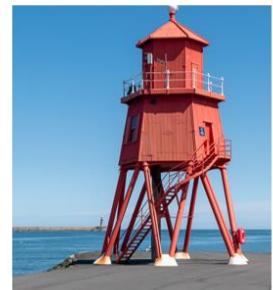




# The United Reformed Church Northern Synod

Profile  
2022



The United Reformed Church

Northern Synod

Office:

4 College Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8JJ

0191 232 1168

[office@urc-northernsynod.org](mailto:office@urc-northernsynod.org)

[www.urc-northernsynod.org](http://www.urc-northernsynod.org)



# Contents

<a href="#"><u>Preface</u></a>	4
<a href="#"><u>A rich Christian heritage</u></a>	5
<a href="#"><u>Where we are</u></a>	7
<a href="#"><u>What we believe, care about and do – our churches</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>How we meet together – Synod life</u></a>	15
<a href="#"><u>Challenges and priorities ahead</u></a>	24
<a href="#"><u>Our future Moderator</u></a>	25
<a href="#"><u>Appendix 1 – Synod &amp; team structures</u></a>	26
<a href="#"><u>Appendix 2 – Churches and membership</u></a>	28
<a href="#"><u>Appendix 3 – Moderator role description</u></a>	29
<a href="#"><u>Gallery</u></a>	36

# Preface

Northern Synod, with its combination of urban and rural communities, is seeking to bring Christ's love to the people in our region, many of whom experience poverty of materials and wellbeing.

We are holding open conversations with and between our churches as we respond to a changing world. We know we will continue to encourage and need different patterns of ministry, different ways of being church: cell church, online church, fresh expressions, of all sorts.

We look beyond our own denomination and boundaries to do this, working alongside ecumenical friends, and collaborating within the five northerly Synods in a mutually supportive use of our gifts and skills, and closer to home, both the Synod and the Trust are committed to supporting our churches to flourish.

## Our next Moderator

A post-Covid world has brought cultural and societal disruption, some of which we may not yet fully understand.

Our next Moderator will be joining us when we are undergoing and preparing for yet more radical change. The whole denomination faces such change, and so it is inevitable that such changes will spill in to the Synod and its future too. Our churches struggle with capacity, and compliance, and we know some churches are facing difficult decisions. Wherever there is change, there can be fear and uncertainty; some worry about new ways of worshipping, bold moves welcome by some, are viewed with dismay by others whose tradition rests deeply.

Yet, in a step-change to patterns of struggle, the Synod has taken a radical move to commit to extensive youth ministry, expanding our youth team to include Pioneer Youth Workers, and strengthening our young people's employment scheme. This is a Synod in which there are open doors; people are understanding the need for change, to 'thrive and survive'; we have a Trust that seeks to support and enable our churches, and is open to new ideas.

Amidst such flux and complexity, the Synod seeks a Moderator to embrace the progress made over the past seven years and take us forward.

The future Moderator will bring their deep spirituality, and love of God into a Synod that feels more fragile, in terms of volunteers, and succession planning. Their faith and

ministry will inspire and encourage our elders, ministers and congregations. They will balance sensitivity and understanding with guidance, imagination and adventurous teamwork, encouraging innovation, and boldness in ministry and worship, use of resources and being church.

With a sound understanding of change and communities, the future Moderator will provide spiritual leadership and oversight, to our churches, Synod and committees.

We are seeking a gifted and prayerful individual who can bring their own spiritual strength to support the Synod through future choices and decisions, so that we can strengthen all that is good - and together, be our best expression of Christ's love, to the world around us.

(A full role description can be found in [Appendix 3](#) on page 30)

## A rich Christian heritage

Northern Synod is a place of pilgrimage; somewhere people travel to and discover its 'thin places'.



*Statue of St Aidan, Holy Island*

St Aidan began this Christian heritage when he travelled from Iona to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne in 635. The Lindisfarne Gospels were produced in honour of the later bishop St Cuthbert, whose community founded Durham Cathedral, now a world heritage site.

The Synod of Whitby, hosted by St Hilda in 664, and presence of St Bede at Jarrow and Monkwearmouth add to both our heritage, and pilgrimage routes. The North East became the heartland of the Presbyterian Church of England, early presbyteries existed here from the mid-18th century and in 1971, it was in Newcastle that the Presbyterian Assembly resolved to join the United Reformed Church. Newcastle is also the home of St James's, built as the 'cathedral' of Northern Congregationalism. Newcastle, incidentally, was also the northern base used by John and Charles Wesley, founding one of the earliest Methodist societies in the country.

## Ecumenical and inter-faith networks

The Synod's ecumenical partners are the Roman Catholic Dioceses of Hexham and Newcastle, and Middlesbrough, together with Newcastle, Durham, and York Anglican Dioceses, which also overlaps with the Diocese of Leeds; Baptist friends are represented through the Northern Baptist Association; and there are Methodist Districts covering Newcastle, Darlington, York and Hull; additionally, there are the Northern Division of the Salvation Army; Quaker groups and various independent churches and networks. Regular church leaders' meetings are held to consider issues affecting the North East including dialogue with the civic authorities.

The regional/sponsoring body is North East Churches Acting Together, which has received financial support from the Synod since its inception. Similarly, the Synod has supported the Northumbrian Industrial Mission to provide chaplaincy throughout the region, and local churches have been a consistent advocate of Faith In Our Community, working closely with them particularly in Sunderland, Durham and Teesside. Faith In the Community provide practical and project support to churches, and have been a steadfast presence for many years, assisting churches as they share their faith and love in hard-pressed places.



The Synod has developed good relations with key members of other world faith communities, including significant engagements with inter-faith organisations.

The Ecumenical and Inter-Faith Officer works closely with the Synod Pastoral Committee and meets regularly with all denominations and faith organisations across the Synod. You can find out more about these organisations using the following links:

[NECAT](#)

[Faith In Our Community](#)

[Northumbrian Industrial Mission](#)

[North East Interfaith members](#)



Synod visit to Newcastle Central Mosque



Synod visit to Newcastle Synagogue

## Where we are...

The Synod covers approximately 8,600 square km and 4% of the overall area of the UK. Its population of just over 2.5 million is predominantly concentrated in the South and East of the region.

Northern Synod is an area of rich contrasts, there is so much here; Northumberland's borderlands, forests and rolling hills, wilderness moors in County Durham, and beautiful coastlines, spanning from Bamburgh towards Whitby and the Yorkshire Dales and moors. All of which are found close to our famous cityscapes, Newcastle, Durham, Sunderland, and Teesside; there really is a bit of everything. You can find out more [here](#).

The North East has a strong sense of regional identity, pride in its heritage, (and football teams!). Over, perhaps, thirty years, many North-East towns have reinvented their focus and purpose – consequently, the North East has become a hub for service industries, rail and environmental engineering and new technologies.

The current cost-of-living crisis is biting deeper in our part of the world, with the government defining more areas as 'forgotten places' in this region, than anywhere else in the country. The North East now continues to have higher unemployment than other Synod regions<sup>1</sup>. Investment in travel is the lowest in the UK; life expectancy and educational attainment fall below national averages. The carbon footprint is the highest of all English regions. The political agenda of 'levelling up' is yet to be fully realised.



Within this edgy reality, is a thriving cultural sector, nationally acclaimed theatres, museums, art galleries and the renowned Sage Gateshead. An active sports scene hosts international and national fixtures in a wide range of interests and sports. With so many areas of outstanding natural beauty, three national parks, forests, and beaches, the North East is a popular tourist destination and tourism

is an important part of the local economy. It is here, within these urban and wild places that our churches and congregations, can be seen.

---

<sup>1</sup> ONS:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/regionallabourmarket/july2022>

# What we believe, care about, and do - Our churches

## Synod churches, ministry and membership

The Synod is one of the smallest in terms of churches and ministers; currently 59 churches can be found here, supported by three serving CRCWs (St Columba's Billingham United Reformed Church, Sunderland, and Wooler United Reformed Church), 11 serving stipendiary ministers of word and sacraments, including 2 non-stipendiary ministers and one Special Category Minister.

There are approximately 2000 members (including ecumenical members of Local Ecumenical Partnerships), in our churches with many children, young people and families connected through use of our church buildings. We have 367 serving elders.

Many of our churches are actively involved in food banks and supporting refugees. Churches, ranging from the southernmost tip of the Synod, such as Zion URC in Northallerton which proactively encouraged and welcomed Syrian refugees into their town, to projects in our coastal churches, South Shields and Amble as well as urban settings such as Roker, Stockton, Durham and Billingham. Churches in Newcastle city, have individual projects and together help sustain the [West End Refugee Service](#) which began in a local URC.

Our churches are variously involved with credit unions, helping people seeking employment, offering services for people with mental illness, dementia cafés and a safe space, providing community gardens, hosting respite for young people with disabilities, and reaching out to their communities.

Through partnerships with schools, local agencies and groups, churches share God's love in a myriad ways, be they small rural churches providing support and friendship to isolated communities, or churches whose dedicated folk create a huge impact.



We can only give a taster here, because in each corner of our Synod, you will find caring churches fully engaged with the needs of the people around them.



Two Northern Synod churches, Zion URC and Roker URC, have won the Congregational Community award, in the past four years.





*Guisborough*



*St John the Evangelist, Kingston Park*



*Jesmond*



*St James's, Alwick*



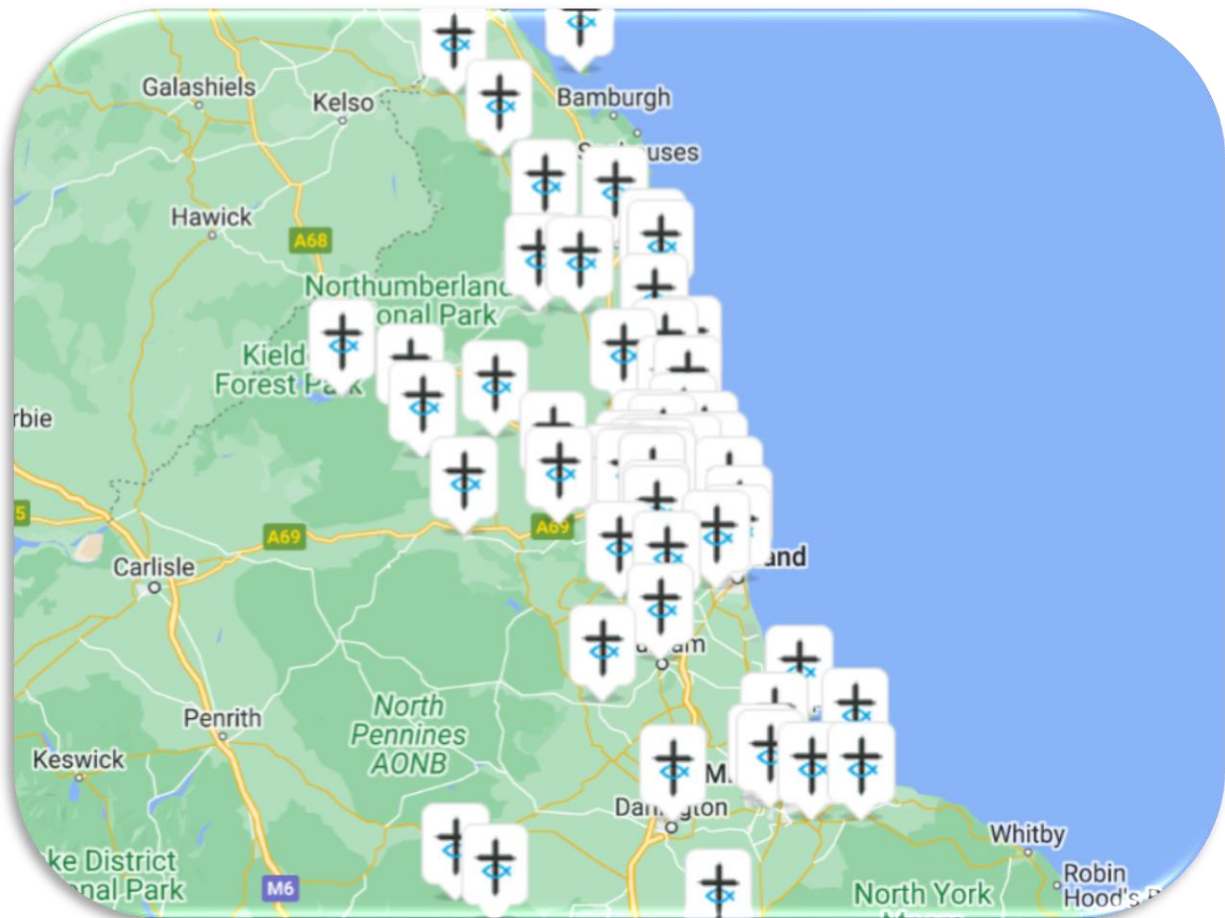
*St George's Morpeth*



*St Columba's, North Shields*

## Church groupings

Map of churches in Northern Synod



To assist challenges in ministry, churches are forming groups of no more than seven churches, with a total of up to 12 groups across the Synod: - known locally as '*The Way Forward*', Synod meeting has regularly discussed church groupings, and was recently encouraged by ministers new to the Synod, who described church groups and team work as both enriching and positive. Conversely, other ministers are candid about the how church groups disrupt the established patterns of ministry they have honed from training.

These groups are at different stages of formation; some were established some time ago and several of these groups such as Tees and Swale, One Church in Four Places and Cleveland are in vacancy. Elsewhere churches such as Bede Group are finding the process to be helpful, sharing ideas and resources that lead to new possibilities; positivity we hope to see replicated as others, such as Mid-Northumberland begin their first conversations.

## Local Ecumenical Partnerships

Of the 59 churches in the Synod, 16 are united formally with other denominations, mainly Methodist. Ecumenical relationships are an important feature in the life of the Synod with a number of churches having informal links with local churches of other denominations.

The United Area of South East Northumberland Ecumenical Area (SENEA) which is empowered to consider its own pastoral and ministerial arrangements is moving on to its next stage with new ways of working, and a new partnership agreement, which is currently awaiting approval.

## Church buildings

As with all other Synods, some of our churches are important historical sites in beautiful rural locations, some are fit for purpose with modern facilities and equipment, others are legacies of an industrial Victorian age, presenting congregations and Synod with a challenge for their maintenance and upkeep. Many congregations find their buildings are an increasing burden, and it is plain to see, that moving into other worship spaces, could bring welcome release, freeing them to be the people of God, that they wish to be.

## Synod outreach and mission projects

Two very different outreach projects, together with two formally acknowledged Mission Projects reflect the differing faces of the Synod; Grindon Mission Project lies in the heart of Sunderland, to the north, the St Cuthbert's Centre on Holy Island, is steeped in Celtic heritage, and beyond the Tees, the Keld Resource Centre offers tranquillity to walkers and travellers alike. Our fourth and newest Mission Project, is the Redcar Missional Community, due to open in 2023.

### St Cuthbert's Centre; Holy Island

The Holy Island of Lindisfarne, or simply Holy Island as it is known in this part of the world, sits just off the Northumberland coast and is accessed via a causeway at low tides. An important part of our Christian Heritage, the island attracts well over 100,000 visitors each year. Many of these come as pilgrims to this special 'thin place' and a good number of these are completing the St Cuthbert's Way as a walk of pilgrimage.



[St Cuthbert's](#) no longer has a congregation, but about 30 years ago, the Synod created the St Cuthbert's Centre which now welcomes visitors and is currently supported by the URC nationally through a Special Category Minister supported by a Management Group. Together we aim to have the Centre open as much as possible, offering prayers, retreat days, exhibitions, and other activities which are a

vibrant expression of living faith in a special place of welcome and sanctuary, including to friends from the Community of Aidan and Hilda, and Marygate House which worship at the centre. A recent project has seen the building refurbished and the garden is being developed to support that ministry of welcome.

### Grindon Mission Project; Sunderland

[Grindon Church Community Project](#) (GCCP) has been a Mission Project since 2014 and hosts a popular Messy Church, regular prayer meetings as well as weekly youth and community groups.



GCCP participates in the Faith in our Communities Programme (FIC) sponsored by the Synod, Durham Diocese, Newcastle and Darlington Methodist Districts.

“a voice, a heart, a spirit, a place”



### The Keld Resource Centre; Swaledale

Keld is a tiny village near the top of Swaledale close to where the Pennine Way and the Coast to Coast Walk cross. The [Keld Resource Centre](#) welcomes locals and visitors, to the chapel, manse, school and the institute. Many school and youth groups have enjoyed the accommodation these buildings have to offer. Keld has become a 'thin' place for the many visitors passing through, often repeatedly returning.





In recent years the buildings have undergone major renovation. The Countryside and Heritage Centre and the recently restored school, house an exhibition of what life in the dale was once like, and the manse is now a cottage with several weeks reserved for retired ministers to lead worship and welcome visitors.

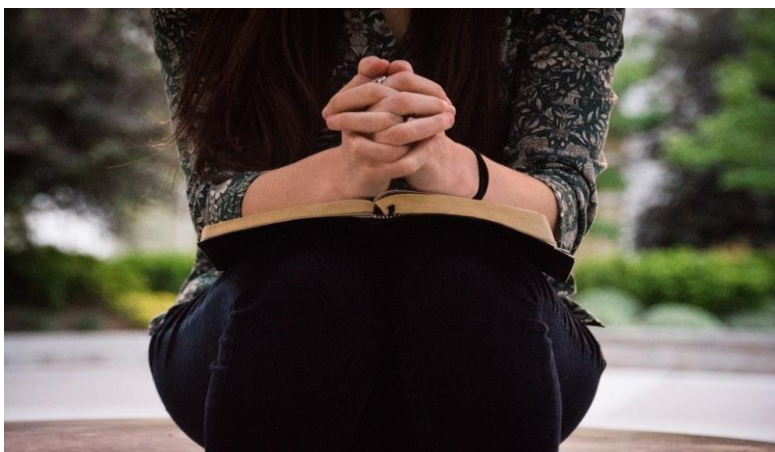
## Redcar Missional Community



This new missional project is due to open early 2023. With support from Synod and Trust, the Redcar Mission House will be a worshipping, residential community. The community will live with a rhythm of prayer and daily rule, supporting their mission out-reach to the local area. The mission project is supported by the nearby URC and Baptist churches.

## Community of Prayer

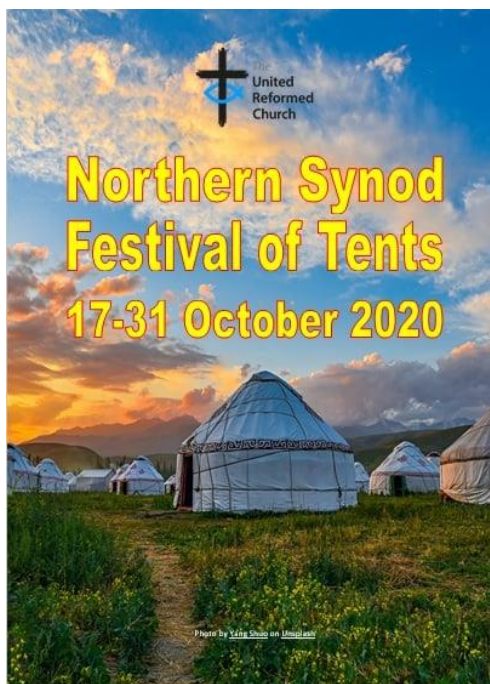
The Synod is held in prayer by our online community which meets daily, Monday to Friday. The community uses a variety of liturgies; sometimes the group write their own and at others, Iona and Northumbria Community liturgies might be used. Their morning prayers have sustained people from all corners of the Synod and beyond, and will continue to do so.



# How we meet together – Synod life

## Synod meetings

Our Synod meetings are held twice each year, in March and October. We vary their location, to ensure as many people as possible have the opportunity to attend. Like many Synods, the pandemic saw us moving our meetings online, and we held the hugely successful Festival of Tents in October 2020. We will be experimenting with hybrid and other patterns of Synod gatherings in the coming year.



## Synod committees

The Synod's committees comprise a Synod Executive and principal committees. These are:-

- Mission Committee
- Children's and Youth Work Committee
- Ministries and Development Committee
- Pastoral Committee
- Joint Yorkshire and Northern Synods Safeguarding Committee

There are a number of other groups which support the Synod including the Trust body. See [Appendix 1](#) for a structure diagram.

### Synod Executive Committee

Synod Executive acts on behalf of Synod, in between Synod meetings and is chaired by the Moderator. Much Synod activity is covered by Synod Executive which comprises the convenors of the four principal committees, the Trust Secretary, Treasurer, the Synod Clerk and Moderator. HR and ecumenical interests are represented by the Trust Secretary and Pastoral Convenor. Synod Executive provides Mission Grants to churches to support their outreach and community life. It seeks to ensure the work across the Synod is co-ordinated and effective.

### Pastoral care and the Pastoral Committee

The pastoral care of ministers our churches and congregations is a priority which is overseen by our Pastoral Committee. The key purpose of the committee is care of our churches, and all in lay ministry and leadership. Since 2016, Pastoral Committee has overseen church groupings; implementing '*the Way Forward*'; overseeing and aligning ministry to church groups, particularly interim Moderators, and pastoral friends, through the many vacancies which have arisen through retirements and changes to parishes.

The Covid-19 pandemic, has left its mark upon our churches and congregations, with some churches deciding the time has come to close. Conversely, the pandemic introduced new ways of worshipping online, and some churches have seen more people joining them. Yet, whilst predominantly many are struggling with capacity, our ordained ministers are finding creative ways to serve several congregations. This works well when elders take on more of a leadership role than perhaps, has happened in the past. Such a personal commitment, can only sit within an individual's deepening sense of discipleship and vocation. The Synod has newly appointed a Learning and

Development Officer to assist all in the Synod who wish to develop their personal faith and call to serve.

These latter aspects of our Synod life fall to our Ministries and Development Committee, and there is a close relationship between Pastoral and Ministries and Development committees, which work together, such as when arranging lay presidency training.

## Ministries and Development Committee

Our Ministries and Development Committee provides guidance and assistance to those exploring vocations and to ordinands throughout their training.

The committee has supported a range of courses for congregations as they have sought to navigate the changes brought about by Covid-19, particularly digital worship and strengthening IT literacy. The committee is looking forward to working with our newly appointed Learning and Development Officer, whose early priorities include Stepwise to assist all our congregations to deepen their discipleship.



## Safeguarding Committee



Safeguarding is overseen by Synod Executive and through the Joint Yorkshire and Northern Synods Safeguarding Committee. The Synod Safeguarding Officer attends at least one Synod meeting and one Executive each year, and the Trust is kept updated of Safeguarding trends. The Moderator plays a key role in safeguarding, and its committees.

## Children, Youth and Family

In October 2021 an exciting new 5-year strategy for Children, Youth and Family was approved by Synod. This was in response to the Synod objective and priority of undertaking:-

“Pioneer work with children, young people and families so that we can develop churches for today’s and tomorrow’s world.”

The main thrust of the strategy is to address the two issues of capacity and connectivity by providing a range of support programmes and finance to those local churches who are wanting to re-energise their children, youth and family activities. This support is

overseen by the Synod Children’s Work Advisor and the Synod Youth Work Advisor. Both of them build upon a strong track record of working with churches, setting up groups and initiatives.

Together they proactively encourage the churches, by asking questions about the church’s priorities and where they see themselves in the future, so that the future activities and support can be developed in partnership – it’s not a static provision.



The support on offer is wide ranging and includes the largest single financial commitment by Synod to local churches. Support can be in the form of employment of additional Pioneer Workers; the provision of church-based work placement opportunities for those aged 18-25; assistance with the design of projects; relevant training opportunities; links to specialist advice through a resource bank; grants for the disadvantaged and help with the purchase of materials and equipment.

Although it is early days, our Pioneer Workers have developed completely new initiatives including a Carers Group for families of young people and children with special needs, pop-up seasonal activities, and recently a series of Family Days which proved popular with families unconnected to the church. The team are proactive with creating and establishing strong connections and partnerships, such as with Churches Together, Northerly Synods colleagues and Scripture Union.

Progress with the strategy is reported to every Children’s and Youth Work Committee meeting. In addition, regular reports are provided for Synod Executive, the Trust and to the twice-yearly Synod meetings.





## Social Justice and Public Issues

We encourage people to engage with 'Christian Aid' and support 'Commitment for Life' projects. Many of our churches promote fair trade and some have become fair trade churches.



## Equalities, inclusion and diversity.

Meeting local needs, can bring us face-to-face with the injustices around us, which often stem from prejudice, institutional and personal discrimination.



Many Northern Synod churches are fully inclusive to all across the LGBTQI rainbow, and amongst the first nationally, to register for same sex marriage. There are some churches in the Synod which are yet to hold their conversations about same sex marriage.

Statistically, the Synod is not a racially diverse region, with 8% approximately of ethnic heritage<sup>2</sup>. The Synod has an active Racial Justice Advocate, who speaks into this space and encourages the Synod and churches to proactively seek out those who are discriminated against, and look to barriers we unknowingly create in our welcome to each other. Inter-faith networks are also a rich source of racial discussion.



<sup>2</sup> ONS - <https://bit.ly/3QcLl4>



Currently, the Synod allocates 25% of one minister's time to work as 'Synod Green Apostle',

encouraging congregations to make creation care a significant part of their life and witness.

As well as visiting congregations to speak and to lead worship, the Green Apostle advocates membership of the [A Rocha Eco Church](#) movement with its accompanying resources and awards scheme. Ten congregations within the Synod have registered with Eco Church, four becoming award winners.

We have registered as an Eco Synod, working towards an Eco Synod award from A- Rocha. The Synod Executive and Trust have begun work on moving to 'net zero' for Synod activities and a Synod environmental policy is being prepared for presentation to the October 2022 Synod Meeting. Most recently, the Trust has offered 100% grants for insulation work on manses within the Synod.

Ecumenically, the Synod Green Apostle contributes to the NECAT (North East Churches Acting Together) environmental group, which has offered successful conferences and seminars across the region – on being an Eco Church, eco theology, energy saving, and a taster event for Forest Church / Outdoor Church.

## Northerly Synods

Northern Synod has actively supported the five Northerly Synods collaboration with Mersey, NW, Yorkshire, and the Synod of Scotland. The Synod views the opportunity to share resources, skills and

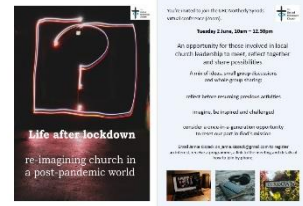


**Northerly  
Synods**



knowledge to be beneficial to all churches and we currently share our Synod Safeguarding Officer and Synod Safeguarding Support Officer with Yorkshire Synod. In addition to the Joint Safeguarding Committee, there is a newly established, joint Listed Buildings Advisory Committee, both shared with Yorkshire Synod. The northerly Synods also share their established reconciliation service which can assist with facilitating and guiding difficult conversations in local churches.

Collaboration between team members across the Northerly Synods is a constant and established way of working in our Synods now; Children and Youth Workers meet up regularly, share resources, and work together and there are shared projects led by Mission Enablers. Behind the scenes, some office staff have regular contact with their colleagues in other northerly Synods, sharing good practice, and building relationships of trust and understanding.



It is expected that shared posts and collaborative working will be an increasingly regular feature of our Synod life. All of which means we are expecting on-going changes to how we work within the Synod team, and in our wider Synod life. The outcome of the Church Life Review is not yet known, although we can anticipate that this will impact upon and be developed alongside the northerly Synods. Our future Moderator will play a key role in developing and assisting the northerly Synods collaboration, both through personal advocacy, and by being an active and supportive member of the northerly Synods Moderators cell-group, and the Moderators' and Clerks' meetings.



## Communications

The Communications Group has made some positive changes, with a new website and the newsletter which now reaches hundreds of people far and wide – sometimes we receive it back again from churches further afield.

The popularity of the newsletter highlights the value of effective communications and we recognise strengthening our digital and online presence is much needed if we are to ensure our communications remain positive and relevant.

## The United Reformed Church (Northern Province) Trust Ltd

The Trust Board takes responsibility for financial and property resources on behalf of Synod. Currently Northern Synod is financially stable and mid-range within the financial spectrum of Synods in the URC. Churches are not charged a levy for the work of the Synod, which is predominantly funded by investment income. This, together with falling member numbers, present challenges in the longer term. The Trust is content for a future Moderator to be a Trustee, or to maintain a presence as *ex-officio*. The Trust sees its role as to support the Synod in the decisions it takes, acting as a good custodian of resources. The Trust has a key role to play in supporting churches in their property and manse decisions. The Trust is the employing body of the Synod team.

## The Synod Team

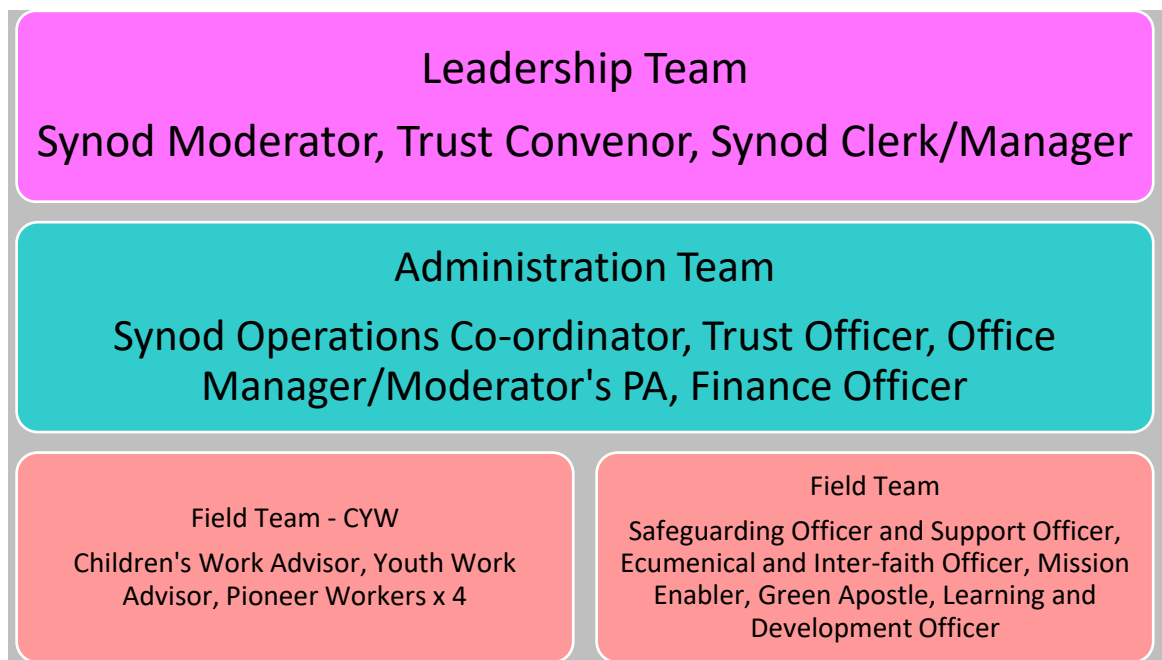
The Synod is organised to enable the Moderator to be free from business tasks, and to concentrate upon the spiritual, and pastoral wellbeing of the Synod. Following a review in 2018, the Synod staff are organised in to three distinct teams:-

**The Leadership Team** comprises the Moderator, the Trust Convenor and the Synod Clerk.

**The Administration Team** is led by the Operations Co-ordinator, and includes the Office Manager/Moderator's PA, Finance Officer, and the Trust Officer.

**The Field Team** involves all who have an outreach role, supporting local churches and they are: the Children's Work Advisor, the Youth Work Advisor, the Pioneer Workers, the Safeguarding Officer, the Safeguarding Support Officer (both shared posts with Yorkshire Synod), Mission Enabler, Learning and Development Officer, Ecumenical and Inter-Faith Officer.

Most of the team work part-time, with an FTE of 8 people. (Please see [Appendix 1](#) for a structure diagram)



The Synod has been operating as a paperless working environment since January 2020. Our HR systems are web-based, all documents are stored on SharePoint enabling fully hybrid and mobile working.



The Synod Office has recently been completely refurbished and modernised, and offers a pleasant working environment – we doubt there is a loo, like ours, anywhere else in the URC!

The office is located in central Newcastle, convenient for all Metro, rail, air, and road networks.



On a practical note, the new Moderator will be freed from many administrative and management activities, some of which are undertaken by the Synod Clerk/Manager and some by the Synod team; which means the Moderator is integral to our Synod team and committee life.



## Challenges and priorities ahead...

The Synod is scoped for 15 ministers and is working towards 12 stipendiary ministers by 2025.

By 2023 we will have 2 non-stipendiary ministers, 3 CRCWs and a Special Category Minister based on Holy Island until 2025. New Synod church groupings are predicated upon team working and seek to encourage all congregations to see that God has something for us, no matter how old we are! Perhaps there is something in developing later-life ministry.

Synod 2021 agreed two priorities for the coming three years:

- To develop Children, Youth and Family ministries by connecting with churches seeking to reach schools and young people, providing Pioneer Ministers to work in churches and communities, to expand our youth work employment scheme and enhance our digital communications and online presence.
- To extend our mission for all churches by encouraging individual vocation and discipleship. This priority needs to be developed further as we also find ways to help relieve churches of the burdens they face.

Underpinning both these priorities is the Synod's commitment to be carbon neutral by the end of 2025 and our safeguarding ethos that to love our neighbour as ourselves, is to maintain a safe and secure space in which everyone can worship freely.

All of which raises issues of capacity, how to facilitate change well within the churches, providing support and encouraging life, whilst responding to the needs of those clamouring for help or seeking closure; this is the challenging and time-consuming essence of our Synod life.

The challenges and changes we face require the commitment and energy to work with all our churches, encouraging and nurturing gifts across the Synod – as well as to help discern the future of the Synod, its congregations, churches and people.

# Our future Moderator



Northern Synod has good projects and good links with other Synods, denominations and partners. Willingness to change is widespread in our churches. Our children and youth work is going from strength-to-strength; we are blessed to have some very gifted and talented ministers and staff supported by willing and skilled volunteers. We have much potential.

Our next Moderator will be taking us on from here, strengthening our mission priorities whilst leading through much change. We are realistic in understanding that with change can come difficult times, that the boldness sought or demanded by some, can be restrained or prevented by others in our churches, our Synod and across all areas of denominational life. Change will be our constant.

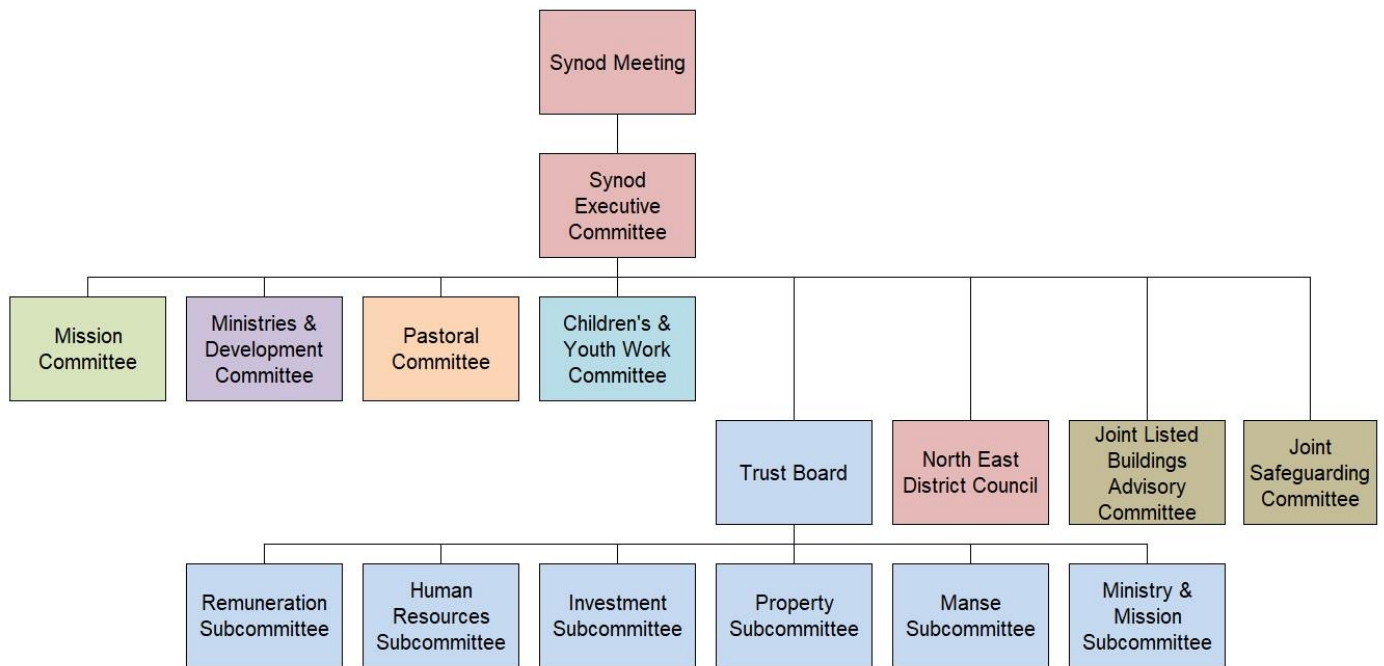
With the courage to tackle difficulties and sensitivity to develop our strengths, our future Moderator will be welcomed as we work together for the good of Christ's Church.



*Shepherding the flock*

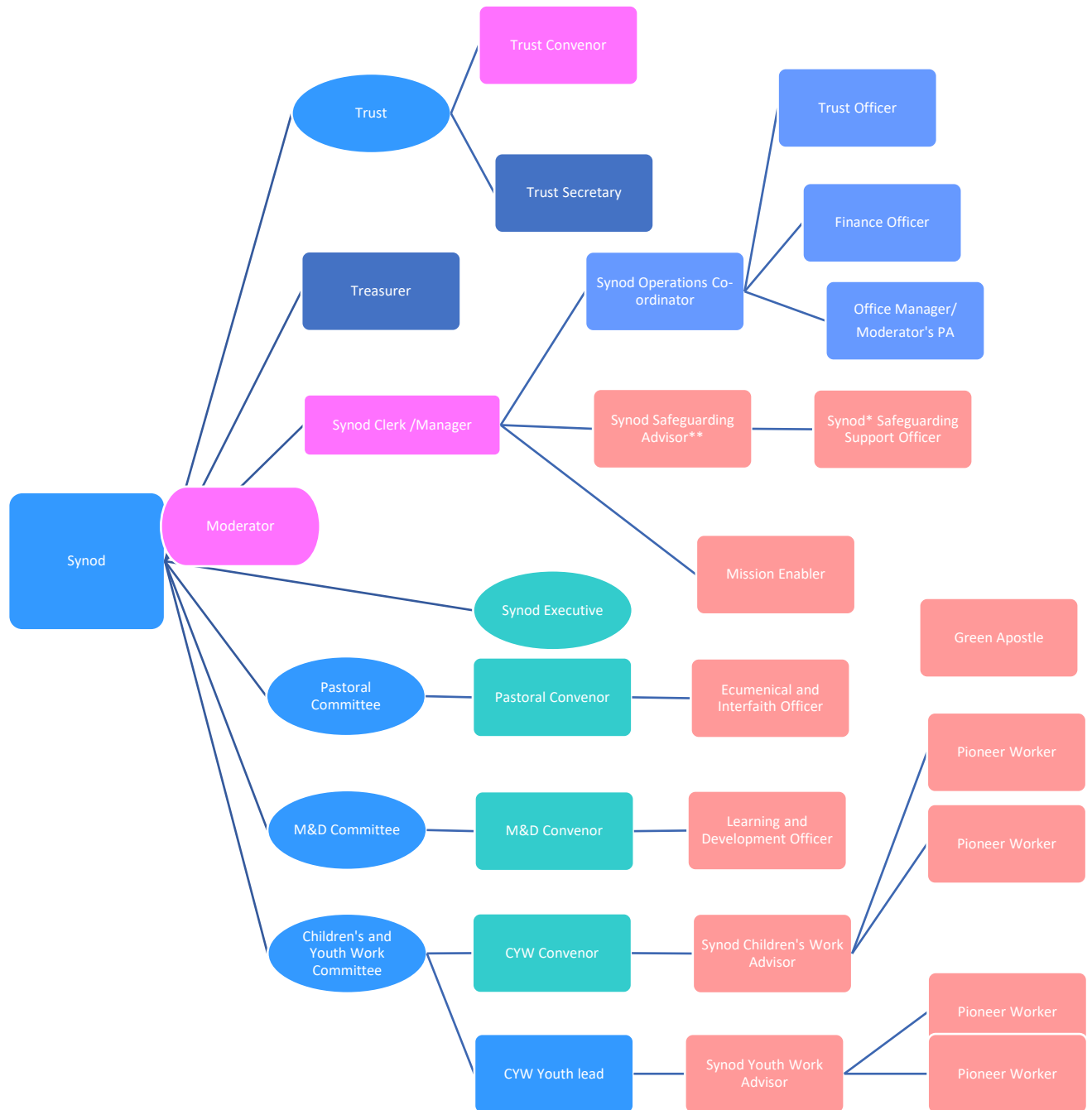
# Appendix 1 – Synod Committee and Team Structure

Figure 1: - Synod Committee Structure



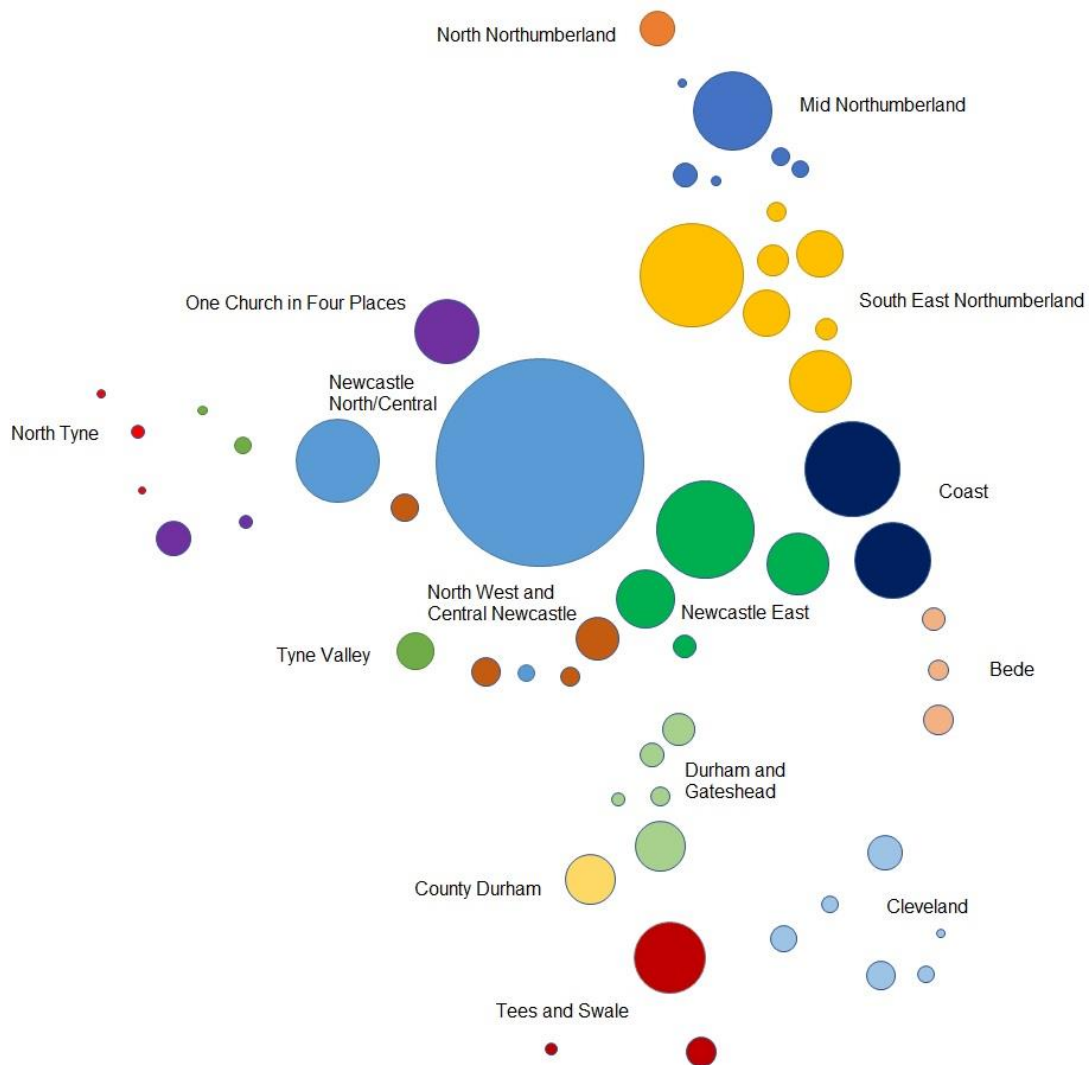
[nb: The Mission Committee is in the process of developing as a Mission Forum with special groups of interest supporting different aspects of mission and social justice in the Synod]

Figure 2: - Synod team organisational structure



# Appendix 2 – Churches by membership size

Figure 3: - Topographical map of churches by membership size.



# Appendix Three – Northern Synod Moderator – Role Description



## Role description

<b>OFFICE TITLE:</b>	Moderator of Northern Synod of the United Reformed Church
<b>RESPONSIBLE TO:</b>	General Assembly through the General Secretary
<b>STIPEND:</b>	Stipend authorised by the Plan for Partnership will apply
<p><b>ROLE OVERVIEW:</b> To provide spiritual and pastoral oversight, care and leadership within the synod, giving confidence for the Church’s mission locally, regionally/ nationally, and globally.</p> <p>To provide imaginative clear personal leadership to enable and encourage discernment of God’s will within the councils of the Church.</p>	

*This post is for an initial seven-year term with a possibility of renewal for further five-year terms. The main responsibilities will be subject to review during the term, and at the point of any renewal as new insights are gained and circumstances evolve.*

## Responsibilities and Duties

### Synod

1. Play a key role in developing and realising the synod’s vision and strategy through the implementation of the synod mission criteria by offering theological insight, having a clear awareness of priorities, and facilitating open discussion within the synod to produce realistic and agreed objectives.

2. Encourage ecumenical commitment and endeavour across the synod.
3. Encourage and support synod and local churches engagement with public issues, notably climate change and social justice.
4. Nurture a sense of community and coherence across the synod by clear communication and leadership to ministers, churches, officers, committees, synod staff and the synod trust.
5. Work collaboratively with synod officers/committees to facilitate clarity about priorities and to encourage creativity and new ideas about being church.
6. Plan and Chair synod Meetings.
7. Maintain a personal visibility across the Synod, initiating and developing creative ways of engaging with people and churches across the Synod.
8. Encourage churches in their ecumenical and inter-faith commitment and endeavour; building peace and unity in relationships with communities of other faiths across the Synod.

### Churches

1. Support congregations as they face change, and to encourage them to think creatively about their futures.
2. Ensure the development and implementation of an appropriate strategy for the deployment of stipendiary ministers/CRCWs within the synod's agreed allocation.
3. Visit and provide strategic encouragement to pastorates in vacancy, to suggest names of ministers and CRCWs to vacant pastorates in conjunction with interim moderators of local churches and to preside (except where a deputy is appointed) at all ordinations/commissioning and/or inductions of ministers within the synod.
4. Nurture vocations of all kinds, with people of all ages and backgrounds, to ensure that individual gifts in the churches and committees will be recognised and fostered for the benefit of the whole synod.
5. Visit and lead worship at churches within the synod.
6. Assist churches which are closing and encourage their congregations to explore new patterns of worship.

## People

1. Ensure active encouragement and support for the spiritual growth, renewal and Christian service of congregations of all ages.
2. Meet with ministerial candidates and provide them with vocational and procedural guidance.
3. Be a 'Good Shepherd'; ensure supportive oversight and pastoral care can be provided to serving and retired ministers, CRCWs and their families.
4. Act as an adviser in the URC's provision of support services to ministers and CRCWs (e.g. long-term sickness arrangements, welfare, retirement processes).
5. Encourage ministers and CRCWs in spiritual growth and development at all stages in their ministry, alongside those responsible for their supervision and ongoing development.
6. Fulfil Safeguarding responsibilities relating to active situations and those responsibilities ascribed to the Synod Moderator under the Ministerial Disciplinary process and the Incapacity procedure.
7. Share the love of God with others, engaging with people in churches and communities.
8. Celebrate cultural diversity, helping people understand and navigate difference enabling the synod and churches to be genuinely inclusive and welcoming.

## Wider Engagement

1. Participate as a member of Assembly Executive and the General Assembly.
2. Represent the synod to the wider church and the wider church to the synod.
3. Take a full part in the Moderators' Meeting.
4. Be proactive in encouraging fruitful ecumenical and interfaith activities at a national level, to ensure the United Reformed Church is represented in church leaders' meetings and, where relevant, represent the synod at ecumenical events.

## Person Specification

Moderator of Northern Synod

REQUIREMENTS	ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	MEASUREMENT
Education and qualifications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Educated to at least diploma level or equivalent in theology</li> <li>2. Ordained minister of Word and Sacraments of the United Reformed Church</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evidence of keeping abreast with current theological literature</li> </ul>	Applicant's details/interview
Experience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Experience of working as a minister in a local pastorate</li> <li>4. Experience of leadership and working in close collaboration with other colleagues</li> <li>5. Experience of working with church or voluntary organisations on strategic plans</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recent experience of working as a minister in a local pastorate</li> <li>• different church contexts</li> <li>• working ecumenically</li> <li>• change management at synod level</li> </ul>	Applicant's details/interview

	6. Leading effective change in complex situations		
Knowledge	<p>7. Deep understanding of the role of the Church in its mission to the world</p> <p>8. Deep understanding of the distinctive traditions, ethos and witness of the United Reformed Church</p> <p>9. Awareness of the individuality of local churches and their needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding of the ethos and polity of other denominations and major faith groups</li> </ul>	Applicant's details/interview
Skills and Abilities	<p>10. Ability to exercise appropriate personal leadership within a conciliar ecclesiology</p> <p>11. Ability to discern and deliver the kind of approach which will best promote open and constructive relationships at all levels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use of social media</li> </ul>	Applicant's details/interview

	<p>12. Strong interpersonal and communication skills</p> <p>13. Delegation and team building skills</p> <p>14. Facilitation skills</p> <p>15. Conflict resolution skills</p> <p>16. Skills in project and change management</p> <p>17. Skills in time management</p> <p>18. Ability to assess priorities and plan workload accordingly</p> <p>19. IT skills in e-mail and document handling</p> <p>20. Digital technologies</p>		
--	---	--	--

# Gallery



**Celebrate Together**

A URC Northern Synod day out to celebrate 50 years of the United Reformed Church. Enjoy the attractions of Beamish Museum for the day and join us for lunch and an afternoon birthday celebration service. Suitable for all ages. Booking is essential—further details at: <https://www.urc-northernsynod.org/celebratetogether>

**Saturday 2 July, 10am-5pm**

