

## **AMALGAMATION AND CLOSURE**

### **What is "Closure"?**

If the members of a church agree that – for whatever reason – it has come to the end of its spiritual and corporate life as a congregation of God's people in that place then the only decision that can be taken is to close. If the members of one, perhaps small, church decide that they cannot afford to continue and want to sell their building and join up with the church up the road, then that is closure and not amalgamation. The decision to close takes courage but can free people, who have been burdened by the struggles that have led to the decision to close, to join another congregation and get on with God's mission for them.

### **What is "Amalgamation"?**

An amalgamation of two or more active United Reformed Churches would occur when those churches have, separately and together, come to the conclusion that God is calling them to a new ministry together. Each lays down their separate identity and a new entity is created. Together they will be stronger than as individual congregations and can undertake their mission and ministry more effectively.

### **What is the procedure to be followed?**

In either situation – closure or amalgamation - the churches must consult with their District Council and samples of the appropriate resolutions are available from the Synod Office.

Where a church is closing the decision will be taken that it will close on a certain date, perhaps two or three months ahead and the church would work with District Council and the Synod Office to deal with the spiritual, pastoral and practical issues.

Where an amalgamation is planned, again the churches would work with the District Council but in essence each of the churches closes on the agreed date and a new church is formed with a new name.

### **What happens about buildings?**

#### **Closure**

If a church decides to close then the property passes to the Synod on the agreed date. The Synod Office deals with everything to do with the disposal of the property although some local assistance may be needed in the first few weeks. Any assets generated enable the Synod to support the work of the remaining United Reformed Churches across the Yorkshire Synod.

#### **Amalgamation**

For a new church formed by an amalgamation, one of their first decisions must be to agree where they will worship and it is likely that some of the property will be redundant. The decision may be to dispose of all existing buildings and develop a new building on a new site more suited to the needs and location of the members and the community they are called to serve. Redundant buildings would generally be offered for sale. Decisions about buildings should be made right at the outset in consultation with District Council and the Synod Office will work with the local church in effecting a sale as quickly as possible. The first call on the capital resulting will be for essential work on the retained premises to make them suitable for the needs of the new church. Such work is subject to the normal approvals process of the Synod and it is expected that it would be undertaken as soon as possible.

### **What about any money left over from the building work at the Amalgamated Church?**

The surplus funds which remain after the premises of the new local church have been provided for are the property of the local church and will be dealt with as follows:

- i) the local church will receive 75% of the remaining capital which will be invested and the interest used for the benefit of the church. Subject to approval of the District Council and the appropriate Synod Committee, the capital may be used at some later stage to fund expenditure of a capital nature, should this become necessary.
- ii) Synod will seek a contribution of the remaining 25%. This contribution will be sought twelve months after the date of the amalgamation when the amount required for renovation should be known. The amount will be assessed by a group consisting of two people nominated by the Church Meeting, two by the Trustees and two by the Synod. This money will be paid to the Synod Amalgamation Fund.

### **How is money in the Amalgamation Fund used?**

This Fund results from contributions made by churches which have amalgamated since the Union in 1972 and the responsibility for the use of moneys in the Fund lies with the Financial Resources Committee. Since 1993, taking note of the needs expressed within the Synod, it was agreed that the money will be made available to Districts for church planting and extension (i.e. NOT Building).

Churches and Districts which identify an opportunity for church extension will submit detailed plans and costings to the Synod Executive which, through a sub-Committee will make a recommendation to the Financial Resources Committee for financial support once the viability of the scheme has been proved.