**Guidance Notes for the Synod Mission Capacity Fund**

***Introduction***

A continual challenge before Synod is how we use resources to support churches in fulfilling their mission. Additional income forecast from the sale of closed churches and the reverting of assets from those churches to Synod presents an opportunity to do so.

A massive challenge facing our congregations is ‘capacity’. There may be much willingness and creativity to rise to the challenge of mission in communities. Such aspirations are frequently hampered by the sheer volume of administrative and legal tasks that need to be carried out and which fall increasingly on a diminishing number of people.

Currently Synod grants are available through the Synod Mission Fund for projects and activities that have a direct input into mission. Funds have been set aside through the *Vision and Opportunity* grant programme to help churches reconfigure buildings or invest in plant that will also contribute to a more effective mission.

The *Synod Mission Capacity Fund* seeks to address needs that lie between and outside these parameters that would help churches be able to engage in mission more effectively.

***Purpose***

The fund is to support activity in the local church which would not normally come within the remit of existing mission funds, but which will directly enable the church to be more effective in mission by lightening the burden of ‘back room’ functions.

Schemes which involve groups or areas of churches working together (including Mission and Care Groups) will be prioritised in the distribution of funds.

To be eligible to apply to the fund the church, or group of churches, must be able to demonstrate all of the following:

1. They can articulate the mission of the local church, consistent with the Synod’s description of the range of missional activity in its ‘Five Strands’.
2. They can explain how the piece of work the funding is supporting will enable this mission to be exercised more effectively
3. They can demonstrate how the work fits into the longer term sustainability of the church.

***Scope***

Grants can cover a maximum of 3 years in the first instance, and satisfactory annual reports will be required before subsequent years’ grants are given.

The kinds of projects might include for example:

* Employment of administrators
* Engagement of contractors to undertake routine building maintenance or caretaking
* Costs associated with the sharing of any administrative function (for example, Safeguarding officers)
* Costs associated with engagement of external agencies to carry out administrative functions (For example book-keeping agencies)
* Employment of personnel in any auxiliary roles that support mission activity
* Initiatives that help congregations transition towards readiness for mission activity

This is not an exhaustive list. Any initiative that enables the capacity of human resources to be released might be considered.

The Synod Mission Capacity Fund must be used for initiatives that either involve congregational Members or else release Members to engage in mission (ie: not for stand-alone initiatives). Applicants will have to demonstrate clearly that any funding will help congregations release resources in mission, working alongside and in harmony with any initiatives.

***Who might apply?***

Applications will be accepted from individual congregations including LEP’s with URC members, Pastorates, Mission and Care groups, groups of churches (including ecumenical groups of which URC congregations form a part) or any group or organisation that can demonstrate close involvement in the local mission of congregations within the Yorkshire Synod (URC or LEPs).

Where applications come from Mission and Care groups, pastorates or groups of churches, one church must be designated as the lead church (to receive funding). The person completing and signing the application form must be an Officer or Elder of this church.

Ecumenical groups making applications must have a formal structure of governance and the URC congregation must be considered to be the lead church for that group.

***How will it run?***

The Mission Capacity Fund will be administered by the existing Synod Mission Fund committee

***Funding limits***

The Mission Capacity Fund will run on a trial basis and will then be reviewed by Synod Council and the Finance Resources Committee.

This means a limited initial allocation of funding (£60,000 for Year 1 at present).

It would be expected that congregations and groups of churches would also contribute to the cost of any initiative from their own resources and Synod would encourage such use of resources. This would increase the capacity of the Mission Capacity Fund although there would be no set criteria or expectation of match-funding

Funds from the SMCF would be available for initiatives/projects lasting up to three years and there is no upper limit on amounts requested.