

Paper X1

Northerly Synods

Northerly Synods Collaboration

United Church 2015
Church 2015
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Northerly Synods Collaboration Update

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Report from Lis Mullen, Kevin Watson, Jacky Embrey, John Humphreys (moderators of Northern, Yorkshire, Mersey, and the National Synod of Scotland), and Andy Braunston (clerk of North Western Synod). Contacts: Simon Walking – moderator of the National Synod of Wales moderator@urcwales.org.uk Melanie Campbell – coordinator Northerly Synods Melanie.campbell@urc-northernsynod.org
Action required	For information, and a decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council resolves to include one new paragraph in the 'Process for the appointment of synod moderators' (the proposed new text is printed at the end of this paper).

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	A progress report on the Northerly Synods collaboration.
Main points	Northerly Synods (Scotland, North Western, Northern, Yorkshire, and Mersey) have commenced discussions, to better understand how collaborative working may assist them to discharge their roles and responsibilities more effectively.
Previous relevant documents	None.
Consultation has taken place with...	Relevant colleagues at Church House as well as across the Northerly synods.

Summary of Impact

Financial	The summary of impact is anticipated to be better practice.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	Ecumenical impact is not known at present.

Northerly Synods Collaboration

Introduction

1. The five northerly synods comprising the National Synod of Scotland, North Western, Northern, Yorkshire and Mersey Synods are seeking to understand how collaboration may assist them to fulfil their duties and responsibilities more effectively. Since October 2014 this process has been facilitated by the Moderator of the Synod of Wales. At this time the meeting could see no medium term advantage to changing synod boundaries or numbers of synod moderators.

Background

2. Discussions between the synods initially began in 2011. A further meeting took place in February 2014, attended by synod representatives, nominated by their Executives. This meeting led to resolutions, which were agreed by synod meetings in each of the northerly synods in March 2014, and enabling exploratory discussions to continue.

Developing Ways Forward

3. In October 2014, synod representatives agreed that, whilst collaboration may have potential to improve practice and effectiveness, the benefits remained uncertain. For this reason the Northerly Synods asked for further work to be undertaken and appointed a co-ordinator, to work for one day a week to assist them in the process.
4. The resulting findings arising from site visits, structured interviews, Task Team workshops and written information, assisted the synods to consider possible ways forward.
5. At their meeting in February 2015 the Northerly Synod representatives identified areas that are important and urgent to them, and agreed the remit for work streams to include communications, safeguarding, human resources, and mediation and consultancy. The work streams have some suggested outcomes to work towards, however there are no pre-conceived expectations.
6. Treasurers will also be meeting together with a view to understanding variations in their processes and costs as well as to find ways to offer practical support to address specific pressures.

Next Steps

7. All involved have been challenged with balancing the important task of being Christians in Northern Britain with the technical tasks we wish to address. A dedicated group is meeting to consider this and their emerging thoughts will help shape our next steps.
8. Throughout the process synod moderators have worked closely together, guiding and listening to one another as conversations have developed. Yet three of the five synod moderators will move on within the next year or so, and Northerly Synods are keen to ensure that the new synod moderators engage positively in the next steps forward. For this reason the representatives from Northerly Synods would like some of their present synod moderators to have opportunity to meet with prospective candidates as vacancies for the position of synod moderator arise in North Western, Northern and Scotland. Whilst these synod moderators would have no vote in the nominating

process, their views about their future team colleagues might be helpful to the nominating groups. To that end we offer the following resolution, which would allow nominating groups to make up their own minds about whether and how to respond to this request.

Resolution

Mission Council resolves to include one new paragraph in the 'Process for the appointment of synod moderators': (text as follows)

Where the new moderator will need to engage closely with a synod's partners – in, for example, adjacent synods or other churches – the Nominating Group may, as part of the interview process, arrange for short-listed candidates to meet with a small number of key people from among the partners. Whether and how to arrange this will be a decision for the Nominating Group, which may afterwards seek advice or comment from these key people, but shall not in any way be bound by their views.