



SYNOD DIGEST SEPTEMBER 2024

LOVING GOD... SERVING PEOPLE... MAKING DISCIPLES...

WELCOME TO SYNOD

Rev Jona Sewell welcomed everyone to Synod, his first as District Chair, held on Saturday, 14th September at Cullercoats Methodist Church, where Jona began his ministry as a Probationer. Jona preached on John 15 v1 encouraging us to reflect on what it means to be rooted in God, our primary job is to remain and be nourished, but how much time do we spend on nourishment? We need to seriously consider the things that hinder nourishment and growth and take difficult decisions so we can flourish individually and as a church. Jona encouraged us to refocus, reset and seek God who is sufficient, as all things are possible with him



Jona explained the new way of working with a Chair and an Assistant Chair. From the start of their tenure here, they wanted to ensure that there was a defined sharing of the Chair's role with clear and specific aspects of work being overseen by, or passed to Stuart. An example is that Stuart has undertaken the reinvitation conversations, and will look after the work with Probationers and manses.

It is planned that the work will be divided depending on individual gifts and graces (and diary commitments), excluding the aspects Jona is required to undertake by Connexion. Jona and Stuart are hoping their collaboration will build on their experience of working together for ten years, which has given them a good understanding of their individual strengths.

Jona and Stuart are hoping to consolidate the focus of the District on wider team work, sharing the workload with the Deputy Chair, Rev Jenny Porterpryde and District Leadership Team (made up of both lay and ordained members) where appropriate.

WORKING TOGETHER

APPOINTMENTS & BUSINESS

We elected three Ministerial reps to Conference; Revs Eva Walker and Brigitta Steele and Deacon Jill Henderson. Kathy Bevan was elected to serve in 2024 & 2025, and Christine Armstrong attends ex officio.

The conference video was shown and Stuart drew particular attention to the conversations about singleness and the God for All Strategy.

District Committee and Oversight Group members were reappointed and the following new appointments were voted in: Rev Susan Richardson (Secretary of the District Policy Committee), Andrew Lowe (Secretary of the Property and Finance Executive) and two Children and Young People's Representatives to DPC, Rebecca Baird and Luca Barwick-Plant.

We are reminded that District has the current vacancies: Ecumenical Officer, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer and Local Preachers Secretary. If you or anyone within your Circuit feels called to any of these positions please speak to Jona to see how your gifts can be used.



CHALLENGING INJUSTICE - IT'S DOWN TO US ALL

Deacon Tracey Hume reminded us that it is down to us all to challenge injustice. While Tracey now works two days a week with Gateshead Council, consolidating the work from the Poverty Truth Commission (GMBC are employing two new staff members to continue this work). If we host a Warm Space we can think and pray about the attendees, are they having their voices heard? Are there local groups or officials we could invite to attend? Tracey is happy to assist with this.

A video was shared showing the growth and importance of Recovery Church, this is available on The Mother House website (www.themotherhouse.co.uk)

Kathy Bevan asked us how we become a justice-seeking church? How can we ensure everyone is heard, particularly those in poverty where this can be more prevalent? Sometimes we do not have a full understanding of a situation but if we ask good questions, and listen, people will share with us. We need to consider whether our churches are accessible to those experiencing poverty, and if there is anything we can do to ensure people feel safe and valued when they are with us.

Suggestions of how we can be more justice-seeking can be found on the All We Can website www.allwecan.org.uk/resources/practices

**POVERTY
TRUTH**

GATESHEAD

**20
ZONE**

**Twenty's
Plenty**

THE MOTHER HOUSE - REMEMBER 20 IS PLENTY

Rev Elaine Lindridge reported that since The Mother House launched there are now around 25 Pioneers involved, gathering monthly, engaging in coaching and mentoring and ensuring good governance is in place for their NPNP projects.

Elaine reflected on the 20 is Plenty road sign she had been noticing recently. It reminds us not to speed, and that 20 is the appropriate number for that area. We may think that bigger is better, but many of our NPNP projects will not grow big. Perhaps their influence is more important as smaller groups enable intimacy and a sense of doing life together, which would not be as easy in a larger group.

Perhaps they are not growing numerically, but are growing in depth and an understanding of God in their lives.

If you're not sure what the Mother House is all about, just get in touch with Elaine and she will be happy to have a chat with you.

DREAM BIG WITH A DISTRICT GRANT

We are all encouraged to speak to Kathy Bevan about our upcoming projects to review the possibility of applying for a District Grant for missional projects. There is an information leaflet available from the District Office (admin@newcastlemethodistdistrict.org) that outlines the process.

Rev Elaine Lindridge interviewed William Gray (Children and Youth Matters Team at Strathmore Road MC) who explained how their District grant, along with Circuit and church funding, allowed them to boldly invest in children and families work. The team felt supported by The Mother House, as somewhere to meet and learn together with other Pioneers and learn from what others are doing.

The grant has funded unexpected growth particularly in Chopwell MC with the launch of *With Wednesdays*. While there have been delays, it has been on God's timing, not our own, and it has been proven to be perfectly timed in the end.

