



## South Western Synod Profile



*Taunton URC where the Synod Office is located*

## Who Are We ... And What Do We Believe?

The South Western Synod covers beautiful countryside, much loved holiday locations, popular heritage sites, busy and progressive cities and often finds itself at the forefront of environmental innovation. Cities, towns and rural communities all have both rich resources and challenges and offer a widely diverse perspective on life, church and mission.

The URC is present in local communities and seeking to bear witness to the gospel across the great variety of experience and context in the region. We believe that we play an important role in encouraging community cohesion, involving people in hopeful communities where well-being is cherished and celebrated. With ecumenical partners we seek to engage with society, embody and share the values of the Kingdom of God, and supporting those in need speaking up for justice and environmental sustainability.

## Our New Moderator

The South Western Synod is seeking a prayerful, discerning, and inspirational Moderator to guide the Synod as it looks to fulfil God's mission. We recognize that the society and culture in which we all live is very different today from what it was even twenty years ago, particularly where church attendance and affiliation is concerned. This requires a Moderator who, with zeal and passion, can bring spiritual leadership as well as a real understanding of, and a willingness to explore, the needs of today's church and society. You will work with us to help build on strengths, and develop our response to the challenges which are faced both by churches and those who live in our cities, towns and villages.

You will bring to the role:

- enthusiasm for church life, mission, and outreach,
- a desire to promote inclusion and social justice,
- advocacy for environmental sustainability.
- practical experience and an understanding of leading effective change in complex situations
- a vibrant interest in ecumenical and interfaith relationships.

Your interpersonal, management, communication and digital skills will help you to lead a Synod which covers a region of varied communities from rural and seaside villages to towns and cities, with many churches in ecumenical partnerships and a united area. The Synod is committed to encouraging and supporting its 110 churches in mission to their local communities and beyond.

You will bring experience in innovative, mission focused, ministry in local churches, to support and encourage our churches to be authentic, outward looking and rooted in their local community.

Your consultative and collaborative style of leadership, and ability to relate well to people, will enable you to provide inspirational and pastoral leadership to the Synod staff team, ministers and churches in the South West.

## Our Community And Place

### Geography

The Synod is large, stretching from Cornwall through Devon and Somerset to Swindon in Wiltshire, and including the Greater Bristol conurbation. This area is home to 4.2 million residents, some 7.5% of the England population. It is one of England's fastest growing regions with the population increasing by 8% between 2011 and 2021. House building is on the rise and people moving out of cities for more rural areas, due to the Covid experience, has had an impact. Another factor being that an increasing number of people retire to the South West from all over the UK.



*Royal Crescent, Bath*

Whilst the area is known for its high quality and diverse environment, reflected in two national parks and three World Heritage sites it also encompasses the major cities of Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth and Bath, together with a range of towns such as Swindon, Torbay, Taunton, Barnstaple, Bridgwater and Falmouth and many rural and coastal communities.

In addition to traditional industries such as agriculture and tourism the area is home to significant clusters of advanced businesses in technologies such as aviation, space exploration, maritime and universities in Bristol, Exeter, Bath and Plymouth.

## Communications

The peninsula nature of the South means that the geographical span of the Synod is large, with a distance of over 200 miles between churches in Swindon and those in Cornwall.

The Synod Office is at Taunton in the centre of the Synod. There are good road links from Taunton to most other areas, with the M5, M4, A38 and A30 providing a good strategic



*Exmoor Coast*

network, albeit with some pressures in Summer months. Similarly, the main line railway offers good connections from Taunton to London, the Midlands, and key cities in the South West.

Off the major road and rail links, travelling is scenic but journey speeds and network capacity can be limited.

## Economic Structure And Social Aspects

### Cities and Towns

The larger towns and cities, where there is good road infrastructure, have large industry and service sector employers. The area is home to significant clusters of advanced businesses in technologies such as aviation and maritime, defence industries, the Ministry of Defence, mobile phone, computer and technological companies along with food producers and major centres for retail.

There are Universities in the major cities, accredited colleges in towns and a variety of agricultural colleges and training programmes. They attract an academic population to the



*Exeter University*

area: students, tutors and researchers, as well as employment and a cultural and arts opportunities. The URC participates in the ecumenical and interfaith provision of chaplaincy services to some Universities in the Synod.

Smaller, often 'market' towns, are facing changing demographics and retail culture, while being sustained by local business, industry and the surrounding rural economy.

### Villages and Rural Areas

Large areas of the Synod are rural. Farming and food production have become more and more industrialized in recent times. Many villages are a mix of long-term residents and holiday homeowners, farmers and land owners. With the closure of local facilities such as banks, post offices, medical care and shops, residents in such communities can feel isolated and churches can play a continuing role in supporting communities.



*Devon Cattle*

### New Towns

With the growing population in the South West there is a continuing emphasis on the provision of additional housing, particularly as high house prices in some areas make it difficult for local people to find accommodation. This has led to changes in village life and the creation of new communities, with the new towns of Sherford and Cranbrook in Devon now being delivered. Further developments being planned such as the Eastern villages at Swindon and Culm Garden Village near Cullompton. These offer opportunities for church planting and pioneer ministry, for example the ecumenical Cornerstone church at Cranbrook.

## Tourism

Tourism is important in many areas of the Synod. It is an industry that has to be flexible to meet changes in consumer requirements: walking on Dartmoor, Exmoor and the South West Coast Path (86% borders the Synod area), outdoor activities such as cycling, climbing, fishing, sailing and surfing, holiday homes for rental along with restaurants and hotels. This fragile industry is frequently served by low paid, seasonal, often immigrant workers and is weather dependent.



*Dartmoor*

## The People

The region and the churches attract a significant number of retired people. There is a racial mix in the South West, not always reflected in our churches.



*Fishing boats, Beer*

The recent years of recession, economic turbulence and the consequent reductions in employment have taken their toll on the communities within the Synod. There are stories of success, resilience and innovation, but there is also significant stress and deprivation, particularly amongst farmers and farm workers. Population shift away from traditional rural communities is often an issue, while there is evidence of newer, locally and environmentally conscious rural initiatives.

## The Synod Is Arranged Into Five 'Areas'

### Snap shots of the Areas from their Synod Pastoral Advisors

#### Bristol

##### The Synod's largest settlement

The South Western Synod's largest conurbation is Bristol, a city and area of approximately half a million people. Although a large city, it is a place that many see as beautiful: built on the river Avon and surrounded by the Mendip Hills, the Cotswold's and the Somerset Levels.



*Clifton Suspension Bridge*

Although built up and almost adjoining the partner city of Bath, some of the URCs in this Area are suburban or rural. There are many green spaces and a high awareness of preserving and working with the natural environment.

##### Transport

A river, hills and lots of people mean that transport within, across and around Bristol can be challenging. It is flanked and cut

in two by motorways, it also has good train links to Wales, the rest of the South West and London. A new Clean Air zone and uncertainties about the future of public transport mean that travel, and particularly peak time travel, can be an issue.

##### Industry and Education

Historically Bristol had a huge maritime focus, with its large floating harbour and the historic SS Great Britain as a reminder of these previous glories. Bristol had an active role in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and this has left a legacy of some great wealth, but also of deep divisions and scars, illustrated by the controversy around the toppling of the Edward Colston statue. The city is sometimes described as having a 'rich' north, with a much 'poorer' south.



*Redland Park URC*

There are a whole range of industries across Bristol, from the globally recognised, now reduced, Rolls Royce and Airbus factories to the plethora of startup companies engaged in practically every area of life. This diversity is also reflected in the area of culture and education, there are the established universities of Bristol, UWE and Bath and Bath Spa, just up the road, but there are also colleges for Music and many other forms of higher education.

## Housing, Life and Church Life

Housing provision and the cost of living is an issue in Bristol as it is an area with huge multicultural diversity, with many close-knit communities. Some behind gated complexes others within tower blocks and others around community allotments or set around compressed street corners with shops selling food ranges from all around the world. This vibrancy and diversity is also reflected in broader church life. Together4Bristol (Churches Together in Greater Bristol) has been able to connect many of these expressions and have facilitated a model of working together to serve society which is novel and powerful and appreciated by many across the city. The mantra that the churches and the Council are working towards: Becoming a City of Hope.

## Swindon, Wiltshire and the Wiltshire United Area

### Swindon and Wiltshire

Swindon is the largest town on the eastern edge of the South Western Synod. Swindon has a famous railway heritage, and until fairly recently was the base of Honda and some tech industries. It continues to be the home of the Nationwide Building Society. There is a large retail sector, as well as a number of educational colleges in the town. The



Swindon

population continues to increase with new housing estates to the south, north, as well as the proposed Swindon East development which will provide housing for 20 000 people.

There are three fulltime URC ministers, two in Swindon, and one serving the Wiltshire churches of Cricklade, Malmesbury and Royal Wootton Bassett. In Swindon there are two large URC churches, Immanuel, Upham Road with around 90 members, and Emmanuel Haydon Wick with just under 80, and four LEPs, although one has just been dissolved. Total membership is around 350 spread over the URC congregations and the LEP's.

### Wiltshire United Area (Methodist/URC)

There are numerous market towns in the United Area, with good travel connections by local bus, as well as a number of train stations with services into London.

There are significant events which attract thousands of people every year such as the Glastonbury festival and annual carnivals and markets. There are towns with a United Church presence – Devizes, Bradford-on-Avon, Calne, Corsham, Melksham, Trowbridge, Westbury and Warminster as well as smaller villages with smaller churches or chapels.



Wiltshire Countryside

Wiltshire United Area has a membership of just over 480 spread over 17 churches. The majority of the congregations have an elderly age profile. The churches are situated in towns and villages of varying sizes and populations. Ministry is provided by two full time URC ministers, and two full time Methodist ministers. There are also active retired ministers from both denominations, as well as a number of local/lay preachers. There is a United Area Executive which includes all ministers and several lay folk covering the administration and finances.

### Cornwall, Plymouth and North Devon Area

Geographically, this area covers roughly half the Synod. There are 19 churches of which 10 are united with the Methodists. The Synod only has five churches in Cornwall of which four are united. Apart from Plymouth, the area is rural and coastal.

The M5 ends at Exeter and although there are good roads down through Devon to Cornwall, they can get busy during the holiday season, making travelling tricky especially at weekends. Once you get into rural Devon and Cornwall roads can be very challenging!



Looe

The Cornish churches and most of those in North Devon are in holiday hotspots. Some members run B&Bs and hotels. Congregations can increase in the summer months with tourists, some

who come just once, while others have holiday homes and may be more involved. Employment especially for young people is mostly in the hospitality industry so there is very little in the winter months. There is a lot of economic deprivation with its attendant problems. It is also hard for people to get on the housing ladder as prices are high due to second homes and landlords only letting to tourists. The upside of this is that there is plenty of potential for churches to get involved in the community.



Plymouth Hoe 1

Plymouth is a University City. It has a long proud naval tradition and plenty of employment. The five churches here are a mix of URC and United and all but one is based in the suburbs. The one in the centre tries to work with the university and there is potential here to do more. There is a mix of rich and poor areas and the churches reflect this.

Dartmoor is a national park and so most people live near the coast or in Plymouth, however we have three churches in villages and towns in west Devon.

It is a beautiful place to live with many people retiring here. The churches are a mix of the vibrant and busy, not necessarily large, and some that are struggling to cope with huge buildings that are not really fit for purpose, and considering where their future lies.

### South and East Devon

South and East Devon has 21 URC churches at present with four of them being united and linked with the Methodist denomination and one with the Anglican Church.



*Cathedral Square, Exeter*

The fellowships cover a wide area from Axminster on the eastern edge of Devon and stretching right along the south coast as far as Dartmouth. This area includes the city of Exeter and the nearby new town of Cranbrook where we are partners in an ecumenical church project. We have churches in coastal communities and further inland. The area is largely rural and the population ebbs and flows with the arrival of holiday visitors in the summer months.

Notable initiatives in the Devon churches in this area include the URC at Axminster which, three years ago, sold the main church, retained their church hall and converted it into a small modern multi-purpose building which has brought new life to the church. Flavel URC in Dartmouth has two local leaders from a Pioneer Network background. The fellowship has a strong evangelical ethos and reach out into the community which thrives during the summer months but has many issues with local deprivation and homelessness. The church run a café, a drop-in centre and a relaxed service on Sundays.

In Exeter, with a recently inducted Minister, the churches are connecting with other denominations, and the cathedral and working with university students. Our Kingsteignton and Dawlish URCs have recently formed a joint pastorate and called a new minister from the United Church of Christ in America. She will arrive in June and work with the pastorate and half time for the Synod. Several of our churches in this area are considering the long-term viability of their buildings and thinking of ways to better connect with and serve their local communities.



*Babbacombe, South Devon*

## Somerset

In Somerset the main city is Bath where two of the URC churches have recently united and



*Glastonbury URC*

have plans for developing the buildings they now occupy to support local mission. In Bridgwater the three-church pastorate run a community café, are involved in Street Pastors and have a CRCW working with them and as a chaplain at the Hinkley Point power plant construction site. In the Mid Somerset Group the 4 churches, between them, run a food hub in Glastonbury, a community café, have on-going live streaming of services and are working on Eco Church issues. Taunton URC, is hosting a Ukrainian family, offering a warm hub, have a mission to a local nursing home and have recently invited local people of the LGBT community people to join them for tea and sharing conversation as the church considers, for the second time, about registering the church for same sex marriages.

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*Somerset levels 1*

## Our Churches And Ministers

There are 110 churches in the Synod. Some 42 are united formally with other denominations, mainly Methodist. Ecumenism is an important feature in the life of the Synod - many churches have an LEP, or more informal links, with local churches of other denominations. Wiltshire has a united Area (URC/Methodist LEPs). Close cooperation with other denominations enables many opportunities and at times some frustrations as the Moderator has to relate to many regional church leaders!

The Synod has a Synod Ecumenical Officer, and there are ecumenical bodies for the majority of the areas within the Synod.



## Local Churches And Ministry

The Synod has churches across the spectrum of theology, worship style and size. The geographical distribution of churches is uneven and there are often problems providing ministry in more rural areas. The Synod Pastoral Committee is trying to encourage a creative approach to sharing and facilitating ministry for all our churches.



Lynton URC

There are currently 23 URC stipendiary ministers serving within the Synod, ministers from other denominations in ecumenical situations and two of our churches benefit from local church leaders. There is a URC Church Related Community Worker serving in the Synod.

The Synod is divided administratively into five areas, each of which has a Synod Pastoral Advisor. Church Membership across the Synod numbers around 2,500.

## Opportunities

This is a 'happy' and cooperative, if independent, Synod where churches feel encouraged to try new things. The Synod as a whole has been committed to exploring new ways of being and leading church for many years now. We've engaged with Pioneer Ministry from both URC roots and ecumenical partners, worked on supporting Local Church Leaders and explored youth mission initiatives with the Youth Genesis trust.

Several of our new ministerial appointments have had, built in to them, a 'transitional ministry' element. This allows a flexibility as ministerial provision changes and allows the Synod to support local churches as they explore and discern their mission and future.

The post Covid experience has opened new mission opportunities for some of our churches. We see congregations being more outward looking and finding ways to support people in their communities through community cafés, warm spaces, foodbanks, and job clubs etc.

The Discipleship and Service Committee are looking at a focus on resources available for training within local churches, for example: Stepwise and resources from the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity, which will give a focus to growing church life and mission. Forthcoming Synod meetings will engage in a project called 'Making Christ Visible' to support local churches.



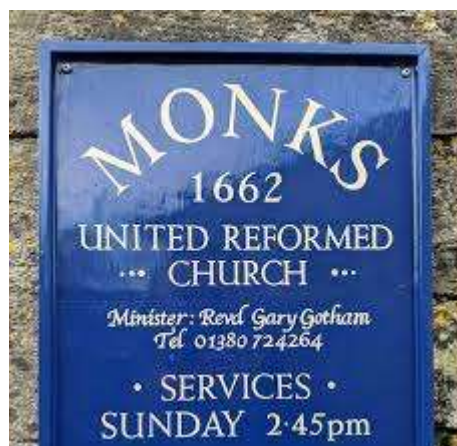
Heavitree URC

## Challenges

Being churches in the UK's increasingly secular culture is a great challenge for all Christians. We recognise this in the South Western Synod along with our ecumenical partners.

One of our greatest challenges is the numerical decline in our congregations, which has hastened over the last few years of the Covid pandemic. Many congregations are encountering challenges in simply maintaining church life due to fewer volunteers and a lack of critical skills, e.g., Elders, Treasurers, Property, Safeguarding Officers.

Deployment of Ministers is an ongoing conversation which is complicated by the impending retirement of a significant ministers over the next few years.



## Initiatives To Highlight

The March 2023 Synod welcomed a representative of the Bristol Korean Church who, after many years of cross-cultural working with their local URC, are applying to become a local URC.



*Welcoming a representative of the Bristol Korean church*

The Synod Pastoral Committee has been looking at creative ways of sharing ministry across areas. In Bristol this has meant the appointment of a Transitional Minister and greater cooperation between churches. Exploring initiatives like a 'companion Elder' model of pastoral support for smaller churches. Bristol Churches have been both diversifying and spreading the provision of ministry across the area. This progressive conversation is beginning to take shape in Somerset too. Our intention is that this conversation is spread across the whole Synod one Area at a time.

Transitional Ministry is a model being applied to our more rural context too. In South Devon the Synod has appointed a Rural Transition Missioner whose role is to support small churches in the exploration of new initiatives in these contexts.

In Bridgwater, Somerset, our CRCW is involved in local community ministry and chaplaincy at the Hinkley Point nuclear power project as it is constructed.

## How We Work

### Synod meetings

The South Western Synod meetings are held twice a year, in March and October. Given the large geographical spread of the Synod the meetings are usually held in central locations, normally at Taunton or Bridgwater. During the Covid crisis it was possible to continue meeting as a Synod using Zoom, and the meeting in October 2022 was hybrid, with some participants able to meet in person at Taunton while others joined virtually.

For the most recent meeting in March 2023, we returned to the 'normal' format of an in person meeting at Taunton, as seen in the photograph.



### Synod Committees

The Synod Executive Committee meets five times a year and conducts the business of the Synod between the formal Synod meetings. The Synod Executive is chaired by the Moderator, and comprises the Synod Clerk, Synod Treasurer, Trust Secretary and five other members. Ecumenical partners have been represented by attendance at Executive by a representative from another denomination, but currently such a role is not filled.

The Executive Committee considers applications for Enabling grants to support the Mission of our churches, and the Synod also offers grants for property improvements and Eco-grants to reduce the carbon impact of the church's activities.

The Synod Executive and Moderator are supported by a number of committees:

- Pastoral Committee
- Discipleship and Service Committee
- Safeguarding Committee
- Property Committee
- Listed Buildings Advisory Committee

The Synod Trust Company hold the assets of the Synod, and the Directors of the Trust Company are the members of the Synod Executive. A meeting of the Trust Company Directors is held after each meeting of the Synod Executive.

### Pastoral Committee

The pastoral care of our churches and ministers is the priority for the work of Pastoral Committee, and comprises of the Moderator, Synod Clerk and the five Synod Pastoral Advisers. With the number of churches far exceeding the deployment of stipendiary ministers this remains an exceedingly important aspect of the Synod's work. Pastoral Committee is chaired by the Moderator.

### **Discipleship and Learning Committee**

The Committee plays a key role in supporting ministers and church leaders in developing forms of ministry which reflect the changing context of our churches, and their place within the communities they serve. The Discipleship and Learning Committee chair person is also a member of the Synod Executive.

### **Safeguarding Committee**

The Synod Safeguarding Committee oversees the work of the Synod Safeguarding Officer and maintains an overview of safeguarding issues. The Safeguarding Committee is chaired by a member of the Synod Executive and its membership includes specialist expertise external to the Synod. A report from the Safeguarding Committee is given at each meeting of the Synod Executive.

### **Property Committee**

The Synod Property Committee meets five times per year and considers reports on ongoing property matters at churches and manses across the Synod. It deals with applications for Property grants and Eco grants and takes decisions regarding listed building applications in the light of advice from the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee (LBAC). The Synod Property Committee is chaired by the Moderator, and comprises the Synod Treasurer, Trust Secretary, Synod Clerk, Property and Trust Officer, Property and Trust Assistant, and Secretary of the LBAC.

The LBAC meets in advance of Property Committee meetings and is chaired by the Trust Secretary. Membership includes professional expertise in conservation and surveying, together with a minister representative and it is supported by the Property and Trust Officer. The Moderator can also attend.

### **Synod Trust Company**

The United Reformed Church (South Western Synod) Incorporated (total value £17 million at 31 December 2021) is chaired by the Moderator. The directors are the members of the Synod Executive, with the exception of the Synod Clerk in view of the fact that she is a salaried employee. The Synod Treasurer is the Trust Treasurer. The Trust is the trustee of all church and manse properties and local church endowments.

The Synod Trust takes responsibility for financial and property resources on behalf of Synod. Currently the South Western 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 funded by investment income and receipts from the sale of redundant property. The Synod Trust has committed to contributing £3million towards mitigation of the deficit in the Ministers' Pension Fund over six years.

Uncertainty on future investment returns, together with falling member numbers which are likely to reduce the scale of Ministry and Mission contributions from churches, may well present challenges in the longer term. The Trust sees its role as supporting 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 and is the employing body of the Synod staff team. Meetings of Trust Officers are held immediately after each meeting of the

Synod Property Committee. The Trust Officers comprise the Moderator, Trust Treasurer, Trust Secretary, Synod Clerk and the Property and Trust Officer. Meetings of the Trust Officers are supported by the Synod Solicitor.

## Ministry and Mission



All churches play their part in providing the money to meet the pledged sum for the Assembly Ministry and Mission Fund. Churches are assessed on their membership and financial strength.

The Synod contributes approximately the same as the cost of the stipendiary ministry it receives.

## Synod Grants

The Synod can support local churches with grants. Currently we offer:

- Mission and Enabling grants
- Property maintenance and development grants
- Eco Grants

## Synod Personnel

The Synod Officers are:

The Moderator

The Synod and Trust Treasurer – the Reverend Dick Gray (volunteer post)

The Synod Clerk – Ms Rachel Leach (part time employee)

The Synod Staff working from the Synod Office, at Taunton United Reformed Church are:

The Moderator

The Synod Clerk (part time) – Ms Rachel Leach

Synod Safeguarding Officer (part time) – currently vacant

Synod Property and Trust Officer (full time) – Ms Diane Phillips

Property and Trust Administrator (part time) – Ms Colleen Lewis

Finance Administrator (full time) – Ms Paula McDonagh

Moderator's PA (part time) – Mrs Hilary Bradshaw

Office Administrator (part time) – Mrs Dinah Firmin

## Synod Pastoral Advisors

For pastoral, property, ministry and mission purposes the Synod is divided into five areas, each of which has a Synod Pastoral Advisor (SPA). Each SPA post attracts 25% of the ministerial stipend.

Their role is to be the first point of contact and communication between the Synod and the local churches. They have a role of pastoral oversight of churches in their area in cooperation with the Moderator. They support churches in times of transition, vacancy or difficulty.

The SPAs meet bi-monthly, as the Synod Pastoral Committee, with the Moderator and the Synod Clerk. They can also represent the Moderator at ecumenical events or meetings.

The five areas and their SPAs are as follows: -

Cornwall, Plymouth and Northern Devon - Mrs Janet Gray

South and East Devon - Rev Jim Thorneycroft

Somerset - Rev Jim Thorneycroft

Bristol - Rev Stephen Newell and Rev Sue Cossey (job share)

Wiltshire, Swindon, and Wiltshire United Area - Rev Gerald England

The Synod has, in voluntary roles, a Commitment for Life Coordinator, two Green Apostles, Health and Healing Advocate, Interfaith Advocate, Racial Justice Advocate, Lay Preachers Advocate and Stepwise Coordinator.

We have a monthly Synod e-Newsletter which is sent to all churches and ecumenical partners and enables us to share good news and forthcoming events and opportunities.

## Moderator Role Description And Person Specification

### Role description

<b>OFFICE TITLE:</b>	Moderator of South Western 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
<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. To provide clear personal leadership to enable and encourage discernment of God's will within the councils of the Church.

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 the Church's engagement with public issues.
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 company.
5. Work collaboratively with Synod officers/committees to facilitate clarity about priorities and to encourage creativity and new ideas about being church.
6. Chair Synod Meetings

#### Churches

1. Work collaboratively to encourage local churches and partnerships to engage in strategies leading to health, growth, learning and renewal.
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. Work with others 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.

## People

1. Ensure active encouragement and support for the spiritual growth, renewal and Christian service of church members of all ages.
2. Meet with ministerial candidates and provide them with procedural guidance.
3. Provide supportive oversight and pastoral care to serving ministers, CRCWs and their families both personally and through the establishment of collegial teams.
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, in partnership with those responsible for their self-appraisal and ongoing development.
6. Fulfil the responsibilities ascribed to the Synod Moderator under the Ministerial Disciplinary process and the Incapacity procedure.

## Wider Engagement

1. Participate as a member of Mission Council 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 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.
- 5.

## Person Specification - Moderator Of South Western 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

Knowledge	6. Deep understanding of the role of the Church in its mission to the world 7. Deep understanding of the distinctive traditions, ethos and witness of the United Reformed Church 8. Awareness of the individuality of local churches and their needs	<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	9. Ability to exercise appropriate personal leadership within a conciliar ecclesiology 10. Ability to discern and deliver the kind of approach which will best promote open and constructive relationships at all levels 11. Delegation and team building skills 12. Facilitation skills 13. Conflict resolution skills 14. Skills in project and change management 15. Skills in time management 16. Ability to assess priorities and plan workload accordingly 17. IT skills in e-mail and document handling		Applicant's details/interview

## Moderator's Manse

Moderator's manses are provided by the United Reformed Church Trust through the Church House Management Group. In light of the Church's commitment in response to Net Zero a decision was taken in 2022 that all Moderator's manses should be to Environmental Performance Certificate C or better.

The manse which has been home for previous Moderators of the South Western Synod does not meet this standard, and an initial inspection suggested that upgrading to EPC C would be difficult and costly.

Alternative accommodation will be secured for the new Moderator. One potential location for a replacement Moderator's manse could be an existing manse, owned by South Western Synod, which is currently rented out on a short term tenancy. This property, 38 Bakers Close, Taunton, is conveniently located in a quiet residential area of Taunton and is approximately 2 miles from the Synod office. Details of the property are given below.

Another option would be to purchase a different property, and further discussions will be held with the successful candidate.

