

## **Synod Council Report**

**Tim Crossley, Synod Clerk**

Synod Council has met twice in formal session since the 2021 March Synod meeting, in May 2021 and most recently in September 2021. It also met in an informal session in July 2021 where just the one item was discussed. As is its remit, Synod Council continues to ensure that the plans put in place by Synod and its officers are done so effectively. It continues to ensure that the churches of Synod are still supported through the Covid-19 pandemic and it is acutely aware of the wider pressures the United Reformed Church is facing, which led it to convene a meeting in July to discuss the challenges the denomination faced concerning the Ministers' Pension Fund. All this has been done to the best of Synod Council's ability, taking into account all aspects of church and Synod life. The challenges facing Synod Council, as we move out of a period of legal restriction to one where the responsibility of care rests with the individual (person or group), are being addressed continuously. I hope that the progress we have achieved throughout the Spring and Summer of 2021 can be built upon as we enter the autumn and winter of 2021.

As in March 2021, I would like to pay tribute to the staff in the Synod Office who are continuing to provide an excellent service despite the gradual transition from home working to one where there is a mix between home and office attendance. Somerset House is now partially open, with, I hope, a presence there on most days through the week. Meeting facilities are also available, but there are limits on the number of people who can attend (until the Covid-19 numbers are sufficiently low to allow a return to pre-March 2020 levels). At the most recent Synod Council meeting it was felt that the time was not yet right for a fully functional meeting facility to be available at Somerset House. However, the updated digital meeting system means that we can cope with hybrid meetings, thus reducing the risk of transmission and improving our environmental credentials. I hope that this way of working can become part of the fabric of Synod, as through this hybrid system of meeting there is an increased opportunity for attendance.

### **Flexible times - still**

This Synod's two-fold pattern is something that has been borne of our experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic. By being able to utilise the skills we have all developed in our on-line capabilities has meant that the Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> October element to the agenda will not now be alien to us. It means that we can have detailed presentations – this time from the Legacies of Slavery/Anti-Racist team, from the Treasurer and on how we respond to the URC's Jubilee 2022 – as well as feeling as though we are united in our endeavours. The plan to meet in person at Longcauseway Church on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October comes from comments which requested that we emphasise the worship element of our Synod meetings. There are elements of business to attend to, but by dedicating a good third of the time we have to worship allows us to celebrate our unity in one and to celebrate the unity of the One who is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

So this October I hope that by still living in and working through flexible times we can be able to broaden the scope of our meeting, widen the franchise of those attending and extend the subject matter, as well as being able to worship together as a strong and vibrant Synod community.

These meetings of Synod is again being supported by the IT group; with Dan Morrell and Lawrence Heath-Moore at the helm I am confident that the meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> October will run as smoothly as the March 2021 meeting, with this link being the means to join:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83789751572?pwd=S1p5ZTVwa3hXcFhSaE1tV1hTRDhudz09>

and the link to watch the livestream of Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> proceeding being here:

<https://bit.ly/urcyorkshireyoutube>

Communication has been central to much of Synod Council's work. The Briefing – born of a desire to keep Synod informed and advised of changes in restrictions early in the pandemic – has become a vital means of spreading the word around Synod of not only Covid related advice, but of mission related events. Now that the Yorkshire Synod website is fully functional at <https://urcyorkshire.org.uk/> the need for a weekly briefing has reduced, so the plan is for it to be published twice monthly, with the odd special as and when required. The uptake of the Website derived newsletter is progressing and I do urge those who can to sign up for it as soon as you can.

Moving onto the life of the Synod.

Synod has met just the once since March 2021, on August 28<sup>th</sup> 2021 at Central URC in Sheffield for the induction of Rev Barry Welch into the Sheffield Team pastorate. May I take the opportunity to welcome Barry to Yorkshire on behalf of the whole of Synod and pray that his time in Sheffield will bear much fruit.

Informally, Synod does keep a watch on other significant events in the life of the Church and of individual churches. Two events come swiftly to mind. On Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September saw the official opening of the new building at Idle Upper Chapel URC, the fifth building it has utilised since its foundation in 1660. On Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> September saw the service marking Mr Alex Walker's work as Lay Pastor at South Leeds URC. Both these events are beacons of light in a period that has sadly seen some church closures within Synod. It is with regret though that the churches at Pickering (11<sup>th</sup> May 2021), Eccleshill (9<sup>th</sup> June 2021) and Christ Church with Trinity, Kirk Ella, Hull (30<sup>th</sup> September 2021) have closed since March. More encouraging is that the fellowships at Hall Gate and Intake in Doncaster have amalgamated (3<sup>rd</sup> June 2021) to form Ardeen Road URC, Doncaster and I hope that Synod wishes them all the best as they start a new chapter of faith in South Yorkshire.

### **General Assembly Meeting July 2021**

General Assembly 2021 met online from Friday 9<sup>th</sup> July through to Monday 12<sup>th</sup> July. Over the four days much was discussed in an environment that, although not strange to those who attended, in that it was held on the "Zoom" Conferencing platform, was strange in that the physical element did seem to be missing. Despite the numerous opportunities to meet in fellowship during Worship and in meeting rooms, much of the emphasis was on the business side of our denomination. In particular, the matter of the Ministers' Pension Fund was at the forefront of much discussion and two areas of church life have been referred to Synods for consideration. The reports and papers are available at <https://urc.org.uk/general-assembly-archive.html> and from the meeting two are resolutions, 39 and 40 relating to Ministerial Discipline and Safeguarding have been referred to Synods for consideration as they affect the Basis of Union. Although not being brought to this Synod I feel that Synod members need to be aware of the move and that they will form part of the meeting due to be held in March 2022. Therefore, I ask members of Synod to make themselves aware of the resolutions and that any resolution members may wish to bring at the March 2022 Synod are restricted to that they 'be not proceeded with'.

### **Synod Meetings 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

I would like to draw your attention to the accompanying Agenda paper that outlines the plan for the two sessions, the submitted committee and reference papers and the Resolutions paper, which lists the Resolutions on which decisions are required. Being aware that the business element of Synod is being split over two sessions in two places, the order in which these resolutions takes place is not necessarily to order in which they are presented here, in particular Resolutions 3 and 4 regarding the budget for 2022 and Resolution 5 regarding the response to the Ministers' Pension challenge. Similarly, the resolutions regarding Safeguarding Committee (Resolution 7), the Listed Buildings Advisory

Committee (Resolution 6) and the Environmental policy (Resolution 8) may not be in the order listed in the papers.

Although there are only papers submitted from six of our committee groups I can assure you that the work of those entrusted with the work of God within the Synod carried an apace. Pastoral Committee continues to work to ensure that the pastoral needs of the Synod are met. It is in constant conversation with churches, mission partnerships and informal groups as to how best their needs can be served by Synod. Similarly, the Property committee have been meeting regularly to ensure that the buildings we use are in good order, that churches are confident in using their buildings (especially through the pandemic) and is acutely aware that buildings are as much a part of our mission as any other aspect of church life.

At this Synod there are no plans to place any of the resolutions in “en-bloc” It may be that we take several resolutions together.

Therefore, the following resolutions are to be brought to Synod.

**Resolution No 1**

Synod receives the report of its Council  
and

**Resolution No 2**

Synod receives the reports from its Committees and Groups as presented in the attached papers where appropriate.

- i. Ministries Committee
- ii. Children and Young People’s Committee
- iii. Safeguarding Committee
- iv. Treasurer/Financial Resources Committee
- v. Listed Buildings Advisory Committee
- vi. Eco Group

The presentation by the Treasurer, Rev Simon Copley, is within the paper brought on behalf of the Financial Resources Committee as well as in the paper addressing the Pension Challenge.

The Pensions challenge will be addressed within the proceedings on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> October, with the following two resolutions being brought to Synod.

**Resolution No 3**

Yorkshire Synod resolves to approve the decision of the directors of the United Reformed Church (Yorkshire Province) Trust Ltd to make to the URC Trust from 2021 to 2024 the payments as outlined in the Synod Treasurer’s Report, section 1b for the sole purpose of funding the pensions of ministers and church related community workers.

**Resolution No 4**

Yorkshire Synod approves the decision of the directors of the United Reformed Church (Yorkshire Province) Trust Ltd to make the following conditional offers to the URC Trust from 2025 to 2030 the payments outlined in the Synod Treasurer’s report, section 1b for the sole purpose of funding the pensions of ministers and church related community workers, noting that these amounts will only be asked for if subsequent actuarial valuations of the MPF demonstrate that these are necessary. Synod approves the temporary suspension, with immediate effect, of all policies in respect of proceeds from sale of properties allocated to the Synod Mission Fund. This suspension to be reviewed at the October 2021 Synod.

The Budget itself will be addresses on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> October with the following resolution being brought to Synod

### **Resolution No 5**

Yorkshire Synod, meeting at Longcauseway Church, Dewsbury on 9th October 2021 both receives and resolves to agree to the Synod Budget as submitted.

As has been outlined in the report from the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, the pressures on both Northern Synod and Yorkshire Synod to provide an effective advisory group to comply with listed buildings legislation has led to the proposal to create a joint committee to cover both Northern and Yorkshire Synods. In the Synod literature are the report from the committee and the Terms of Reference and with this information they propose the following

### **Resolution No 6**

Yorkshire Synod, meeting at Longcauseway Church, Dewsbury on 9th October 2021, resolves the following.

- a) Synod acknowledges with thanks its existing Listed Buildings Advisory Committee and agrees to form a new united Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, to fulfil its duties under the Ecclesiastical Exemption across the geographic areas of the Northern and Yorkshire Synods under [The United Reformed Church And The Planning \(Listed Buildings And Conservation Areas\) Act 1990 Procedure For Control Of Works To Buildings.](#)
- b) Synod adopts the terms of reference for the joint Listed Buildings Advisory Committee set out in the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee report the October 2021 Synods, and requests that any subsequent amendments be agreed by both synods.
- c) Synod appoints Steve Armitage, Peter Conwell, Sarah Dodds, Bill Flett, Liz Haestier, Robert Hoyle, Rev Andrew Lonsdale and John Niven to the joint Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, to serve from 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2024.
- d) Synod appoints the Northern and Yorkshire Synod Property Officers as members *ex officios* of the joint Listed Buildings Advisory Committee.
- e) Listed Buildings Advisory Committee reserves the right to co-opt additional members as necessary.

Similarly, the provision of Safeguarding oversight in Northern and Yorkshire Synods is being addressed. Currently the two Synods share Mr Matthew Knowles as Safeguarding Adviser and to streamline the lines of communication and management plans are being put in place to create a single committee to oversee this aspect of Synod life in accordance with the recommendations of "Good Practice 5", which General Assembly has adopted. Therefore, the Safeguarding committee propose the following

### **Resolution No 7**

Yorkshire Synod Safeguarding Committee recommends to Yorkshire Synod that formal discussions commence with Northern Synod to create a Joint Safeguarding Group.

Synod tasked itself at the March 2021 meeting to develop an Environmental Policy to both challenge itself to be more environmentally friendly and to challenge our constituent churches. Under the guidance of the Synod's Green Apostle, Mrs Alex Jowitt, the Eco group have worked tirelessly over the summer and have produced a suitable policy which is being presented to Synod. The accompanying policy as well as the Annex, which is flexible in its construct, form the basis on which we can develop as a "green" Synod. Not only does it unite us in striving for a cleaner planet with the URC nationally, it encourages partnerships with the Synod's. Moreover, it challenges us all to be aware of the changes we cause as a result of our actions. A key element in all this is assembling a group of Green Apostles through which this can be achieved, and with this in mind Synod Council proposes

### **Resolution No 8**

Yorkshire Synod, meeting at Longcauseway Church, Dewsbury on 9th October 2021 both receives and resolves to adopt the Yorkshire Synod Environmental policy.

The following resolutions mark the people and events of Synod, in particular between March 2021 and October 2021. Sadly, there are more folk standing down than stepping up, but I hope that as we move out of these years of pandemic more people will hear the call to contribute to the on-going life of the Synod.

**Resolutions 9, 10, 11 and 12** give thanks for the work of Mrs Ruth Roddison on Children and Young People's Committee, Mrs Pauline Blackman on the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, Rev Tony Lee as a Trustee of the Cottingley Project and Rev Matt Stone on Ministries Committee.

**Resolution 13** celebrates both previous and future service in that Rev Fran Kissack has agreed to continue for a further 3 years as one of our Assembly Executive representatives whilst **Resolution 14** recognises Mrs Terasa Raddings' commitment to working as a Synod appointed Trustee of the Cottingley project.

Sadly, we have permanently lost three of our churches since March 2021. Pickering URC, Eccleshill URC and Christ Church with Trinity URC Kirk Ella URC have all closed their doors this summer, **Resolutions 15, 16 and 17**, whilst the amalgamation of Hall Gate Doncaster and Intake URCs to create Ardeen Road URC, Doncaster is marked in **Resolution 18**. I am also aware that there are other churches whose names and witness may be brought to the next Synod meeting. I hope that you will share with Synod Council in the prayers granting them strength to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord as they journey through the next few months.

Finally, as I mention each time, there are always openings for people to help in the discerning the direction of the Synod. As I write there are vacancies on most of our committees, in particular on the Financial Resources and Property Committees. That doesn't mean to say that there are not places elsewhere in Synod which need fresh faces or within the URC as a whole. If you are called to help, please contact the Clerk at [clerk@urcyorkshire.org.uk](mailto:clerk@urcyorkshire.org.uk)

*Tim Crossley*

Synod Clerk

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### **Ministries Committee Report**

**Mrs Kathryn L Lonsdale, Convener**

Since my last report the work of Ministries has been mainly through zoom, email & telephone but as I write this report we look forward to our first meeting, since I became Convenor, at the Synod office 21<sup>st</sup> September.

### **Student completion of training**

It was a pleasure to join the induction & ordination of Rev Adam Woodhouse to Lancashire East Missional Partnership on 18<sup>th</sup> July. Please keep Adam in your prayers in his first year as an ordained minister.

### **Candidating for ministry**

We have no students in training this academic year. If you have anyone thinking about candidating for ministry please encourage them to get in touch with our new candidating secretary, Sally Duxbury, personal assistant to the Moderator.

### **Elders Development**

An elder's 24-hour conference at Wydale conference centre will take place 30<sup>th</sup> September – 1st October. This is being led by Rev Jamie Kissack, our Moderator, who has chosen for his theme "How shall we sing the Lord's song" an exploration of the psalms.

After positive feedback the Church Secretary zoom meetings will continue about 4 times a year. The next one is Monday 18<sup>th</sup> October 10am-11am.

The Elders Development Group have updated the United Reformed Church Elders resources and are planning some sessions to share this information. They are also discussing developing elders mentoring in Yorkshire and starting to plan next year's annual elders conference.

### **Worship Development**

Lay preacher's preparation for preaching zoom sessions have continued through the pandemic and due to positive feedback will continue on zoom. Our lay preachers planning group of myself, Jill Fletcher and Rod Morrison are planning a weekend conference for lay preachers and worship leaders at Wydale conference centre 22<sup>nd</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> July 2022. More information, including a booking form, will be available in the new year but please note these dates if you are interested in joining us.

After good feedback on last year's overview on Mark we have planned, for all interested

on Zoom 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> November

10.00am-11.30am repeated at 7.30pm-9.00pm

'An overview of Luke led by Lawrence Heath-Moore'

Lawrence Heath-Moore will lead a series of sessions on the gospel of Luke (the upcoming 'Year' in the revised common lectionary). The sessions will be interactive, informal, and set you up well for a year of preaching on Luke! Whether you're a seasoned preacher, minister, lay preacher, worship leader, elder, Bible study leader or just interested please book your place with the Synod office

[office@urcyorkshire.org.uk](mailto:office@urcyorkshire.org.uk) 01132 898490.

### **Stepwise**

The first group of 4 have successfully completed Faith-Filled Life. If you or any of your church members are interested in knowing more about Stepwise please contact our Stepwise Coordinator, Dr Lesley Coote.

### **Reviews**

This year we have instigated 5 reviews:

Leeds University Chaplaincy & 18-25

Elder in local leadership

Leeds Mission & Ministry Enabler

Churspacious Ministry

Huddersfield Church Related Community Worker

The latter 2 are still in progress

We thank the reviewers, post holders, management group members and other contacts for their time and input to these reviews during this year.

### **Yorkshire Lay Preaching and Worship Leading policy**

After the United Reformed Church General Assembly in July agreeing a new process for locally recognised worship leaders and assembly accredited lay preacher training this policy has been a major piece of work over the last few months. As I write this report the final draft is due for agreement at next week's meeting. It is encouraging that we are already getting enquiries for the locally recognised worship leader process and have had one applicant for the assembly accreditation course.

For both of these the applicants' local church support and approval is one of the requirements before any applicant is accepted, so we will contact you early in the process if any of your members show an interest in either of these callings.

We look forward to the coming year when we can move forward the work of Ministries meeting, partly still on zoom, but importantly starting to gather more in person for the various meetings, conferences and visits to churches we are planning.

Yours in Christ's service

*Kath*

## Children & Young People's Committee Report

Ruth Roddison, Convener

The last six months in the synod have seen us slowly emerging from lockdowns and restrictions. During that time, it has been great to be able to meet in person again with some church groups and workers, although most provision for children or young people has still been severely restricted. In the spring we decided to tentatively plan for more activity in the autumn and we are starting to see a positive response to this. Things will continue to develop as Megan returns to work from Sep 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Things to celebrate:**

- Presentation of Joseph Hartley's (Longcauseway Church) Lundie Award.  
<https://urcyorkshire.org.uk/longcauseway-lundie-award-presentation/>
- Presentation of the first of the NEW format 'Children and Youth Friendly Church' scheme to Shiregreen URC.  
<https://urcyorkshire.org.uk/shire-green-urc-is-children-and-youth-friendly/>
- Youth Mental Health First Aid training course for church workers, as one way of addressing the mental and emotional health needs of young people after the last 18 months.
- 6 under-26 reps at General Assembly representing Yorkshire Synod (this must be a record?). They did the synod proud – well done Kai Weynberg, Dan Morrell, Megan Westgarth, Lydia Raddings, Aaron Wood, Jacob Lowe.
- Wilderness Pilgrimage day for young adults – as our usual weekend retreat had to be cancelled we met to walk along the Leeds canal to Kirkstall Abbey.
- Little Big Day Out (Sep 18<sup>th</sup>) – 120 adults and children enjoying a day out together at Gulliver's Valley, nr Sheffield.
- Synod Youth Weekend (1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> Oct) – a valuable opportunity for young people to get out and have some fun together and meet up with new people after the severe impact on their mental and emotional health of the last 18months.

### **Future things to look forward to:**

- 5 Northerly Synods 'Messy Church Meet-ups' on zoom
- 5 Northerly Synods 'Parenting for Faith' online course
- Youth Assembly 2022 <https://urcyorkshire.org.uk/event/urc-youth-assembly-2022/>
- Advent Retreat for church workers and volunteers

### **Things to pray for:**

- The children and young people who come to your church, are part of your family, or who walk past your window. Ask God to bless them, and to show you how to bless them too.
- People who work with children and young people in your church – the paid and volunteer workers, teachers, social workers and other professionals.
- For your church to be a more welcoming and caring place for children and young people.

Please get in touch if you want to talk about anything to do with children and young people and your church: [wilderness@urcyorkshire.org.uk](mailto:wilderness@urcyorkshire.org.uk)

## Safeguarding Committee Report

**Matt Knowles, Safeguarding Adviser**

Since the last report there has been a significant rise in work undertaken by the Synod Safeguarding Adviser. This has been partly driven by the increased visibility of the role and the support provided to local churches as well as a rise in the number of safeguarding concerns that have needed to be dealt with.

**Safeguarding Training.** An all new intermediate training package has been created and this is being rolled out to Synod from September 2021. There has already been a large number of bookings made and further courses will be made available in 2022. Further Foundation (basic) courses are also being run to allow for those who didn't attend the last run of training dates as well as those that require a 3-year refresher.

**Annual church safeguarding returns.** The work surrounding this has had to be placed on hold due to the amount of work required to be completed on safeguarding concerns on a spontaneous basis. Once sufficient time is available then this issue will be returned to. 2021/22's returns will be completed on an amended form which will be supplied with a guidance sheet to assist churches to complete the forms correctly. In 2022/23 there will be the option to complete these forms online.

**Casework.** All aspects of Synod casework are up to date. There have been some serious and complex safeguarding concerns which have been dealt with by the Synod Safeguarding Adviser. Some of these have concluded but there are still several serious concerns ongoing. All churches involved have put safeguarding at the top of their list of priorities. In doing so they have mitigated the risk to children and young people to the best of their ability. There is no doubt that if they hadn't done this then we would have been facing much greater challenges. The Committee Convener is fully aware and updated with ongoing issues as is the Moderator when necessary.

**Yorkshire / Northern Synod Safeguarding Committee.** Work is ongoing to create a joint committee and several meetings are planned in the coming months to arrange terms of references etc. Both Synods are actively engaged in ensuring that the amalgamation improves safeguarding for both Synods whilst providing a support mechanism for the Synod Safeguarding Adviser to perform their role. Therefore, the Safeguarding committee bring Resolution 7 to Synod: *Yorkshire Synod Safeguarding Committee recommends to Yorkshire Synod that formal discussions commence with Northern Synod to create a Joint Safeguarding Group.*

**Safeguarding updates.** The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) produced the third report into child protection in religious settings on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021. This report released by IICSA included findings relating to churches including the URC. Due to this report there are some quite sweeping changes expected and this will be brought to the committee's attention at that time. It is however recommended that members read this report to get a full understanding of failings in the past and how we need to act in the future to ensure these mistakes and lack of actions do not reoccur.

[Child protection in religious organisations and settings Investigation Report | IICSA Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse](#)

**Matt Knowles, Synod Safeguarding Adviser**

## Treasurer's Report

Rev Simon Copley, Synod Treasurer

### 1a - Pensions Challenge - the URC Position

The URC have been forecasting an overall deficit in relation to the Ministers Pension Fund of around £45 million from 10 years, 2021 to 2030.

All 13 URC Synods have been in internal discussions, in discussion with the URC's Risk Management Group (RMG) and in dialogue with each other but, essentially, each Synod has been asked to make an indicative offer to the MPF. This process culminated over the summer and the remarkable outcome is that the 13 indicative offers added up to £44.988 million, a shortfall of only £12,000.

In addition, the central URC Trust also offered £4.5 million making the total offer up to £49.488m. Also, the 2021 Valuation of the Pension Funds may be better than expected with the 2021-2026 target requiring £6m less than anticipated. (This is conditional on the Regulator's thoughts about the strength of our legal framework - our Covenant). Despite these promising developments the RMG will continue to assume an overall target of £45m from the whole denomination, in the interests of prudence.

As we progress, there will undoubtedly be variations in the extent to which all Synods can meet their indicative offers (or not!) as well as fluctuations in the 2024, 2027 and 2030 valuations. These will either reduce or increase the demand made of Synods across the URC. Any repayments as a result of reductions will be made, pro-rata in line with sums committed by various Synods.

The URC Trust has agreed to be the main conduit of payments and holding funds on behalf of Synods which will minimise legal and accounting complexities for Synod Trusts. The RMG have also done work on wording of resolutions for Trusts and Synods to pass. There is also work, in liaison with the Charity Commission, to ensure members of Synod are not in conflict of interest while considering the issues.

### 1b - Pensions Challenge - Yorkshire Synod's Proposed Response

The Yorkshire Synod's indicative offer (approved by Trust and FRC) to the MPF is £1.675 million over 10 years. We are asking Synod to endorse this approach.

This offer is made up of three distinct elements:

- a) We will continue to donate 20% of proceeds of sales of closed churches to the MPF. This is effectively a continuation of Synod current policy. The estimate is given in the table below and it is very conservative so, in reality we will probably be able to donate more to the MPF.
  
- b) We will offer an additional sum totalling £644,000, so we can make as generous an offer as possible. This additional amount is in line with the RMG's original suggestion (in August 2020) of what Yorkshire Synod might be able to offer in this way, based on their assessment of our assets at that time.
  
- c) We will, in time, encourage individual congregations to consider their own donations to the MPF (totalling £400,000 across Synod). A good proportion of these would, presumably, come from assets held in trust for churches by the YCU, but also from elsewhere if possible. We propose a total sum equivalent to around 5% of YCU assets which, at start of 2021 totalled £8.2 million (hence £400,000). NB this is an overall total and it will be up to each individual congregation to decide if, and how, to respond. All congregations will be invited to do so even if they have no assets held by YCU. The response would, hopefully, be determined in the context of a wider conversation about constructive use of assets for mission. NB: 9.6% of the £8.2m (£785k) has already reverted to Synod (or is estimated to do so) because of church closures this year - so Synod could take a lead in making contributions from this source.

The following table shows our proposed schedule of payments to MPF and this is replicated in the resolution before Synod.

Source/Year (£K)	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	Total
20% of closed church sales (estimated)	264	14	14	14	14	57	57	57	82	58	£631
Additional commitment	86	86	86	86	86	43	43	43	43	42	£644
Donations from congregations (net)				80	80	80	80	80			£400
Total MPF commitment	350	100	100	180	180	180	180	180	125	100	£1,675

The reaction of the RAMG was that this was a “very generous offer”.

Note FRC are proposing that the offer be front-loaded to meet the immediate needs of the MPF in the early years of the challenge. The estimate of income from closed church sales is not necessarily tied to the actual time scale of closures (although it is related to our estimate of closures, over the whole 10 years)

The aspiration is to contribute £1.675 million in total. The overall commitment from Synod funds is £1.275 million. The commitment to be asked from congregations is an additional £400k and this will not be required until 2024 at the earliest and 2028 at the latest.

Any payment from property sales for 2021 that would normally be due to the MPF are included in our offer (although no actual payments have been made to the MPF in 2021, as yet).

### 1c - Pensions Challenge - Can we do it?

There are a huge number of factors in our projections with varying degrees of predictability and all subject to continual monitoring. Overall, our original estimate, over the 10-year period of the Pensions Challenge, is as follows:

Regular income (mainly investments and Synod Levy)	£3.521m
Regular Expenditure (core and development costs)	(£5,650m)
<i>Overall deficit</i>	<i>(£2.129m)</i>
Income from closed churches etc. (Net)	£3.454m
MPF Commitment (Synod’s direct commitment)	£1.275m

### **Overall Balance**

**£50,000**

This shows a very narrow margin of solvency. But by far the greatest contribution (and fluctuation) determining the viability of our response will come from the number and scale of property sales. There may be more (or less) property sales predicted and variations in price because of the property market. We have already, in 2021, seen more properties being sold than expected at higher prices than anticipated.

Also, not included are liquid and investment proceeds from assets of closing churches that will revert to Synod. Some assets have already done so (and others are estimated to do so) in 2021. Some of these will be from assets held by YCU. The figure for the year is still to be finalised.

Income from closed churches is also netted after disbursements to Synod Mission Fund so our scenario assumes running the SMF at a level in line with demand from churches for a few years (we are tracking funds that would normally be allocated to the SMF to inform any future investment in mission funding). We are also able to maintain our existing commitment to VINO funds that we originally decided, or proposed, to allocate.

Overall, we are likely, having made a generous offer to the MPF, remaining committed to SMF and VINO and still running Synod year-on-year at a deficit, to be in a position to invest more, strategically, in mission. Synod Council and FRC intend to look at this in greater depth and detail as the situation unfolds and bring information for discussion to a future Synod.

## **2 - Budget performance 2021**

Overall we are looking at a £25k under-spend on the budget originally set for 2021.

Income - Investment income is picking up again, generally and we predict an increase of about £11k in this source overall. Please note: we are still to make our appeal for voluntary contributions to the Synod Levy (after October) so that may yield some more income - but it is an unknown.

Expenditure - we still have a net under-spend, in the region of £14k. This is not going to be as much as predicted in the summer mainly because of additional spending on Safeguarding Officer's hours, website development and IT task group and increased costs of maintaining properties that we are in process of preparing for sale.

Under-spent items include a slight overestimate of staff salaries, zero call on our contingency fund, a very modest outlay on the Big Day Out (which turned out to be a little but enjoyable one), less Youth/Children and Development activity and not employing a Development officer this year.

## **3 - 2022 Budget**

This is attached for Synod's approval. The main points to note are:

Income - our Pensions Challenge projection made a quite optimistic assessment of our Investment Performance but we have adjusted this down by about £22k. Reintroduction of a Synod Levy will boost income although it may be less than originally expected.

Expenditure - This is very close to expectation overall although there are some variations within the detail, notably £6k set aside for a Digital Divide Project and £4k for more development of lay preaching. There is less expenditure on a Development Officer (although not reduced entirely to give us some leeway on progressing this).

The budget is presented slightly differently from last year in that ongoing IT support and all Safeguarding costs have been moved from Development to Core. The IT task group have moved beyond their initial excellent development stage and we need to reinforce the mind-set that Safeguarding is certainly not to be considered an "extra"!

## **4 - A note about current SMF and VINO commitments**

Synod Mission Fund - SMF currently has about £366k in uncommitted funds. In the next few years, I would propose to only allocate funds to the SMF to keep it topped up commensurate with the demand from congregations (£50k grants estimated for remainder of this year then £170k allocated for 2022, increasing incrementally thereafter). Otherwise funds are set aside unnecessarily.

VINO grants - There is £242k already allocated but as yet unspent and a further £200k allocated in principle but awaiting Synod decision as to the practical criteria for distributing it (So a total of £442k).

We have budgeted a £162k spend for 2022 but I don't see why Property Committee (and others) need be bound by budget constraints if needs are being presented. It is difficult to predict what might arise at what point and, again, we don't want funds to be tied up unnecessarily.

As Synod has made decisions in principle then we must assume that VINO money be treated as committed unless we decide otherwise. But we will need a decision on the £200k, eventually. Detailed proposals came from a combined group from FRC and the VINO task group, but the latter has not met during lockdown and their original proposal regarding the £200k was waylaid by the lockdown.

## **5 - Other issues**

Conversations are ongoing within Synod about how to support churches as creatively, flexibly and fully as possible, while encouraging congregations in their core purpose and best use of their assets. It is pleasing to hear of churches recovering lost income through insurance claims and beginning to recover giving in other ways as lockdown eases. But things are still uncertain.

## Listed Buildings Advisory Committee Report      Revd. Andrew Lonsdale, Convenor

I have to begin my report with a big thank you to David Figures and Clyde Binfield for their commitment and long service to this committee and our Synod. Thanks are also due to Pauline Blackman who has also stepped down from the committee and to those who continue to serve on it.

We have continued to support those churches who are exploring the ways in which their buildings can be adapted to improve their worship and mission activities and those who need to carry out difficult repairs and maintenance particularly with informal visits, discussion and professional advice prior to an application for the work.

We are establishing a pattern of meetings each year so that any church needing to make an application for permission to do work will know the dates by which the application has to be made. This will enable the committee to both send the details to the appropriate statutory bodies for their comments and consider it before making recommendations to the Synod Property Committee.

Here are the proposed dates for the LBAC in 2022, with the Yorkshire Synod Property committee and Yorkshire Congregational Union committee of management for reference.

These dates are to be implemented for Yorkshire applications and will be brought to the joint committee if Resolution 6 is passed. Late applications will be held over to the subsequent meeting and the advice is to have any plans submitted well before the LBAC meeting date.

Application to be submitted to the secretary of LBAC (currently Yorkshire Synod Office) by	28 day statutory Consultation period ends	Date of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee meeting	Proposed date of Synod Property Committee ( for information)	Proposed date of YCU & FRC ( for information )
28/01/2022	25/02/2022	03/03/2022	09/03/2022	15/03/2022
01/04/2022	29/04/2022	05/05/2022	11/05/2022	17/05/2022
27/05/2022	01/07/2022	07/07/2022	13/07/2022	19/07/2022
30/09/2022	28/10/2022	03/11/2022	09/11/2022	15/11/2022

We have also been involved in discussion with the four other northern Synods (Northern, Mersey, Northwest and Scotland) who, like ourselves, have been looking to recruit more members to their Listed Buildings Advisory Committees. The current proposal is to create a joint committee with Northern, utilising the following Terms of Reference as to how it will work and with the possibility that other Synod's may join us later. This will enable us to use the expertise from a larger group and ensure we give the support needed by our churches but we are still asking if anyone who has the appropriate experience would be willing to join the committee. Therefore, LBAC propose Resolution 6.

**Yorkshire and Northern Synods\***  
**Listed Buildings Advisory Committee**  
**Proposed Terms of Reference**

Name of group	Yorkshire and Northern Synods Listed Buildings Advisory Committee
Membership and appointment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A representative with a property advisory role from Yorkshire Synod</li> <li>▪ A representative with a property advisory role from Northern Synod</li> <li>▪ A minimum of two people with buildings, architectural or related experience.</li> <li>▪ A minister of word and sacrament.</li> </ul> <p>Ideally core membership will not exceed 10 people, and members may be co-opted for their particular knowledge, skill or role if it will support the work of the committee or requirements of the Synods.</p> <p>Where possible geographic representation and a balance of gender, ethnicity, lay and ordained interests will be sought, however this may not be guaranteed. The committee seeks to be inclusive and will attend to communication or other needs to assist full participation.</p> <p>*Note: members may be appointed after consultation with Historic England, relevant associations of local authorities and the bodies listed in the second schedule of the URC Acts. See <i>The United Reformed Church And The Planning (Listed Buildings And Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Procedure For Control Of Works To Buildings</i>. <a href="https://www.unc-northernsynod.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Listed-Buildings-Control-Procedure.pdf">https://www.unc-northernsynod.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Listed-Buildings-Control-Procedure.pdf</a></p>
Chairing	The chair will be agreed by the committee and affirmed by the Yorkshire and Northern Synods.
Frequency of meetings and quorum	<p>A minimum of four meetings in a calendar year, with a minimum of one meeting each year to take place in person.</p> <p>The meeting will be quorate for decision-making with 50% members present. Decisions and views can be submitted by committee members online before the meeting.</p>
Record of meetings	Minutes will be taken and circulated within 10 days and be available for the next meeting.
Reporting mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The joint LBAC is accountable to the Synod Property Committee on applications for consent. This is the Synod Executive in Northern Synod and the Synod Property Committee in Yorkshire Synod.</li> <li>▪ In practice the LBAC will also report to the relevant Trust committees in each Synod.</li> <li>▪ A formal report will be presented to Yorkshire and Northern Synods on the previous six months' activity by the nominated representative. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Committee members will ensure their relevant Synod committees and groups are apprised of and kept up to date on all significant LBAC issues and those arising from the committee's activity.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Committee members will be responsible for ensuring building applications which require LBAC approval are shared with the committee in a timely manner.</li> <li>▪ Committee members will share any learning or development opportunities with their Synods.</li> <li>▪ A committee representative will attend the URC Listed Buildings Advisory Group.</li> </ul>
<p>Functions and delegated authority</p>	<p>The Yorkshire and Northern Synods Listed Buildings Advisory Committee will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advising Synod Trusts and/or Property Committees upon listed building applications received from URC churches in Yorkshire and Northern Synods.</li> <li>▪ Fulfilling the responsibilities and requirements of an LBAC as defined in <i>The United Reformed Church And The Planning (Listed Buildings And Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Procedure For Control Of Works To Buildings</i>. <a href="https://www.unc-northern-synod.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Listed-Buildings-Control-Procedure.pdf">https://www.unc-northern-synod.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Listed-Buildings-Control-Procedure.pdf</a> (link valid at August 2021)</li> <li>▪ Making arrangements for appropriate liaison with professional bodies, local authorities and heritage bodies.</li> <li>▪ Undertaking enforcement action in the case of unauthorised works to listed church buildings.</li> <li>▪ Reviewing the environmental impact of proposed works, and signposting to sources of advice about more sustainable materials and approaches.</li> <li>▪ Advisory functions can include and not be limited to explaining existing Synod policies, risk management and health and safety issues arising from listed buildings applications.</li> <li>▪ Providing guidance on listed buildings strategic issues to Synod Trusts, committees and councils as appropriate.</li> <li>▪ Proactively offering early advice and support to churches with listed buildings prior to any buildings applications being submitted.</li> <li>▪ To develop a supportive and developmental ethos for committee members, churches and Trusts regarding listed buildings.</li> </ul>

\*Note: The terms of reference can be modified to include other northerly Synods which in time, may also wish to become a member Synod of the Joint LBAC.