

Paper X2

Synod reports on
vision2020 implementation



United Church 2013
Church 2013
Reformed Church 2013
Church 2013

Paper X2



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Basic Information

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Action required	For information and reflection
Draft resolution(s)	
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	General Assembly 2010 adopted vision2020 as the framework for mission across the United Reformed Church. Mission Council asked the synods to report to the November 2011 meeting on their progress with use of the framework (paper B2).
Consultation has taken place with...	

Summary of Impact

Financial	
External (e.g. ecumenical)	



Synod reports on vision2020 Implementation

A. *Dying to Live: vision2020 in Northern Synod*

Northern Synod recognised the reality of church decline, and sought to help churches to consider what needs to be let go of, to enable new life to come – using the parable of the sower. Here are highlights of their implementation of vision2020.

1. Spirituality and Prayer

This is the main focus for St Cuthbert's Centre, Holy Island, which is increasingly recognised by visitors as a place of prayer. The Warden can also resource a wide variety of churches, individuals and groups in this area, on and off of the Island. Aware of the current financial climate they are looking at more effective advertising and marketing to increase the use of the Bothy for private retreats.

Other achievements in the Synod

- Worship resources for Vision 2020 are on the Synod website
- Training events for worship leaders being run by Coast churches
- TLS is regularly promoted in Synod meetings – 10 students took the Foundation Course in 2012/13, with 1 on an extension course
- 13 individuals attended the Synod's spring retreat 2013
- 9 people participated in the Synod's 2013 pilgrimage.

2. Identity

- 44 churches have a website. All the otherS have a page on the Synod website.

3. Christian Ecumenical Partnerships

The three denominations on Holy Island are working closely together, not least on the Lindisfarne Gospels Pilgrimage in July 2013. Some ecumenical co-operation is developing with the Retreat Houses using our facilities and vice versa.

Other achievements in the Synod

- South East Northumberland is operating as an ecumenical area
- There are 15 single congregation Local Ecumenical Partnerships in the Synod, as well as 23 sharing agreements and various informal sharing arrangements
- Receptive ecumenism findings are to be a major discussion point at Synod meeting in October 2013
- Synod plays a full part in North East Christian Churches Together, the Churches' Regional Commission in the North East and Northumbria Industrial Mission
- The Newcastle City Centre Chaplaincy is currently a partner in mission

4. Community Partnerships

Other achievements in the Synod

- 2 Church-Related Community Worker posts and 2 community worker posts in the Synod
- Continuing as a partner with the Faith in the Community project in the Diocese of Durham.

5. Hospitality and Diversity

- Returns for 2013 show 25% of church members in the Synod are male and 1% black or minority ethnic members; males make up 36% of adherents, with 4% BME
- Nominations Group seeks balance where possible
- Synod advocates and supports the revised radical welcome campaign.

6. Evangelism

St Cuthbert's Centre, Holy Island, was a full participant in a mission weekend run by students from Cranmer Hall in March. It is hoped that this might become an annual event. An interesting ecumenical conversation has begun about the opportunities on Holy Island for faith-sharing, with the hope that some resources and activities might be developed for the hundreds of thousands of visitors who come each year.

Mission & Evangelism Group seeks to encourage churches to recognise and use opportunities; to help to equip churches; offer information and some training; to enable the movement of ideas through contact with the Link Persons; and to take the fear out of the word "evangelism".

7. Church Growth

Mission & Evangelism Group are considering offering to do some work on prayer in relation to both evangelism and church growth. This occurs in the context that total church membership in the Synod has declined by 10% since 2010 with average church membership declining by 5% in the same period.

Other achievements in the Synod

7 churches had a growing membership in the 2013 returns.

8. Justice and Peace

- Commitment for Life was promoted in Synod meeting in 2012 and one church has since joined the scheme
- Crookham peace garden was opened
- Many churches across the Synod are actively working with Food Banks and similar community initiatives.

9. The Integrity of Creation

Other achievements in the Synod

- Northallerton and Ponteland have gained the Eco-Congregation award.

B. Implementation within the North Western Synod

In March 2010, meeting at Trinity Church Cheadle, the North Western Synod agreed to prioritise three of the Vision 2020 statements for its life and mission. These were Spirituality & Prayer, Community Partnerships and Evangelism.

Spirituality and Prayer

- Since 2010 there will have been two retreats on Lindisfarne: one in May 2010 attended by 15 ministers and the other in September 2013 attended by 24 ministers and lay people.
- The Silence & Retreats group have taken advantage of the two Synod Days to publicise their work and offer resources to people.
- The Emmaus Road Prayer Community has come into existence as a means by which our life in Christ might be deepened and our local congregations might be nourished by prayer. So far there is only one local meeting but it is hoped that this will grow in the coming months.
- Our Synod meetings have incorporated the Sacrament of Holy Communion and this was most recently celebrated at the Big Day Out at Blackpool.
- Mr Lawrence Moore and the Rev Dr Rosalind Selby have led us in Bible Study in our Synod Meetings.

Further Work

Arrange training Events for lay, ordained and young people to help deepen our understanding of spirituality and prayer.

Develop ministers' meeting in each area which offer colleague support and forums for prayer and reflection.

Create prayer links with our World Church partners and share ideas stories with the wider Synod.

Community Partnerships

- The Synod has set up a Redevelopment Group to harness the skills and experience of churches in the Synod that have recent experience of redevelopment together with those with relevant professional qualifications. This may include sourcing finance, negotiating with local authorities/ other agencies. The Legal & Trust Officer has recently prepared a paper which will be circulated to all churches in the Synod on how to tackle a redevelopment project.
- In addition to the Tonge Moor CRCW placement, a CRCW post has been declared at Levenshulme/ Trinity Community Church, Moss Side and a further such post is being prepared in Blackburn.
- Some good news stories have been shared through Area Meetings of churches impacting their communities.
- Monies released to support local churches through the Synod Grants scheme have tried to establish how the grant will facilitate Christ's mission in local communities.
- The Synod Property Consultant has addressed the EM 2 ministers on how to set about leading their congregations into redevelopment projects to better able meet the needs of the surrounding communities.

Further Work

LMMR needs to be fully implemented. Currently without a Ministerial Self Appraisal Accompaniment Co-Ordinator the Synod has been delayed in assisting local churches to think about their ministry and mission in localities.

Evangelism

- Thinking ahead about... initiative launched within the Synod and then nationally by the Rev Dr John Campbell, Ms Linda Rayner and the Rev Wendy White. Linda wrote of this: I am also aware of many events that were a direct result of the conversations, but were not 'fed back' including one church which held a Taize service on Palm Sunday evening, handed out Holy Week colouring books, held a Saturday workshop creating banners and gardens for Easter Sunday - bringing in the Brownies, and many parents who don't come to church - delivered invitations around the estate opposite, and generally improved their outward-facing communications.
- Synod Mission Interns a scheme to encourage young people to spend a year's placement in a local church (or churches) to enable local churches in their mission. The first such volunteer is at Chorley URC. We are hoping that the scheme will develop in the coming years.
- Following the closure of the ZI campaign, a small Radical Welcome Campaign group has started work and circulated materials to every church in the Synod and explained the development of the process within our Synod and set up a website.
- Three Special Category Ministry posts have been agreed. Two are for Pioneer ministries in Salford and Chorlton. The other is for Town Centre Chaplaincy in Oldham.
- A 24hr residential conference has been planned for Elders in March 2014 with John Ellis to inspire and help them think about their missionary purpose.
- Fresh Expressions featured at both the Synod Days Out. We are blessed in having the National Co-ordinator for the URC as our TDO. Several Area days have been organised as 'taster' Events.

Further Work

Explore evangelism with World Church Partners and share stories and ideas with wider Synod.

Careful evaluation of the SCM ministries (beginning January 2014) Enable through LMMR the adoption of local mission pledges by local Churches.

C. Mersey Synod

D. A story from Yorkshire Synod

During 2012 the congregation engaged with Vision2020 and after consideration of all the 10 statements we decided to work with Statements 2 (*Identity: The URC will be a church where every local congregation will be able to say who they are, what they do and why they do it.*)

And 7 (*Church Growth: We will be a growing church with an increasing membership*)

We also took into consideration Statements 1 (Spirituality and Prayer: We will grow in our practice of prayer and spirituality, nurturing strength for our witness to Jesus Christ, and developing our discernment of where God is and what God is calling us to do by reading and studying the Bible and through the power of the Holy Spirit.)

And 5 (*Hospitality and diversity: We will be a church committed to becoming even more welcoming and hospitable, and embracing all people equally*)

Groups were set up to look at our Prayer life, our Welcome to all and an Explorers Group working with enquirers about Church Membership.

So far we have:

- Written our Mission Statement.
- Produced an Advice Sheet for newcomers to Communion.
- Produced a draft Welcome Pack. The Welcome Group are in the process of producing the final version.
- We have implemented the Prayer Group's suggested changes in the use of the prayer book, box and tree; and they are working well.
- Produced a Welcome Sheet for Baptismal Families.
- Engaged with our sister Churches in SPACE to produce a 'What's on in SPACE' booklet to encourage our congregations to interact with one another.

All this is a 'Work in Progress' which we hope will help to build the spiritual life of this Church.

E. East Midlands Synod

Vision2020 has been at the heart of much of the Synod's work in the last six years. Here are the headlines.

1. Development of Pastorate Profiles of Churches who find themselves in vacancy.
2. LMMR and MASA processes
3. Mission Fund Panel which gives grants to churches
4. Mission Enabling Group which reports to Synod
5. Several presentations at Synod meetings
6. County meetings in the recent past
7. Back To Church Sunday.

F. West Midlands Synod

The West Midlands Synod has not integrated Vision2020 into its strategies. Rather it is using the Vision2020 framework and inhabiting it with its own aspirations and indicators under the Vision2020 statements. A copy of the synod's strategy is available on request.

As an example Local Mission & Ministry Review sits under the Identity statement and we have indicators for the number of pastorates we seek to cover by a given date.

Our Mission Fund sits under the Community Partnerships statement and we have indicators to say we aim to make sure that the Fund becomes a regular part of the synod's life.

The indicators and targets are kept under regular review by Synod Mission Council. Some indicators have already been achieved and so amended or removed. Many more of course have to be amended because we have missed our target or anticipate we will do so.

The establishment of a strategy group to oversee the work of the evangelist and mission enabler is now working on sharpening the synod strategy to better support their work.

In any event our pattern is to review all the indicators under all the statements at our annual residential Synod Mission Council. We then look at smaller sections at each of the intervening SMC's to ensure we revise them and keep them up to date and that actions laid on Synod Mission Council specifically are followed through.

Much of the work indicated was in train when Vision2020 came along. So for example our moves to seek an Evangelist and Mission Enabler. A good amount of the work indicated below would have unfolded without Vision2020. But Vision2020's comprehensive range of statements has enabled us to map our work better. And it has obliged us to pay attention to areas of our life which previous initiatives were not covering. We are now for example surveying churches with regard to their engagement in issues of peace and justice and with regard to the integrity of creation to establish where cross fertilisation of ideas can help and to see where churches need more encouragement.

This Vision2020 framework also allows us to note where Mission pledges and other information coming from Local Mission & Ministry Reviews requires us to amend or adjust our synod's strategy. This is happening slowly so far as Local Mission & Ministry Review picks up speed and people get used to it. Much of what has been drawn from pledges so far encourages us to maintain a strength of commitment to children's and youth work and to continue providing a mission fund which has been used to support local youth workers.

G. Eastern Synod

In the Eastern Synod, the main way in which we have been exploring how to engage with the Vision2020 statements, is through the LMMR process. We have rewritten the pastorate profile document to make it fit for purpose, in terms of being the key guidelines for undertaking the LMMR process and in doing that we have written the Vision2020 statements into that document. By doing that, we are hoping that over a fairly short period of years, every church within the Synod will be encouraged, whilst doing that process, to consider their engagement with the Vision2020 guidelines.

The process leads to the production, from the congregation in our case, of what we are calling a Mission Manifesto and that is proving to be a very helpful process and the Mission Manifestos that have been received so far from the churches are, on the whole, of very good quality and a number of them are very helpfully addressing the Vision2020 statements and their engagement with those.

The other thing that we have done is that we have chosen to focus on Vision2020 at the two Synod meetings during 2013. In order to facilitate that, we were very pleased to welcome the Convenor of the Mission Committee, the Revd. Tracey Lewis, as our keynote speaker at the March Synod and Tracey gave us a very helpful address in which she encouraged and challenged us to engage with the Vision2020 statements. At the October Synod, we had a series of workshops, which sought to address a number of the Vision2020 elements. As these were presented in a range of ways, we didn't call them workshops, but referred to them as Topics and the leaders of the Topic sessions engaged in a range of ways in encouraging people to look at the particular theme. Each participant in Synod was able to attend two of these Topic sessions, examples of what we included are: Prayer and Spirituality, Church Growth, Mission and Evangelism, Messy Church and Communication.

H. South Western Synod

A brief report from a very new synod moderator:

In the South West we are in the process of piloting an LMMR process which will include work on the Vision2020 statements.

Our Education & Learning Enabler is also happy to help churches to get to grips with what Vision2020 might mean for them, if they request this.

I. Wessex Synod

J. Thames North Synod

Thames North Synod has been involved in a number of different initiatives and programmes that have reflected the mission priorities at the time. With the introduction of Vision 2020 by the wider church, it was recognised within the Synod that this was not a separate initiative, but offered a framework for understanding the activities of church life in terms of mission and outreach. This has enabled the use of Vision 2020 to be integrated into the thinking of the Synod in a way that has not required major changes. The language and structure offered by Vision 2020 will become more familiar to the congregations and the Synod as it is being used increasingly within the programmes being established by the Synod

This Synod has a long history of funding small projects being undertaken by local churches as part of their mission and outreach. These schemes are managed by the Mission Initiatives Group (MIG). Two schemes were previously available, the first The Small Grants Scheme, usually for one off payments of under £1,000. The second scheme was the Developmental Grant Scheme and was generally for a period of up to three years and the sums might be up to £3,000 per annum. However, schemes requiring larger sums have been and continue to be supported under the scheme. For both grant funding schemes the criteria operated was the Seven Marks of Mission.

In November 2011, at the Synod meeting MIG presented a new scheme of grant funding using the Vision2020 criteria as the basis for assessing the mission potential of a project. This new scheme was launched, with a new series of forms to encourage churches to consider the proposed projects under the criteria set out in Vision2020. In addition the sums awarded under the scheme were in line with the sums being awarded under the national scheme that is up to £2,000 per annum for a maximum of 3 years. It should be noted that although the scheme operates according to the criteria set out by the national church, it is being funded locally as part of our recognition that Thames North Synod is in a position to be able to do this.

In adopting Vision2020 within the Synod, it was recognised that the scheme being used to assess the project was less important than the project being undertaken, but it is recognised that some tool is necessary in order that some comparison and analysis is possible. It was also recognised that a number of churches were familiar with other schemes for describing their mission and outreach activities. It was agreed that these would not be discouraged, but that for the purposes of evaluation would be read within the context and framework of Vision2020.

The Vision2020 headings are offered as one of the resources for Churches and their Pastorate Partners to use in assessing the life and witness of the Church, but these are not the only one as, within the Synod, we haven't been prescriptive. So far from, the few Church Life Reviews (CLRs) that have been received the Vision2020 criteria have not been used. However, this is the start of the process and only a very small number of CLRs have been received. As a Synod there was some delay in getting LMMR up and running, and it is only now it is truly getting going.

K. Southern Synod

Southern Synod endorsed three major documents; two are for guidance and are encouraged to be to be used for the local church to use as they see fit in their life and witness. The other is the Synod's policy document which underpins the life of all churches within the Synod. It is used extensively in all areas of church life. The documents I refer to are as follows:-

- 1) **'The 5 Marks of Mission'** which has assisted churches for many years but we recognise has its limitations. We recognised some have benefited and therefore it recommended to churches, but its the responsibility of the Church meeting to decide if they thought it appropriate for their setting.
- 2) **'Vision2020'** in its developmental stage came during the finalising of the Southern Synod Mission Criteria. After careful consideration and a small working party representing the then Mission Committee representative, Revd Pauline Sparks and the Synod Mission Officer, Martin Hayward, and others that the two documents had the same intention and ethos but they were sufficiently different in their statements/ enquiry. Vision2020 met with a degree of hostility from the floor of the Synod and was accepted as a tool to be used on the same lines as 'The five Marks of Mission.' Southern Synod therefore has enabled churches at the local level to engage with Vision2020 if they deem it suitable for their situation.
- 3) **The Mission Criteria** is the Southern Synods policy document. Similar to vision2020, however, it is a covenant agreement as it is in two parts, the Synod and all its committees and Council work use the mission criteria and local churches use it as the basis o their life and witness. It is the primary document that guides all our work e.g. deployment, scoping, LMMR, finance, property, allocation of small grants (New Growth Fund) allocation in grants for youth and children workers in local churches (Turn the Tide) and the recently set up Synod Mission Fund.
- 4) LMMR is working well in Southern Synod. We have fully integrated the old MASA with the old District visitation to produce a much better scheme which allows a local church to produce its own living document which reflects its current mission with hopes for the future. The Synod Mission Criteria is used for this rather than Vision2020. I have attached a copy for you. You will see the similarities with Vision 2020 but I am sure you will appreciate the wording of the Synod Mission Criteria was carefully chosen with discipleship being the first of those criteria. The Synod Mission Criteria reflects the Local Church Mission Criteria and we have just spent an interesting Synod Council meeting reflecting on Synod priorities so that it might facilitate local churches better in its mission to building up God's Kingdom.

It is regrettable that Southern Synod does not, at this present time, have monies to make large building grants (too many choices in the past which have gone belly-up and depleted reserves). However, we give small grants for:

- a) Children's and Youth Work = Turn the Tide
- b) New church projects = New Growth Fund
- c) Mission/Evangelism projects = Mission Fund

We are working to restore the finances to a position where we shall be able to make larger grants. We have also stopped giving loans simply because we need to explore the implications for this under the Consumer Credit Act.

- 5) We have many examples of churches in Southern Synod exploring Messy Church, Food banks being set up, and, of course, we continue to help fund a Ukrainian student at our Project Fair Isle on the Kent coast which helps to promote mission to disadvantaged immigrants particularly in the Margate area.

L. National Synod of Wales

M. National Synod of Scotland

- a) We offer vision2020 to churches as one of many tools for their mission and outreach, which they use as they so wish. We are not "implementing" vision2020 as such.
- i) Vision2020 is one of a "basket" of ways that are used by congregations when considering their ways of being church now and into the future.
- ii) This "basket" is primarily advocated through the Synod's Mission & Development Officer, and others, and in particular when facilitating LMMR in local churches, and when churches are looking at ways of growing and/or identifying issues to work on.
- iii) Other items in this "basket" include;
 - The eight Synod Aspirations (please ask if more detail required) of which we are just about to produce a booklet of 'Faith Talk Starters' for each Aspiration and this is being promoted through our Church Life Committee and Synod Development Team (*It is worth noting that the Synod of Scotland developed its Aspirations a couple of years ahead of V2020 and hence why there is a stronger emphasis on Aspirations*).
 - The Vision for Life materials
 - HOPE Heartbeat which is to be promoted to all churches at our Autumn Synod
 - Possibly the work being undertaken by the Mission Committee on evangelism and church growth (plans to have workshops over next two residential Synod meetings)
 - Various ways of exploring the Bible
 - Various ways of being involved in the community
 - The "See me....." campaign and pledge against the stigma of mental ill-health made by congregations singly or ecumenically, as in Lanarkshire and Dumfries & Galloway
 - The dynamic worship workshops developing in our West Link congregations
 - Explorations into faith such as "Living the Questions", Alpha courses, and the like
 - Ecumenical engagement; local churches have been invited to get to know their ecumenical neighbours, this has focussed on two strands i) to try to implement our EMU national (Episcopal, Methodist, URC) partnership at local level, and ii) to support the Church of Scotland on local partnership, eg.

exploration by Giffnock URC & 3 parishes, foermal agreement at Stonehouse. Synod Ecumenical & World Church Committee charged with exploring deeper relationships with parishes. (The National Sponsoring Body is the strategic vehicle for local initiatives, eg. at the Barrhead Church). Exploratory interim ministry at 4 URCs in Fife/Tayside (Dundee/Dunning/Dunfermline/Coaltown–o–B) is also looking at ecumenical options.

- The opportunities offered to all congregations and ministers by the Scottish United Reformed & Congregational College, which offers an annually newly-written programme of short and longer courses, which in 2013/4 include leadership development, jazz as an organisational & developmental model, pilgrimage as a model of congregational life, continuing work on radical welcome, multi-congregation pastorates, ministry with older people, TLS valuing community experiences, developing skills for facilitating adult learning, Ministers' conference focus on towns and urban theology/ministry/mission, engaging with the sacred and the sensual.... .Much of the educational programme is rooted in a commitment to engaging with the gifts of wider society for theological thinking as well as with that society critically.
- Children's and Youth Ministry initiatives; Child Friendly Church Award, CORE Skills for Children's Ministry & Youth Work Training
- The use of 'Everybody Welcome' which has been very well-received and promoted engaging conversations and actions

b) **Good stories about Churches that are delivering something significant under one of the vision2020 Headings.**

Priesthill – Community ministry/activities/ garden = Community Partnerships

Avonbridge Lunch Club = Community Partnerships, Hospitality and Diversity and Ecumenical relationships

Augustine & Metropolitan Community Church = Hospitality and Diversity

Mosspark = Spirituality and Prayer (through their Lunch Club)

Port Glasgow Food Bank = Hospitality and Diversity as this foodbank (unlike others) does not discriminate nor expect enquirers to substantiate their need

Dunfermline, Nairn, Peedie Kirk - Kirkwall, (examples, as there are many) = global partners

Helensburgh one example of Integrity of Creation

Murrayfield Churches Together (Saughtonhall) and Morningside = Hospitality and Diversity, Community Partnerships, Ecumenical Partnerships through their ministry for elderly and dementia etc





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