

URC South Western Synod

October 2023 meeting of Synod

Report from the Discipleship and Service Committee

Convener: Revd Neil Thorogood (email: ministerthurc@gmail.com)

1. The creation of this special meeting of Synod and the various elements within it have taken a significant part of the committee's time this year and we wish to record our thanks and appreciation to all involved. In particular, we are grateful to those who have offered workshops and those who have encouraged more people to attend. We record our great thanks to everyone involved at Westfield URC for hosting us. We hope and pray that this gathering will be an opportunity to celebrate the Synod's life and vitality and to discover resources that can work well in our own contexts. This feels a very important aspect of our collective encouragement and affirmation, not least in this period without a Moderator.
2. General Assembly in July 2023 reaffirmed the importance of pastoral supervision as a requirement for serving ministers. In the South West, we have always extended this to include local church leaders as well. We will continue to encourage and advocate for this and are glad that many are already receiving such supervision. In order to ease any financial pressures or concerns, **we are delighted that the Synod Executive has taken the decision that all pastoral supervision fees for ministers and local church leaders be reimbursed from now on by the Synod.** This removes any need for local churches to fund this, or for any support to be sought from central URC funds. We hope this will make the system easier to use and also affirms the Synod's commitment to pastoral supervision as an essential aspect of our wider life and work. Please make any claims for reimbursement from now on to the Synod Treasurer in the normal way, using the relevant claim form from the Synod website.
3. In relation to interfaith matters, we hold in our prayers the URC's Moderator of General Assembly, Revd Dr Tessa Henry-Robinson, as she joins an ecumenical visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories in November. This has been organised by the Church of Scotland and the Methodist Church.
4. We are delighted that Revd Aiyana Gardner-Houghton is moving on from Education for Ministry Phase 2 (the first three years after ordination) as she continues her service in the Synod. We hope to be able to formally present Aiyana with her certificate at the meeting in October. We continue to support and pray for our own Synod Clerk, Rachel Leach, as her ordination training continues and look forward in due time as further candidates explore possibilities. It will be a joy that the Synod will be offering placement opportunities for current students in training at both Northern College, Manchester and Westminster College, Cambridge, in the coming months. We wish all involved well.