

SYNOD DIGEST

Synod was held on Saturday, 9th September at Westerhope Methodist Church. The following is a summary of the main items on the agenda.

Welcome to Kathy Bevan, the new District Evangelism and Justice Enabler. Kathy is excited to get to know folk across the District, to build relationships and connect folk with a heart for mission and justice. Get in touch to discuss your ideas: kathybevan@icloud.com

Nominations to Conference 2024

Conference will be held in Leeds next year. Deacon Maggie Patchett and Kathy Bevan will join Rev Eva Walker, David Brown and Christine Armstrong as representatives from the District.

Mrs Carolyn Godfrey is to be Vice-President of the Conference in 2024. As Carolyn was present at Synod in her role as Regional Safeguarding Officer, she was warmly congratulated and Stephen, the Chair of District, prayed for her.

Community Engagement Enabler

Deacon Tracey Hume updated us on some of the amazing stories and developments from her work. Over 150 people with addiction issues have experienced Recovery Church and Tracey has been approached for advice, as it is hoped that a new NPNP project could be set up in Glasgow.

She is working with Gateshead Council capturing 8 anonymised stories of those who feel they have been treated unfairly in their interactions with, eg the Police and Social Services. Addiction is often a response to trauma, and these situations have often retraumatised individuals. Some have suffered a relapse because of their treatment. She will share these stories with representatives from different services so that they can work together to create more positive experiences in the future.

Synod unanimously agreed that this role should continue and the reinvitation process for Tracey is currently taking place.

Rev Jona Sewell, Chair of Tracey's Oversight Group, spoke of the joy at what God is doing, the joy that the voiceless are being heard, but also the challenge of the work. It sometimes feels like being in a boat at sea, not knowing where the destination will be, but knowing that Christ is in the boat with us.

Celebrating 50 years of the ISC

The International Student Centre based at Brunswick Methodist Church has been working with overseas students for 50 years. The Coordinator, Stephen Richardson shared some of their stories with us. For more details and to enquire about volunteering opportunities, please contact Stephen: iscnewcastle@gmail.com

Deliverance Ministry

Rev Dr Neil Cockling explained that he has been involved in this ministry for 35 years. Having paused this ministry three years ago, the Methodist Church has now brought out new guidelines. There is a new discernment process and there will be one cohort each year embarking on a connexional training programme.

Both lay and ordained may feel called to this ministry but don't know what the next step should be. The new training programme, starting in May, will enable individuals to explore what this means and what is involved.

In the first instance, anyone interested should inform the Chair of District, who will pass their name on to the connexional panel. There will be an hour-long conversation followed by a discernment day, training then follow-up. The panel will give authorisation and there will then be a supervisory relationship with regular gatherings in order to explore good practice. This means that anyone seeking this ministry can be put in touch with an appropriately trained person.

The Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers: Commitments and Expectations

Rev Ann Varker gave us an introduction to this important piece of work. It is rooted in the biblical understanding of ministry, seeking to equip and enable the flourishing of those in ministry. It encourages a deeper commitment to God and to one another as we watch over one another in love.

Members of Synod stood to make the first of nine commitments: "As members of the Church we play our part in maintaining the Covenant Relationship as we exercise our particular responsibilities towards ministers in our various ways.

As an expression of that commitment we resolve to receive the gifts and graces of particular presbyters and deacons (in circuit and other appointments) and to listen, consider, and, as appropriate, enable those ministers to develop their gifts and graces and flourish in a variety of expressions of ministry."

Ann encouraged us to read the full report, which can be found at:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/26036/conf-22-19-covenant-relationship-church-ministers-commitments-expectations.pdf>

Property Support Officer

Synod was informed that this new role will be advertised very shortly. It is hoped that it will alleviate some of the work involved at circuit level when churches and manses need to be sold.

3Generate

David Brown, the District 3Gen Ambassador, explained that this is the largest event in British Methodism aimed at young people. It will be held at the NEC in Birmingham and while the District doesn't pay for places, it does help with transport costs.

As it has grown, the biggest challenge is getting sufficient volunteers. There are so many roles that need to be filled, which make a huge difference to those attending. Synod was also asked to pray for the event and all involved and also to make space for our young people to share their stories when they get back.

If you feel called to volunteer please contact David: d.r.brown@icloud.com

The Mother House

Rev Elaine Lindridge, Minister for the Mother House, gave us an update on how pioneers are being supported through The Mother House.

A lot of time during the first year has been spent on governance issues. We are committed to keeping people safe, but NPNP work can be a risky business. The projects, which are focused on forming new Christian communities at the edge of normal church life and beyond, are also very diverse.

In Phase 2, Elaine is seeking to encourage NPNP work across circuits. There is a limited amount of funding available, but it is much more about getting alongside people and looking for what God is doing.

Some projects are a little vulnerable and the main reason is a lack of volunteers to support the work. She is hoping to highlight this at our April Synod by initiating a type of volunteer scheme.

Elaine also asked Synod members for their help in looking out for those at the edges who may have drifted away from church life. If you know anyone like that, then please give them Elaine's contact details so that they can get in touch.

EDI and Environmental Policies

Synod was reminded that these will be reviewed at our April Synod. It would be great if we could hear stories of how elements of the policies are being implemented in local churches and circuits.

For additional information about the topics covered, please contact any of your Circuit Synod Representatives.