

South Western Synod Pastoral Committee

The committee consists of the Synod Clerk and the Synod Pastoral Advisors and our Moderator. Over the past 9 or 10 months while we continued without a Moderator, I have been convening this committee.

As you will guess from our title, our role on behalf of our Synod meeting, is to oversee and take care of the people and ministries here in the south-west. In a typical meeting we will consider individuals where there are particular joys or sorrows. Each synod advisor will then lead in talking about matters in their areas that need attention. It is not appropriate here or on the floor of Synod to go into these matters in detail but if anyone wants to speak to Rachel, me or now of course the Moderator, on a matter troubling them, then please feel free to approach one of us

The committee has some other things on its agenda too. It functions as a nominations committee seeking to fill vacant posts in the synod's organisation. In conjunction with the Discipleship and Service committee we consider matters to do with ministers who are in the period of service immediately after their ordination, Education for Ministry 2, and we deal with applications from ministers for Education for Ministry 3 and sabbatical grants. We also consider applications from local churches for members who are not ordained ministers of word and sacrament, to preside at communion in their local church.

And in the last few months we've also taken our part in a conversation that the Synod has been undertaking to make sure that we better support local churches who find themselves in difficulties in one way or another. The Synod is concerned to make sure that local churches understand that when they are struggling for people or money or personnel that there are many other options to consider than simply closing! Pastoral, Finance, Legal, and Property - indeed all the arms of synod - want to make sure that our resources are coordinated as well as possible to assist in such situations. And that congregations are aware that there maybe more routes to continued life and growth that seem possible at such times. The pastoral committee have been keen to emphasise the importance of churches who are worried, speaking first to their Pastoral Advisor. They can then work to coordinate the resources and explore the options available. I chaired the first round table meeting in this process but it is now being developed by the Executive.

Also this year the General Assembly decided that the old Local Ministry & Mission Review process which has become largely defunct, ought to be resurrected in a lighter form. This is the process whereby churches consider in an ongoing way, their life and mission. The Pastoral Committee has begun to work on how we can best adopt and adapt Assembly's suggestion here in the South west. This seems to us (but also to Property and Finance) urgent, as it will help and speed up the process that is needed when for example, a local church asks the synod for financial support - especially for building work. It will assist in the confidence of the synod to give money to a particular project, if it knows the church's application for such help is in the context of the church's overall consideration of its life.

Roy Lowes

