

Resolution 13

Mission Projects in Eastern Synod

Basic Information

Contact address	The Revd Paul Whittle: moderator@urceastern.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Acting on behalf of General Assembly, Mission Council receives the new pieces of mission work at Love's Farm, St Neots, and at North Avenue, Chelmsford, as Mission Projects of the United Reformed Church.

1. Love's Farm Church

- 1.1 Love's Farm is a new community of around 1500 houses on the edge of St Neots. In 2013 Churches Together in St Neots, with St Neots URC taking a lead role, approached the Eastern Synod seeking a grant from its Pioneer Fund to support a Pioneer Minister, based in Love's Farm, to develop the embryonic church that was emerging. A grant of £250k was awarded to support this post for five years, and a house provided to be the manse. The grant has since been renewed for a second five-year period. The appointee, the Revd Helene Tame, is an Anglican, but the post is fully funded by the URC Synod.
- 1.2 The work has grown significantly. Breakfast Church meets every Sunday, bar the first in the month, and can attract over fifty people. Messy Church meets on the first Friday of the month. Little Loves is a parent/carer and toddler group meeting on a Thursday morning, and hosted by the Breakfast Church team. The Youth Club is every Friday evening and the Youth Café after school on Wednesdays in term time. Helene has a good role as community chaplain and the church seeks to engage with and support the community in a variety of ways.
- 1.3 Helene herself writes: "We have seen a real deepening of faith despite some significant challenges. I continue to reflect on the reality that our growth and faith journey rarely happens in a straight line. I know that God has brought us together as a church community and got us this far – I continue to trust the onward journey to him."
- 1.4 Love's Farm is still in its relatively early days, but is a church community in its own right. Recognition of this is overdue. The Synod is committed to supporting the continuance of this work and is in conversation with the Church of England at local and diocesan level to explore how we can more intentionally sustain this work as a bilateral ecumenical partnership. Synod recognized Love's Farm as a Mission Partnership in October 2019 and commends it to Mission Council for recognition as such.

2. **North Avenue Christian Centre, Chelmsford: 'Hope in the Community'**
- 2.1 In 2019 Eastern Synod recognised North Avenue Christian Centre as a Mission Project.
- 2.2 Following the decision to close North Avenue United Reformed Church in mid-2018, Eastern Synod wanted to continue and build on significant Christian work going on in the premises. North Avenue is recognised as being a socially deprived area of Chelmsford.
- 2.3 The Christian Centre is managed by a Partnership between Synod and a gathered church, Oasis. The Partnership was formed in order to support existing work and develop outreach and mission in the local community. The Synod had already appointed a Church Related Community Worker (CRCW) to the area, and Oasis Church were already hiring the premises for their Sunday services.
- 2.4 During the first year the objective was to maintain existing, valued work. Practical structures were put in place, including an ecumenical partnership agreement, reworked hiring agreements, a management structure and appointment of key management roles; the work of existing groups (a long-established youth centre, a Community Café and a Fellowship group) was therefore able to continue. New initiatives begun by the CRCW, including a Little Free Pantry, a study group and an open prayer space (a Prayer Knit-In) have since been established. All the existing and new initiatives have been able to continue in some form or another during the current lockdown, and community prayer support is available from the CRCW. The Centre has recently embarked on a significant building improvement and enhancement programme, which has largely been able to go ahead during this time.
- 2.5 The continuance of a Christian presence on this site since the closure of the URC Church has undoubtedly been welcome by the local community: engagement with the existing work remains high, and there has been real enthusiasm for and involvement in the new work too. The congregation of the worshipping community is also growing; they too are valuing the collaborative Partnership.
- 2.6 Eastern Synod commends North Avenue Christian Centre as a Mission Project to Mission Council.