shortfall would have been greater but for the additional giving by those churches who received legacies in the year. £16,000 is equivalent to half the gross cost of a stipend and if the trend continues then the number of stipendiary ministers the URC is able to sustain will necessarily fall.

During the year we reluctantly said farewell to Trevor Hahn who is now training for ministry and welcomed Bill Klesel from West London. We hope that we will be able to welcome appointees from Chiltern and St Albans in 2011.

In the spring of 2010 we organised meetings around the Synod for church treasurers majoring on the subject of "The Synod Formula" which were well attended but covering other subjects of concern and relevance to local church finances. These have been repeated in 2011 and again have attracted a good number of people. There are lively question and answering sessions which help us all to understand the problems facing both churches and Synods.

*Jean Wyber*  
 Secretary  
 22 February 2011



for the Synod.

The URC has continued to invest in the chaplaincy in London Metropolitan University. This work is being extended to take a broader view of the role of a Reformed church chaplaincy to students in London. Some financial support has also been given to the University of Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire University and Bucks Chiltern University. MIG is learning more of the breadth of our university chaplaincy work and its challenges.

Our new chaplain at Heathrow was inducted at the start of the year. This chaplain is a member of a team long established at Heathrow but will give especial attention to vulnerable people there including those in detention centres. Financial support has also been given to the chaplaincy at Luton Airport. The Herts and Beds Industrial Chaplaincy continues its cutting edge work.

The Interfaith Chaplaincy has continued to build relations with people of other faiths with a growing interest in the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. It is also providing advice and support to others in the Synod and the Synod itself on inter-faith issues.

We were successful in securing an additional Special Category Minister for "transitional ministry". Again MIG is pushing out the mission boat to enable congregations which need help in moving into a mission focus during a period of change. We believe that this is an exciting innovation, recognising that churches which confront their challenges through the Spirit can find a new future in the Gospel.

MIG owes a debt of gratitude to the various support and management groups which we have set up, the Chaplains, Advisors and Pastors who we support. Thanks go to all the committee members and the Synod staff and volunteers who are so helpful to us.

MIG is supporting work of vital importance and proactively seeking to engage the church with the wider mission of the church in the world. Leaving 2010 behind us, MIG is looking forward to taking forward the mission of the church in London and its surrounding areas by supporting the commitment of the Synod to the Vision 2020 process.

*Revd Vaughan Jones,*

*Convenor*

*February 2010*

## NOMINATIONS

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

To keep the list of committee members and other synod appointees, with a record of the date of each appointment and its expiry date

To acquire job descriptions for each post

To circulate lists of forthcoming vacancies to the churches and Area Committees so that names can be suggested (and ensuring that job descriptions are posted on the synod website)

To identify suitable people to serve in each of the appointed posts as vacancies arise and ascertain their willingness to accept nomination

To present a list of nominees to the Synod Meeting for appointment.

### MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE 2010

#### **Ex officio**

Synod Moderator  
 Synod Clerk  
 Two Racial Justice Advocates  
*Presently* Revd John Danso  
                   Revd Shahbaz Javed  
 Disability Coordinator (*vacant*)

#### **Members**

Mr Adrian West (Convenor)

#### **Appointed by Areas**

Mrs Sue Russell (A)  
 Mrs Jackie Haws (B) (*Secretary*)  
*Vacant* (C)  
 Revd Derek Jones (D)  
 Mrs Eleanor Boateng (E)  
 Miss Joy Sadler (F)

### REPORT

Please read this! The work of Nominations Committee may not seem very exciting, but it is vital, and we need your help.

Our central task is to find suitable people willing to serve the Synod in a variety of ways, for appointment by Synod. Last year was a very heavy one for us, because a large number of positions to which appointments for three years' service were made in March 2008 were about to become vacant. As explained in my report last year, in order to cope with this we have had to make the assumption that people should be reappointed for a second term if we knew of no reason to the contrary. We would like to thank very warmly all those who have served for the last three years, and all who have been willing to let their names go forward for service in the future.

Our task is not an easy one. We can only fill a vacancy if somebody tells us that it exists, and we can only nominate people we know or have been told about. It is therefore very important for the ongoing work of all our committees that each Area Committee should select a suitable representative to join us (due to retirements, no fewer than four Areas currently need to appoint new representatives!) and that they should take seriously their responsibility to submit to us the names of any suitable people in their churches.

Those who serve our Synod by filling posts or sitting on committees are not people who belong to an exclusive club, "insiders" – they are people like you. Nothing pleases Nominations Committee more than to learn for the first time of someone

willing to use their experience or abilities in this way. Do not be shy about coming forward!

Finally, I should like to pay tribute to the hard work of the committee's secretary, Mrs Jackie Haws, who has now retired. So far we have not been able to find anyone to succeed her, and I should be most grateful for suggestions as to whom we might approach.

*Adrian West*  
*Convenor*  
*20<sup>th</sup> February 2011*

## YOUTH & CHILDREN'S WORK COMMITTEE

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

- To promote youth and children's work across the synod
- To plan synod events for youth and children
- To agree grants to local churches and groups of churches for activities or projects relating to children and young people
- To set and oversee the strategy for the YCWDO
- To offer training and support to youth and children's workers
- To disseminate information from the Assembly youth and children's work offices
- To liaise with uniformed organisations and Pilots
- To oversee Good Practice
- To recruit representatives for FURY Assembly
- To operate within an agreed budget

### MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE 2010

#### *Ex officio*

Synod Moderator  
 Synod Clerk  
 Synod Treasurer  
 Children & Youth Development Officer  
 Synod Youth Secretary  
 Synod Children's Work Secretary  
 Regional Pilots Officer,

#### *Appointed by Synod*

Mr Stephen Ansa-Addo  
 Revd Jayne Bazeley (*Convener*)  
 Mrs Joyce Berry  
 Mrs Memona Javed  
 Ms Reanne Morris

#### *In Attendance*

Mrs Gillian West (*Secretary*)

### REPORT

Simon Rudiger, our CYDO, began work on Feb 1<sup>st</sup> 2010. This year we also had the privilege of working with Karen Bulley, the national Pilots Development Officer. Thames North was her focus synod for 2010. She was involved in the appointment process for the CYDO, and continued to offer support, particularly in the induction process, until the Line Manager, Lewis MacKenzie, was appointed. Lewis initially agreed to act as temporary Line Manager, but has since kindly agreed to take this on long term.

11 young people attended FURY Assembly from TNS. This was successful but there are still some organisational issues that need ironing out.  
 4 churches in the Synod are working towards the Child Friendly Church award. A Children's Synod is being planned, to run alongside the March 2011 Synod meeting.

The committee continues to give grants to individuals and churches, for training and visits, eg to Israel, also for holiday clubs and youth and community projects. Over £4000 has been given from the Religious Education fund, and there is about the same amount still to be given away.  
 The committee are planning to have an Awayday together in February, to plan for the future work.

The committee now produce a brief report after each meeting, which is sent out to Area Forums.

We have experimented with using a website to share information, news and good practice – visit **[www.thamesnorthchildrenandyouth.posterous.com](http://www.thamesnorthchildrenandyouth.posterous.com)**

The CYDO has been involved with delivering training, the URC Campaign, FURY Forum, Children's Assembly, More Than Gold, church visits and more.

The committee has sent representatives to the Lea Valley Strategy Group meeting. At our last meeting, we tried out a new way of structuring the meeting, based on an idea from Mike Yaconelli. The business of the meeting is set within the context of time spent listening to God, in the Bible and through each other. This has worked well, so we will continue it.

*Revd Jayne Bazeley  
Convener  
25 February 2011*

## LISTED BUILDINGS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

The **Listed Buildings Advisory Committee** is a quasi statutory committee which the Synod is obliged to appoint in accordance with the Revised Procedure for Control of Works to Buildings agreed between the United Reformed Church and the Government under The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 & The Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Order 1994. (SI 1994 No.1771). It is also distinct from other Synod committees in that it largely operates under Planning Law and not the United Reformed Church legislation.

The **purpose** of the Committee is to receive notice of any work proposed within the curtilage of a Listed Church, currently in use for worship by the URC and held in URC Trusts within Thames North Synod, and after consulting with the local church and appropriate heritage bodies to advise the Synod (through the Grants, Loans and Properties Committee — GLPC) as to whether or not to grant Listed Buildings Consent and on what conditions.

Cases involving like-for-like repairs and replacements or relatively minor works that would not require secular Listed Building or Conservation Area Consent in the absence of the Exemption can usually be dealt with informally without going through the full procedure.

### MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE 2010

The **Membership** is appointed (not elected) and shall consist of a Convenor (Chairman) and a Secretary who must be Members of the United Reformed Church, together with at least four other persons not necessarily Church Members who between them have the particular knowledge and experience and have been appointed after consultation with the heritage bodies as set out in the First Schedule of the United Reformed Church's 'Procedure for Control of Works to Buildings'.

#### **Members**

Mr Simon Fairnington (*Convenor*)  
 Mr Michael Gould  
 Mr James Laurie.  
 Mr John Payne (*secretary*)  
 Dr. John Thompson  
 Revd. David Skipp

### REPORT

The Committee met four times during the year and John Payne joined its membership in March and was appointed Secretary, replacing Christopher Buckwell, for whom the committee is grateful for all his years of service to the committee and the Synod.

Major projects have been considered for two churches during the year — Walkern & Sandon, and Wanstead for which Listed Building approval has been given, subject to a number of planning conditions. There was some consultation with six other churches with listed buildings.

Officers of the Committee and of the GLPC attended the main URC Listed Buildings Advisory Group meetings in April & November, which continues to monitor recent changes to legislation in respect of the URC's Ecclesiastical Exemption.

We continue to be on the lookout for people (architects, surveyors, builders) with the knowledge, training, qualifications and experience willing to serve on this committee.

*Simon Fairnington*  
*Convenor*  
*16 February 2011*

## **AREA COMMITTEES**

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- Oversight of the ministers, CRCWs, local church leaders and churches within the Area
- Declaration of ministerial vacancies, in accordance with the Synod deployment policy
- Appointment of interim moderators in consultation with the churches concerned
- Agreement of terms of settlement/appointment for ministers, CRCWs and local church leaders
- Oversight of arrangements for ordination and induction services
- Reviews of CRCWs and local church leaders (and probably implementation of the ministerial appraisal system when this has been agreed by Assembly)
- Consultation visits to local churches (except in the Central & North London Area, where the Mission Accompaniment Scheme pertains)
- Local ecumenism
- Pastoral care of churches/ministers in conflict or crisis, in partnership with the Synod Moderator and the Synod Pastoral Consultants
- Encouragement of lay preachers and other worship leaders
- Authorisation of lay presidency at the sacraments
- Consideration of the pastoral, ecumenical and mission implications of church redevelopment projects and mission grant applications as appropriate, and appointment of a suitable person to serve on the Development Group when requested
- Submitting appropriate names to the Synod Nominations Committee for the full range of synod appointments (local churches will also be invited to submit names)
- Communication of all decisions via a return form sent to the Leadership Development Group secretary and the Synod Office



Meanwhile there were some events to celebrate. In September the Revd James Mather was inducted to the pastorate of Kensington URC. James comes to us from the Church of Scotland on a certificate of eligibility. Revd Julian Templeton was inducted to the pastorate of St John's New Barnet, also in September. Julian had been interim minister at St John's for a year and at the end of that time the church were so delighted with him they asked him to formalise the arrangement! The invitation was accepted and the Area had a second celebration in a month! Julian also continues his ministry at Pond Square Chapel, Highgate.

I would like to thank all the Committee members for their hard work, faithfulness and commitment. It is not easy trying to ensure that our churches get the ministry they deserve and we pray that with our Lord's help we may have achieved some successes.

*Vic Russell*

*Convenor*

*February 2011*

## WEST LONDON AREA COMMITTEE

### MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE 2010

#### **Ex officio**

Synod Moderator

Lay Preaching Advocate

*(Mr Graham Hinton)*

Ecumenical Officer *(Mr Bill Boyd)*

Disability Advocate *(Vacant)*

#### *In attendance*

Pastoral Consultant *(Ms Lesley Trenkel)*

### **Members**

The Revd Kathy Wilson ( Convenor)

Mrs Anne Byfield (Acting Convenor )

The Revd Edward Sanniez ( Secretary )

Mrs Cathy Simpson ( Minutes Secretary)

Mr Bill Klesel

Mrs Janet Hogge

The Revd Elizabeth Shaw

Mr Antony Thomas

Mr Donald Burling

### REPORT

A consultation Day was held on Saturday, February 6<sup>th</sup> at the Grail Centre, Pinner. This gave us the opportunity to discuss among other matters, the nature and role of the committee.

To improve the effectiveness of communication within the Area, The following strategies have been adopted:

- A poster was produced for member Churches explaining our role. Each committee member also acts as the link person between the Committee and a designated member Church.
- Production of Newsletter. For logistical reasons, the production of the newsletter has not been on a regular basis. We hope to commence its production in 2011.
- We agreed to rotate our meeting places. It is hoped that this will bring the committee closer to local Churches as well as enabling members to have a better understanding of the context and mission of host Churches.

We have had changes in our ministerial team as detailed below:

Acton Hill:	Post to be filled by the Methodist
Ealing Green	Revd Jennifer Smith (Methodist)
Feltham, United Free Church:	Mr Mark Conlan (Methodist) as Lay Leader
Heston	Mr John Douglas, Local Leader
Hounslow	Revd. Viv Randles
St John's Northwood:	Revd. James Fields (75%)
St Martin's, South Oxhey	Revd. James Fields (25%)
Holy Trinity, Perivale	Revd. Carole Elphick (Special Category Transitional Minister)
Wembley Park	Revd. Carole Elphick ( Special Category Transitional Minister)

Members of Holy Trinity, Perivale have voted to continue as a congregation after the LEP with the Anglicans came to an end

As regards to mission initiatives, the URC Gadangme Fellowship continued to meet at St Andrew's, Ealing on the fourth Sunday of every month. The annual joint fellowship with St Andrews was held during the year. Pastoral support is still being given to the West London Asian Fellowship at Heston. There is a healthy symbiotic relationship between Heston and the Fellowship. The periodic liaison meetings have also enhanced understanding between them. It is the expectation of the Support Group that the Fellowship will become a URC congregation in not too distant a future

There was a review of the ecumenical covenant between Ickenham URC and St Gile's Parish Church (COE). The report is expected to be submitted in early 2011. There was also a review of the ministry of the Local Church Leader at Acton Hill.

As a family, we have not been insulated from the difficulties as a result of the present deployment issue. Like other Areas, we are relying on Interim Moderators, Local Church leaders, elders and lay preachers to help us minister to our people.

*Edward Sanniez*

*Secretary*

*March 2011*



and ideas with each other.

We also hosted the "Meet the Synod Exec" session (held in September at Trinity High Wycombe) – an opportunity for Chiltern Area churches to ask the Synod Exec questions

### ***Area Convenors' meetings***

These are proving beneficial for sharing information and ideas.

### ***Committee vacancies***

We continue to find it difficult to get nominations for vacancies. Two elected representatives will be standing down in 2011 and only one nomination was received by the deadline in 2010. We aim to have six elected representatives but will only have five in 2011.

The Revd Daphne Preece (formerly Williams) resigned in February as Chiltern Ecumenical Representative owing to work and other commitments.

After a gap of many months the Revd Alan Kirkcaldy (retired NSM) kindly agreed to be the URC rep on the Churches Together in Bucks Enabling Group on the understanding and agreement that he does not attend Synod Ecumenical Committee or Area Committee meetings. Alan Kirkcaldy has also agreed to be the URC rep on the Church on Fairford Leys LEP Staff Consultative Group.

### ***Ministerial changes and vacancies***

Fairford Leys LEP: Revd Anthony Howells (URC) inducted September 2010. 100% scoped.

Chesham: Revd Bridget Powell re-inducted as stipendiary minister, in September 2010, having resigned and left as NSM in 2009.

Beaconsfield & Holtspur: Revd Nigel Douglas inducted August 2010.

Gerrards Cross: Change of Interim Moderator - Dr David Henry from January 2010. Scoped 33%.

Trinity Slough: Revd John Danso inducted October 2010.

Revd John Danso also appointed as URC chaplain to Bucks New University (17%) from November 2010.

Iver: Interim Moderator: Revd Gwen Collins. Scoped 25%.

Burnham: Revd Janet Hopewell resigned April 2010. Interim Moderator: Revd David Simpson. Scoping to be confirmed.

Deanway, Chalfont St Giles LEP: 2011. Scoping 50%. Interim Moderator: Mr Alan Yates

*Kate Yates  
Secretary  
February 2011*

## ST ALBANS AREA COMMITTEE

### MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE 2010

#### **Ex officio**

Synod Moderator  
 Lay Preaching Advocate  
     *(Vacant)*  
 Regional Ecumenical Officer  
     *(Revd Keith Brown – Beds)*  
     *(Revd Jane Weedon – Herts)*  
 Disability Advocate  
     *(Vacant)*  
 Member on M&M Committee  
     (Mr. Trevor Hahn) (Until Sept.2010)

#### **Members**

Revd Keith Brown  
 Mr Peter Freeman  
 Mrs Margaret Ingram  
 Mr Andrew Jack (*Secretary*)  
 Revd Derek Jones  
 Mr Richard Nunn  
 Mr Lawrence Patterson  
 Revd Tony Ruffell (*Convenor*)  
 Revd Jane Wade

#### **In attendance**

Pastoral Consultant  
     *(Revd David Trafford)*

### REPORT

During the past year, the Committee has met every month except August and has sought to fulfil its In order to make the link between the Synod more relevant to the local congregations. The Committee organised a 'Provision of Ministry – Your Role' at Harpenden URC on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2010. It was led by Rev Anne Sarderson, Synod Training Officer. Conveners or their representatives from all Synod Groups/Committees attended and led a Discussion Group on what their Group or Committee did.

The Committee, through having one member of the Committee identified as having the responsibility for the congregations in one of the Area's six Focus Groups, continued to offer to arrange Informal Visits to congregations who had asked for such meetings and such a visit was made to Stevenage URC. The Committee continued to hold their every third/fourth meeting as an Open Meeting, located in a church within one of the Focus Groups. These meetings have been held at Ashwell URC, Adeyfield Free and St.Katherine's of Genoa.

In order to help the Committee decide on the level of ministerial support to be allocated and to the mission possibilities in proposed developments, the Committee looked at their Mission Criteria

At each of its meetings, the Committee received reports from the Synod's Leadership Development Group, Grants, Loans and Property Committee, Ministry and Mission Fund Committee and the Ecumenical Committee. In addition they added reports from the meetings of Area Committee Conveners

During the year a vacancy at Bricket Wood, Harpenden and Trinity St. Albans was filled by the Revd. Leonora Jagessar In addition to the vacancy at Brookmans Park and Potters Bar the Committee has been heavily involved in discussions arising from vacant ministerial positions in Luton and Dunstable Churches, Letchworth and Hitchin, the latter two in the north Herts Group of Churches

During the year the committee have been involved to a greater or lesser degree in developments in Baldock, Wheathampstead, St. Andrews Borehamwood and Walkern.

Last year reference was made to the difficulties, the Committee had identified on the creation of a Church Related Community Worker in Luton and during the year the committee approved the Terms of settlement for Karen Campbell who had been appointed.

A review by the Churches Together in Hertfordshire of the post of University Chaplain at Hertfordshire had resulted in it being discussed at the Mission Initiatives Group as well as the Area Committee. The discussions resulted in it being established that the Area Committee's sole responsibility is the Pastoral Care of the Chaplain.

During the year Trevor Hahn was accepted and started his training for Stipendiary Ministry

The Committee had to deal along with the Moderator in a difficult position which arose because a URC Minister had been appointed to fill the vacant Ecumenical Ministerial Post at the Wixams Development. When this post was first agreed it was on the basis that it would not affect the Synod's Deployment figures. However after the appointment was made the Committee were told that it would be part of their deployment figures. This was not resolved in 2010.

*Andrew Jack*

*Secretary*

*27<sup>th</sup> February 2010*



Last March Emmanuel Osae and Revd Helen Matthews were replaced on the Area Committee by Revds David Atkinson and Tim Clarke, and Tim has taken on the role of Secretary in succession to Helen. We would express our thanks to both Emmanuel and Helen for their service.

*Revd Hugh F. Graham*  
*Convenor*  
*February 2011*

## RODING AREA COMMITTEE

### MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE 2010

#### **Ex officio**

Synod Moderator  
 Lay Preaching Advocate  
     *(Mr Trevor Cottrell)*  
 Regional Ecumenical Officer  
     *(Revd June Colley)*  
 Disability Advocate *(Vacant)*

#### **In attendance**

Pastoral Consultant  
     *(Mrs Fredwyn Hosier)*

#### **Members**

Mr Malcolm Allard  
 Revd Ashley Evans  
 Dr Malcolm Haslett  
 Mr Jim Laurie  
 Revd Lythan Nevard *(Convenor)*  
 Revd Phil Nevard *(Secretary)*  
 Miss Joy Sadler  
 Ms Sandra Yeo

### REPORT

This year the main focus for the Area Committee has been working on the formation of four groups of Churches in the Area. Although one motivation for this was Deployment it was also seen as a way of working together in order to enable the mission of each local Church to be fulfilled more effectively. Forest Group, already long established has been reviewing its patterns of working together and so some changes to the terms of settlement of the Ministers have been agreed by Area Committee. Although oversight and support for the Group Council had been given by Area Committee, it is now run from within the Forest Group itself.

The Heath and Havering Group is moving towards becoming an official body and inducting the incumbent Ministers to the Group, with Ministers and lay preachers already leading worship and providing other means of leadership and support across the Group.

The South Forest and South Roding Groups are not so far along the path but it is felt that it is important that each Group finds its own pace as the history, needs and gifts of each Group are very different.

There has been no movement of Ministers in the last year. However we are aware that in the years to come this is going to change and will bring many challenges for the Churches of Roding and the Area Committee as we seek to serve them on behalf of the Synod. We pray that our Group way of working will help all the Churches as they seek to share the Kingdom with the communities in which they are placed.

*Revd Lythan Nevard*  
*Convenor of Area Committee*  
 16<sup>th</sup> February 2011

## RACIAL JUSTICE ADVOCATES

### MEMBERSHIP OF GROUP 2010

#### **Ex officio**

Synod Moderator  
Church & Society Consultant  
Training Officer

#### **Members**

Revd Francis Ackroyd  
Mrs Sandra Ackroyd  
*(Co-ordinator)*  
Ms. Geneva Adjei  
Miss Patricia Akoli *(from Dec 2011)*  
*(under 26)*

#### **Members (cont)**

Mrs Eleanor Boateng *(Chair )*  
Ms Gloria Bujan  
Revd John Danso  
Revd Leonora Jagessar-Visser 't Hooft  
*(from Dec 2011)*  
Revd Shahbaz Javed  
Mrs. Moya Patel  
Mr Everton Talker  
Revd Rosemary Tusting  
Mrs Joan Young *(Assistant Co-ordinator)*

### REPORT

- Who are we?  
We are a network of Advocates with a passion for justice, intentional in working with churches and the Synod to build a Multicultural Church where everyone has the opportunity to share and use their gifts and skills and to be around the decision making table. We wish to encourage churches to become truly inter-cultural, where creative learning and action takes place. We can only make a difference if we can work in partnership with the churches and the Synod. This we seek to do. We are part of the URC wide network of Advocates.
- What have we been doing?
  - During 2010 we engaged in debate before and after the General Election in May, paying attention to political extremism. We shared information on hustings that were particularly hosted by our churches before the election and examined some of the documentation regarding the activity and results of the BNP (British National Party). Whereas we were glad that local BNP councillors lost their seats and failed to gain any seat in Parliament, we were concerned that the quantity of votes they received overall exceeded those of the previous election. We also explored the issues relating to religious extremism which we recognised existed in most Faiths.
  - At the Advocate Residential gathering for all advocates in April we used one session to do some creative writing that could be useful for worship and education relating to racial justice.
  - In September, together we prepared a Market Place event where we had stalls about Youth cultures; migration and asylum issues; textiles/cloth and their histories and stories; games from different cultures; and an exhibition stall featuring local church community projects. To open the market we had prayers and as the market closed we enjoyed a meal together.
  - Some of us led services in other churches on Racial Justice Sunday in September and were well received.
- What are we planning to do?
  - March - Circulate a Racial Justice Sunday questionnaire
  - April – June- arrange for an educational tour of the Olympic Site and

possibly local walks in that area of East London

- June – Hold another Market Place event to include a bible stall ( different languages and different translations )
- When requested ,groups can be arranged to visit appropriate museums or exhibitions that can develop our knowledge and awareness of cultural history ( one of our advocates enjoys acting as a tour guide and is happy to organise such groups)
- September 11<sup>th</sup> is Racial Justice Sunday and we are open to invitations from churches
- SEPTEMBER 24<sup>th</sup> is the URC MULTICULTURAL EVENT at Carrs Lane Birmingham
- During 2011 it is our intention to engage with the Area Committees in our Synod so that a more effective communication and involvement can be achieved.

For further information please contact :

Sandra Ackroyd: email: ackroyds22@hotmail.co.uk    phone : 020 8279 0533

Joan Young: phone : 01708 760 608

*Sandra Ackroyd  
Coordinator  
February 2011*

## **URBAN CHURCHES SUPPORT GROUP & ITS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

### **REPORT**

**Introduction:** UCSG and ADCO have been through a difficult year on our journey to the present situation which is one of joy and achievement in that our new worker in Thames North for UCSG will be commissioned into this role in September 2011. Also we are encouraged by the fact that we are nearly ready to publish the list of the people from Thames North and Southern synods and what they are willing to offer to UCSG. This is the Network of Urban Practitioners that will work with the two new workers for UCSG.

**2010 :** Reflecting on the past year, the work we have accomplished has included

- Working on and with the network of urban practitioners. We had a creative meeting on October 7<sup>th</sup>, when people shared the things they are willing to offer UCSG which included interests, skills, gifts, advice and specific experience.
- The work on chronic illness has continued, being headed up by James Ashdown. People in our churches who have participated in this programme have found so much benefit. People with chronic illness say they are often left off the prayer list because their condition is not necessarily life threatening, but their suffering is ongoing and often very hard to bear.
- We continue to work on gathering material of church stories about small community projects that church members are directly involved with. We are compiling a book of these stories which can continue to be added to. We felt this would be very encouraging to other churches who may want to start something. It also helps us be aware of the breadth of mission initiatives that are going on in our synod.
- We planned a new initiative for December 4<sup>th</sup> ' Our stories of the URC ' in which we encouraged people who are new to the URC whether they come from other countries or this one, to share their experiences of being in the URC. We also explored the ethos and principles of our church, looked at what the people had to offer the URC and what opportunities there were for all of us. We also looked at the similarities and differences between people's back home churches (often Reformed churches as well) and the URC.
- We enjoyed 'Cause for Celebration' held at Christchurch, Dulwich in March
- We held two Church Secretary Consultations, one at Lumen URC 5<sup>th</sup> June and the other at Crossway URC 30<sup>th</sup> October. The theme for these consultations was 'How your church can become a volunteer magnet '.

Some of our new initiatives have grown from listening to stories and becoming aware of experiences of people in our urban churches. We also engage in debate regarding the current contexts in which people are living out their lives and trying to be church. Currently we are already hearing about changes to people's lives because of the economic climate such as being forced to move because of changes in housing benefit and young people 16 – 18 showing anxiety because of the removal of the EMA benefit ( at the end of 2011 ) which has been a life line for many young people in this age group who are studying in further education. There are many other examples which are going to affect the lives of many in our urban churches and beyond.

**2011:** Events for 2011.

- \* February 19<sup>th</sup>- 'Abide with Me' the last Chronic illness gathering held at The London Interfaith Centre, Kilburn.
- \* April 2<sup>nd</sup> – Cause for Celebration- held at Trinity URC, Slough- programme

includes workshops on

1. Developing and maintaining a spirituality in an urban setting
2. Different ways of developing discipleship in a local church
3. How we respond to opportunities for service in the wider church, e.g., Ministry as Ministers, CRCWs, Youth workers etc.

\* June – Church Secretaries Consultation held in a church in Southern Synod

\* SEPTEMBER + Please watch this space !!

James, John and myself would like to thank all the people involved in the process of bringing about a positive outcome for the UCSG, especially for the perseverance and hard work of our Thames North Moderator, Dr. Revd Andrew Prasad .

*Sandra Ackroyd (for UCSG )*

Changes in UCSG ADCO (the UCSG advisory Committee) came this year and we look forward to implementing the Review suggestions and directions from September onwards as Dr Revd John Campbell takes up the role of Co-ordinator, together with hoped for personnel from Southern Synod. We thank and commend Sandra for all she has given to the Co-ordinator role over the years and for the work she continues to do until August of this year. We wish her a happy and no doubt fruitful next phase of her life. We also want to show our appreciation for the work carried out by James and John. From ADCO we saw the departure of Dr. Revd Kathy White to Northern College, and then Revd Nigel Uden from moderating Southern synod, to Cambridge. We look forward to the involvement of the new Southern Synod moderator, Revd Nicola Furley- Smith, together with new representation from Southern Synod. Overall we have been somewhat in a state of flux, in which I serve temporarily chairing ADCO meetings as suggested by the Review. The forbearance and patience of everybody concerned during these times is to be commended and Synod's prayers and support for the continued beneficial working of UCSG for the benefit of our urban churches in both synods, as it embraces the demands of URC life in 2011 and beyond.

*Revd Tim Clarke (for ADCO )*

*February 2011*

## WORLD CHURCH/CHURCH AND SOCIETY CONSULTANT

### Report

Thanks and gratitude to everyone who sends supportive messages in response to various emails. Also, when we meet to receive verbal expressions of appreciation. These are music to my ears.

The work is surrounded by theological reflection based on Amos 5:24, Micah 6:8, Luke 4:18, Hebrews 13:2 and James 2:14 – 17 (The Revised English Bible)

### ***Sorry...***

*Sorry that we are here  
That we take your time  
Sorry  
Sorry that we breathe your air  
That we walk on your ground  
That we stand in your view  
Sorry  
Yes sorry*

*Sorry that we look like we do  
Sorry that we disturb your rest  
You do enough for us already  
Sorry that we are not grateful and happy  
Not grateful enough  
And that my name is not David  
Or Catherine  
Or May  
But Rashed  
Holta  
And Ardita  
Sorry that we sit in your trains and buses  
And on your benches in the sun  
And that we brought nothing  
And the only thing we have is a story  
Not even a happy story..*

*A Boy from Bosnia  
Age Unknown*

The URC through Thames North, continues to be held in high regard, across ecumenical circles in London. It is the major Free Church with a leadership role in the diverse and challenging tasks of social responsibility in our multicultural society. The work of the World Church and Church and Society and now immersed in the wide ranging and very necessary work of Immigration, is ecumenical by nature of the Church and pan London with non-governmental organisations. It is especially helpful to work with Terry Drummond the Public Policy Consultant for the Diocese of Southwark. This is invaluable and has been praised and supported by the national Church and has the support of the Bishop of Southwark. It is a good example of how ecumenical working together can bear fruit.

## **Children in Detention**

Met with Lord David Ramsbotham at the House of Lords to discuss Children in Detention. There was wide agreement on various issues concerning this practice. We discussed other areas of immigration practice and procedure. We continue to work together and with other people through a Parliamentary group of peers and MPs to challenge government.

A Parliamentary Meeting on Children in Detention was held in November 2010 and chaired by Julian Huppert MP. Thirteen MPs and six members of the House of Lords attended. Some MPs have Immigration Removal Centres (IRC) in their constituency and have a degree of sympathy for the welfare of the detained people.

November 2010 attended the meeting when Nick Clegg announced the ending of children being placed in detention. Many of us have worked together to bring this issue to public notice. Nick Clegg was very bland in his remarks. The Yarlswood Detention Centre was closed almost immediately but a building next door to Tinsley Hall Gatwick is the receiving place now for families who have yet to be returned to their country of origin or an alternative if the UKBA decides that to be so. This is very unsatisfactory. Tinsley Hall is scheduled to close in May 2011. The final report on this injustice will not be concluded until the end of May/early June 2011.

**London Churches Refugee Network** continues to develop well. Speakers are engaged to speak on important issues in the asylum and refugee sector. The quarterly meetings attract a diverse audience

April 2010 - Presentations were given by:

- Nic Eadie – Director – Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group
- Dan Jones – from the Outcry! Campaign The Children’s Society

July 2010 – A presentation was given by

- Natasha Walter – freelance journalist with the Guardian and Director of Women Asylum Seekers Together (WAST) and Women for Refugee Women. WAST has an excellent photo exhibition which was on display.

October 2010 – Excellent presentations by;

- Steve Symonds - Legal Officer of the Immigration Law Practitioners’ Association who brought current news on legal aid.
- Nazek Ramadan - founder of a new NGO, Migrant Voice, presented work.

January 2011 - Presentations by:

- Mike Kaye – Advocacy Officer for the Still Human Still Here campaign which majors on destitution
- Jerome Phelps - Director of the London Detainees Support Group

**London Refugee Hardship Fund for Destitute Asylum Seekers** - An Away Day was held as we needed to review work and to proceed with the calls upon funds. A wonderful result from the carol singing at Oxford Circus Underground station - £1300 was collected. Maggie Hindley was instrumental in the arrangements.

Regular grant giving meetings are held. Also, the Annual General Meeting and Supporters' Evening is held mid-summer. It is a pleasure to report that Mike Gould is auditor for the fund. Maggie Hindley and I continue to serve as trustees.

### **Churches Refugee Network Steering Group – national - (CRN)**

With the demise of Refugee and Migrant Justice (RMJ) and Kenneth Clarke's announcement to axe legal aid thousands of asylum seekers live in a void. Representation is being made to Kenneth Clarke and other Ministers responsible for Departments. A number of local church ministers have requested copies of the CRN document so that they can support the issue.

We have majored on Children in Detention

Occasional Seminars have been held including the issue of how people cope after they have been given Indefinite Leave to Remain. There are many pitfalls as local authorities and government agencies are unaware of procedures to help people.

The 2010 Annual Conference was good with 120 people attending. Theme: Caged Kids – Caged Minds (Britain's Invisible Handcuffs) – Various speakers majored on Children in Detention including physical and mental health and legal aid.

### **URC Immigration Co-ordinator**

A wide network of people is developing with and for people involved with Immigration especially asylum and the issues affecting many people in our churches such as visas. This involves working ecumenically and with colleges for students needing assistance.

**Multi-culturalism** - people of varying ethnicity and living in our communities are an important part of the Church not only the URC but across the ecumenical board. There is an increasing focus on our lives together. It is gratifying to report that the URC is moving toward the understanding of an Intercultural society which speaks better than Multi-cultural.

### **UKBA - Head of Partnerships and Engagement Team International**

**Group** – there was a good relationship with Mark Walmsley as one of the senior civil servants engaged with granting or refusing permission for people outside the EU to enter the country. I had success with cases for Thames North, Southern Synod, Baptist and Methodist Churches. Also, the Council for World Mission through Roberta Rominger asked me to engage Mark for a Consultation on visas and the Points Based System for access to the UK. We worked together on the presentation. It is unfortunate for the URC that Mark has returned to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. However, Charles Wilson known to me across the months will continue the relationship.

Mark asked me to prepare a booklet for Churches setting out our needs and procedures based on a similar document used for the Entertainment and Arts industries. There will be contributions from the UKBA from their perspective.

## **Asylum Seekers - Overstayers – Visa Refusals**

Many difficult and sad situations are worked on with Puck de Raadt, Church and Public Issues Consultant of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Louise Zanre, Director Jesuit Refugee Service and Nicholas Sagovsky, formerly Canon Theologian, Westminster Abbey. One example - a Korean lady dying of terminal stomach cancer was asked by UKBA to register fortnightly at Becket House, Bermondsey. She was hospitalised and this was known to the UKBA.

**The Refugee Council** – The following courses have been attended:

- Key Issues in Asylum
- Refugees and Migrants: Entitlements to Housing and Other Services
- The Refugee Council and The Big Society

There is work in a variety of other ways which is helpful for a profile of the Church.

The Refugee Council is in a serious situation as they need to lose 100 staff. The Day Care Centre where meals are provided daily for 100 – 150 destitute people will close in August 2011 due to cuts in funding. Funds will be raised to support the Centre at The Big Lunch to be held in due course which will be hosted by the Revd Maggie Hindley at The London Interfaith Centre and St Anne's and St Andrew's.

**Detention Forum** – this is a part of Asylum Aid. I accepted an invitation to be a member of the Steering Group. The URC is the only Church on the Steering Group

## **Conferences and Seminars held during the past year**

**The Elderly and Poverty** – a very good event led by Ann Morisy of Psalm (Project for Seniors and Life Long Ministry). This was an eye opening day and radical in places. The day explored through lectures and structured conversation the dilemmas and challenges that face our society as the population ages. As a result of the day participants gained

- An appreciation of the dilemma of seeking justice and better provision for older people and 'borrowing from the future' i.e. the issue of 'inter-generational equity'
- An understanding of the dynamics that have made for this extraordinary and novel situation when those over 60 are the largest group in the population and the implication this has for democracy
- How personal choice and social policy can help improve the quality of life of older people
- The scope for a radical response from Christians to this issue which in 20 years time is likely to present challenges on a scale similar to climate change.

**Ministry with and for Migrants - Practical and Pastoral Care** – an event for ministers and lay people involved at the grassroots with asylum seekers, irregular migrants and refugees. This well supported event was planned with Terry Drummond, Southwark Diocese and Louise Zanre Jesuit Refugee Service.

- Vaughan Jones presented a paper – The Theological Understanding of Migrants and Migration - which was widely acclaimed. The paper was circulated to all our ministers, the URC Immigration Co-ordinator Network and the London Churches Refugee Network. People asked for extra copies.
- Peter King TD Senior Immigration Judge and Judge of the Upper Tribunal gave A View from the Court
- Louise Zanre gave advice on pastoral and practical responses for destitute asylum seekers.
- Tom Greig from the UKBA set out ways in which the church can work with The Borders Agency

### **The Big Society - what does it mean for the Church?**

A very well attended day organised with Terry Drummond of Southwark Diocese There were contributions by:

- Andrew Stunell MP – Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Communities and Local Government
- Jon Cruddas MP for Dagenham and Rainham
- Debra Allcock Tyler – Chief Executive Directory of Social Change
- Richard Farnell Canon Theologian Coventry Cathedral

Since this event held earlier this year the debate has developed. Much needs to be watched as the Big Society will not operate with all the drastic cuts being made to local services especially Sure Start, Care for the Elderly et al.

**Poverty - Who Counts? - Who Cares** was led by Frank Kantor, Alison Gelder Director, Housing Justice and myself. Poverty is to be found across the whole of Thames North Synod. This will increase due to the financial cuts and people will suffer. Homeless People, Disabled People, Asylum Seekers and Refugees. The day was surrounded by theological reflection.

**The Poverty Group** – Ann Jack, Maggie Hindley and Debbie Hodge are supportive and meet with me to plan Poverty events. We need a far greater awareness across the synod of what it is to be financially poor – remembering that many families in the so-called middle class will become financially poor in a short while.

**Homelessness** – will increase due to the drastic cuts in the Local Housing Allowance. Thames North and Southwark Diocese are holding a Round Table of local church ministers and people engaged in housing to consider how best to cope with the pastoral needs. Also, for practical action needed by people as they will be removed from their homes and communities which is inevitable.

**NACCOM** (No Accommodation)– agreed to be a member of the group especially as Homelessness is very integrated with Poverty and Refugee and Asylum Issues. Maggie Hindley has a leading role in this organisation. At present Praxis is the base for the organisation

## **Global Partnerships**

### **Karnataka Central Diocese – Church of South India**

The visit at Easter 2010 for the Music Workshop led by Carole Elphick was very successful. This was much appreciated by the Karnataka Central Diocese. Various visits were made. In future these communities will receive a larger share of music time. A follow-up visit by Patricia Job and Geetha Basappa was held in the synod last Autumn. This was an opportunity to talk about future work in other fields which is the beginning of a deeper relationship between our two churches. It is hoped to make progress with an exchange of theological students between Westminster College and United Theological College Bangalore.

### **Association of People with Disability (APD) and the Khayalansalyi Horticulture Centre (K'Halli)**

Continuing and growing contacts with the school at APD and the Horticultural Centre at K'Halli. It is great to remember that a former LMS minister the Revd Iorwerth Thomas was a founder member of APD.

### **Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren (ECCB)**

Development continues and there is keen participation by the Revd Gerhard Frey-Reininghaus. The Revd Andrew Prasad is to visit the ECCB Synod in Spring 2011. There are regular requests by ECCB for young people to come here for English Language experience

**Inter Faith** – attendance at the regular meetings of the Management Group for Maggie Hindley as Deputy Director

### ***Prayer Needs to be Action***

#### ***I Cannot Live as if Justice is of No Importance.***

*Lord of my motivation  
Encourage me to keep going  
Enable me to be ever more  
Determined to work for what  
I believe  
Might be ...  
Justice.*

#### ***I cannot live as if Justice is of no importance.***

*When I see people on a television screen:  
The women  
    The men  
        The children  
Injured  
    Distraught  
        Bereaved  
All certainly traumatised ...*

*They are flesh and blood ...  
With human feelings...  
Suffering ...  
according to the ways  
and understandings in which they live their lives*

***I cannot live as if Justice is of no importance.***

*Thank you for the investigative journalists  
the television reporters  
the women and men who put their lives on the line ...  
so that we might see and have some knowledge  
... and try to understand ...  
Thank You to the One who seeks to protect them*

***I cannot live as if Justice is of no importance.***

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