

District Development Plan (after SO 962) for the Wales Synod

962 Development Plan. The district Policy Committee shall formulate and keep under annual review a development master-plan for the Methodist church buildings and circuit staffing of the District taking into account Planning Authority proposals (e.g., new residential areas, new road proposals, and urban centre redevelopment). Existing and proposed church buildings of other denominations shall be noted, particularly with a view to ecumenical co-operation or the formation of local ecumenical partnerships and the consideration of projects under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969. In Synod Cymru and the Wales Synod the master-plan shall take account of and give effect to any action of Y Cyngor under Standing Order 491(3). Any such project may be referred for detailed consideration to a group appointed by the committee for that purpose. The committee shall report annually to the Synod upon any such projects and upon the content and implementation of the development master-plan generally. As to the second and third sentences see also S.O. 334, 412(2), (3) and 434(3).

1) Introduction

The Wales Synod came into existence in September 2007, formed out of the former North Wales and South Wales Districts after longstanding conversations between the 3 Districts in Wales seeking to bring about a more unified approach across Methodism in Wales led to proposals which were accepted by both Synods and then approved at Conference in 2006. As part of the proposals it was also agreed that there would be a new way of relating between the Wales Synod (working predominantly in English) and Synod Cymru (working predominantly in Welsh) through the creation of a new body, Y Cyngor, meeting 3 times a year including representatives from both Synods.

When the 2 Districts came together, there were 6 circuits in the old North Wales (Bangor & Holyhead, Buckley & Deeside, Colwyn Bay & Llandudno, Rhyl & Prestatyn, Wrexham and Welshpool & Bro Hafren) and 20 in the old South Wales Districts (Cardiff, Penarth, Barry, Caerphilly, Newport, Monmouth, Chepstow & Caldicot, Blackwood, Pontypool, Cwmbran, Ebbw Vale & Tredegar, Abertillery, Abergavenny, Mid-Glamorgan Mission, Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot, Swansea & Gower, Llanelli & Carmarthen, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion).

However, the merger of the 2 districts coincided with the connexional initiative about 'Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission' which encouraged circuits to take a fresh look at the context of their mission and to see whether they would be better served by a review of circuit boundaries. Already in South Wales a process had begun in which the Superintendents of the Gwent circuits, many of which were single station circuits, met regularly for mutual support and planning. The presence of these 2 initiatives, one local and one connexional, prompted a process which over the next 5 years (2007-12) led to a major reconfiguring of circuits across the whole Synod in which the total number of circuits reduced from 26 to 16 (namely Bangor & Holyhead, Bridgend, Buckley & Deeside, Cardiff, Ceredigion, Conwy & Prestatyn, Gwent Hills & Vales, Llanelli & Carmarthen, Mid-Glamorgan Mission, Neath Port Talbot, Newport & Lower Wye, Pembrokeshire, Swansea & Gower, Welshpool & Bro Hafren, Wrexham and Vale of Glamorgan.) This meant that by 2012 over 50% of the circuits in the new Wales Synod were now part of 'reconfigured' circuits. Moreover, this process has not come to an end, as the September 2016 Synod gave approval in principle to the coming together of the Llanelli & Carmarthen and Pembrokeshire circuits as a new 'South West Wales' circuit in September 2017.

This brief introduction to the history of the Synod seeks then to highlight 2 things which underlie both the formation and the mission of the Wales Synod; firstly that its inauguration was part of a process intended to provide a greater coherence to the mission of the Methodist Church in Wales; and secondly, reflecting the complex geography of Wales and distance between circuits, that this would best be achieved primarily by looking to support the work and witness of circuits in their local contexts rather than by generating Synod-wide initiatives. This is reflected in the Synod Policy below.

2) Synod Mission Policy and Statement (adopted 2008 and updated in 2015)

2.1) Preface

The Wales Synod came into being in September 2007 with the coming together of the previous North and South Wales districts. This followed a long process of consultation, which included Synod Cymru, as to how Methodism in Wales could act more coherently together. It resulted also in the creation of Y Cyngor, as the body through whom the two Synods could confer together as regards mission and ecumenical matters in Wales.

The creation of the Wales Synod coincided with a major connexional initiative, 'Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission'. This initiative, which built on the mission priorities established first in 'Our Calling' (namely Worship, Learning & Caring, Service & Evangelism) and then the 'Priorities for the Methodist Church', encouraged districts and circuits to review their structures and see how they might be re-shaped to support the Church's mission. This led to a major restructuring of circuits across the Wales Synod, reducing them in number from 26 to 16 in the years 2007-12. It also meant that the Wales Synod, in addressing the mission imperatives found in Our Calling and the Priorities, has from its inception focused on the need to resource and support circuits in their local context. Accordingly, the Wales Synod in February 2008 adopted the following Mission Statement and Policy.

2.2) The Wales Synod Mission Statement

We exist to support God's mission and the ministry of the Methodist Church.

We encourage and enable the development of Circuits, local Churches and individuals to engage more effectively in worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism.

2.3) The Wales Synod Mission Policy

The aims of the Synod in fulfilment of this statement are that its policies and practices seek always:

- To nurture confidence in the Gospel of Christ and in the Church's ability to relate to today's world.
- To offer opportunities for all people to explore new understandings of faith.
- To enable and support Circuits as they review their life and mission.
- To be a channel for communication between Circuits and the wider Church.
- To promote the sharing of information and resources across the Synod
- To affirm unity in Christ within the diversity of the Church.
- To nurture and support ministers and all Church workers.
- To encourage the widest participation of all ages in the life of the Church.
- To explore mission opportunities through the language and media appropriate to their context.
- To co-operate within Y Cyngor, with Synod Cymru, and with our ecumenical partners in furtherance of these aims

3) Circuit Mission Policies

In light of this, to reflect and review the Synod's mission strategy, we need to take seriously the mission statements of the 15 circuits which make up the Synod, many of which have recently been 'reconfigured' specifically to address mission in their local context. Accordingly, and to reflect the fact that this Development Plan is intended also to help in decisions about the deployment of ministry, we set out these policies as they are found in the most recent circuit Stationing profiles.

Bangor & Holyhead (2/3)

The Mission of the Circuit is to proclaim the Gospel and serve Jesus Christ in North West Wales through the continuing development of worship, pastoral support, fellowship and welcoming outreach, and to contribute to God's mission across the world. The Circuit aims to achieve this through:

- * Providing attractive and relevant worship for both local residents and holiday-makers, mainly through the English language.
- * Developing Christian faith and fellowship through formal and informal meetings and groups.
- * Showing the love of Christ through its care for the whole community, near and far, by promoting justice for the poor and support for those in need, of all faiths and none.
- * Supporting the home and overseas mission activities of the Methodist Church.
- * Fostering links and understanding with other churches and faiths in the locality, and with churches overseas.

The Bangor & Holyhead circuit consists of 5 churches and is served by 1 Superintendent minister with support from supernumerary ministers and 1 P/T lay worker.

Bridgend United Area (2/6)

The Bridgend United Area's vision is to share the ministry of Christ with each other, in our communities and in the wider world. The United Area consists of 8 churches – 4 Methodist, 3 Methodist and United Reformed, and 1 Methodist, United Reformed and Baptist. Members continue to explore together all aspects of worship, evangelism, mission and service by developing our combined resources in the best way and by ensuring that the ethos and traditions of participating churches are recognised and used to broaden our faith and understanding. There is mutual recognition of each other's patterns of ministry, and ordained ministry is intended to be provided on an alternating basis from the denominations represented in the shared churches.

The Bridgend United Area consists of 8 churches and is served by 1 Superintendent minister and 2 presbyteral colleagues, 1 Methodist and 1 URC.

Buckley & Deeside (2/7)

Each church within the circuit has been encouraged to discover God's vision for their context and plan their work accordingly. The circuit is committed to supporting that process. The presbyters have focused pastoral charge of the 14 churches, working sectionally, but teamwork and collaborative working within the staff team and with lay members is encouraged and expected. This is planned and discussed in regular presbyteral staff meetings and leadership team meetings. In order to allow ministers to engage in mission, outreach and spiritual growth, the circuit seeks to keep the number of churches in each minister's pastoral charge as low as possible. The circuit has successfully sought grant support to provide an additional part-time member of staff from 2015. They will focus on enabling mission across the circuit in addition to the pastoral charge of churches. Buckley & Deeside is a fair-trade circuit.

The Buckley & Deeside circuit consists of 14 churches served by 1 Superintendent minister with 2 Presbyteral colleagues, 1 P/T active supernumerary and some P/T lay worker support.

Cardiff (2/9)

The Cardiff Circuit exists to support the ministry activities of the 15 Circuit Churches and 2 Ecumenical Churches together, with the Urdu speaking fellowship based at Trinity. The circuit is mindful of the need for the gospel to be both life changing and practical. This mission and ministry is conducted at a local level through three clusters in the East, West and North. The circuit resources the clusters, and two ministers are appointed with pastoral charge of the churches within each cluster. Ministers in clusters meet monthly, sometimes with lay leaders, to look at issues and development within their cluster area. Our aim is to develop the core skills of our existing team and move on to identify people who can take the mission of the clusters forward in new ways. Recent ministerial appointments have enabled us to focus a minister in Caerphilly where we believe

significant mission and ministry opportunities lie. It is too early to assess the benefits of this strategy however the circuit is committed to reviewing progress. A separated Superintendent appointed two years ago oversees the circuit, providing pastoral and professional support to colleagues. The Superintendent also meets with other five ministers individually or within cluster teams on a six-weekly basis to allow opportunity for supervision and support. This appointment has assisted the circuit to develop new ways of working and there have been clear benefits as we have become more mission and ministry focussed.

The circuit is also seeking to exercise mission and ministry through circuit wide initiatives which include

- Oversight of the Trinity Centre.
- Reviewing our resources; looking at new housing developments in Cardiff and engaging with planners
- Growing capacity and skills in our people, especially in peer groups across the clusters
- Improving our Children and Youthwork by developing circuit initiatives alongside the 'Youth Space'

The circuit is staffed by six presbyters and a P/T Administrator with the Cardiff HE Chaplain and Synod Enabler.

Ceredigion (2/10)

The Cymru Circuit, being the single circuit of the Cymru Synod of the Methodist Church in Wales, seeks to support and offer Christian worship, witness, mission and ministry in and through its churches, predominantly through the medium of Welsh. It does this within its eleven Areas, one of which is Ceredigion. The Ceredigion Circuit's mission is to worship God, to help one another learn and grow as Christians, and to spread the Good News of God's unconditional love for all. Leadership and ministry are shared alongside an active Circuit Leadership Team. Uniquely within the connexion, the Ceredigion Circuit and Ceredigion Area co-operate to provide ministry through both English and Welsh, offering a joint witness in a significantly bilingual region of Wales.

The Ceredigion circuit consists of 7 (3 English & 4 Welsh language) churches served by 1 Superintendent minister with 1 Presbyteral colleagues, with a P/T Diaconal colleague serving as Chaplain to Hafan Y Waun MHA.

Conwy & Prestatyn (2/12)

The Circuit's aim is the advancement of the Christian faith in our churches and the communities of which we are a part. In order to accomplish this, the Conwy & Prestatyn Circuit is committed to:

- conduct worship that has integrity and strives for a greater depth in holiness;
- seek new and relevant, as well as the traditional, ways of expressing the gospel to both those who are a part of the church community and those who are not yet;
- increase lay participation and development in all our worship and witness;
- foster a culture of mission rather than maintenance in its understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ, ask searching questions of our churches' and members' faithfulness to the gospel and the changing culture in which we live and work;
- be good stewards of its resources (human, financial, physical) and apply them according to the priorities of mission in line with the kingdom of God, rather than equal distribution;
- reflect the biblical injunction to serve and witness among the poor and despairing, and to reveal the life of God's kingdom among the comfortable and successful;
- encourage churches to collaborate in mission and worship, and to seek partnership with all our ecumenical partners where possible;
- monitor this policy annually, formulate a set of 'faith goals' annually and review the policy every 5yrs.

The Conwy & Prestatyn circuit consists of 9 churches served by 1 Superintendent minister with 3 Presbyteral colleagues, and some P/T lay worker and admin support.

Gwent Hills & Vales (2/13)

Since its inception in 2009, the circuit has made mission a priority with churches being challenged to undertake outreach on a regular basis. This is led by a strong ministerial team who have been together for a number of years and the circuit has seen significant progress and encouraging signs for future growth, particularly in recent years. Monthly staff meetings allow time for discussion on circuit matters and a chance for ministers to support each other in prayer and fellowship. Ministers do not necessarily live in the area for which they are responsible, but this has allowed ministers to get to know the circuit and a continued growth in team ministry. The circuit is committed to mission being the work of the whole people of God and this is modelled by a dedicated and supportive Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) which comprises: the ministers; six circuit stewards; Property Secretary; Circuit Treasurer and Local Preachers' Secretary.

The Gwent Hills & Vales circuit consists of 32 churches served by 1 Superintendent minister with 5 Presbyteral colleagues, a P/T Administrator and some supernumerary support.

Mid-Glamorgan Mission (2/16)

With a deep desire for the kingdom of God to be extended in the hills and valleys of the circuit:

- To explore new models of church in terms of worship, mission, fellowship, use of buildings & governance
- To focus human & financial resources on missional opportunities where potential growth is identified
- To explore ecumenical opportunities for co-operation

Monthly staff meeting, monthly leadership team meeting comprising staff and circuit stewards, two of whom are responsible for each of finance, property and ministry (e.g. stationing). The Circuit has a variety of working groups all underpinned by a prayer network. Ecumenical links are a growing part of Welsh Valley community life either on an informal basis or more organised through CYTUN (Churches Together in Wales).

The Mid-Glamorgan Mission circuit consists of 13 churches served by 1 Superintendent minister with 1 Presbyteral colleague and 1 Diaconal colleague.

Neath Port Talbot (2/18)

Each church is encouraged to grasp mission and ministry opportunities within their own setting, as well as enjoying worship, mutual support and social activities within a circuit context. Having been newly formed as a Circuit in 2006, strong links across the churches and a good quality pastoral care system have been developed.

Future priorities are:

- a) to develop mission opportunities, making the gospel accessible to people in our communities;
- b) to continue to enhance the quality of worship life, pastoral care and discipleship of the circuit;
- c) to enable local churches to develop creative relationships with other community groups;
- d) to keep a worshipping presence in our smaller communities and to be proactive where there are signs of growth across the circuit.

The circuit is committed to team/collaborative working in all spheres of church life.

The Neath Port Talbot circuit consists of 9 churches served by 1 Superintendent minister with 1 Presbyteral and 1 P/T Diaconal colleague and some P/T lay worker support.

Newport & Lower Wye (2/19)

As a circuit, we are committed to developing our ministry across all the areas we serve, with the larger churches working alongside the smaller ones in their sections. We have a positive ecumenical outlook and are keen to support our churches to be a driving force in mission particularly within the revitalised and expanding Newport City Centre. The Circuit Leadership Team meets regularly to encourage and coordinate circuit activity. Sections have a large degree of autonomy, while members of staff are committed to exercise ministry across the circuit. The ministerial staff team meets monthly for fellowship and mutual support.

The Newport & Lower Wye circuit consists of 21 churches served by 1 Superintendent minister with 4 Presbyteral colleagues, 1 AP (URC) and a P/T Administrator.

South West Wales Circuit (2/20)

This Circuit is committed to the aims of “A discipleship movement shaped for mission” and “Our Calling” and seeks in its strategic planning and daily ministry, lay and ordained, to welcome and engage with people of all ages, without discrimination and irrespective of faith or no faith.

Within the fifteen churches that make up the Circuit, we seek to increase awareness of God’s presence and to celebrate, within a variety of worship styles, God’s unconditional love.

We aim to help people to grow together and learn from each other, as we explore faith and spirituality in a variety of contexts.

The Circuit is passionate about community outreach, demonstrated by the projects which have been initiated and are run collaboratively during the week in order to meet a variety of spiritual, social, additional and emotional needs.

The Circuit consists of 15 churches (including 4 LEP’s) served by 1 Superintendent minister with 2 presbyteral colleagues, 1 AP (URC) and a P/T Administrator. (The South West Wales Circuit came into being in September 2017, out of the previous Llanelli & Carmarthen and Pembrokeshire circuits.)

Swansea & Gower (2/24)

We affirm the priorities of the Methodist Church and local circuit policy. In doing so we seek to:

- **Express the gospel** through worship, word and action in ways that are contextual
- **Nurture Christian discipleship** and lifestyle through fellowship, study and prayer groups.
- **Encourage growth** in church membership through worship, evangelism, mission and pastoral care
- Support and develop existing **chaplaincy** ministries
- Promote and strengthen **denominational** and **ecumenical** links
- Play an active part in the **work of the Methodist Church in Wales** and the worldwide Church of Christ
- Be **environmentally** aware and sensitive.

Members of the staff team have pastoral charge of several churches, whilst actively supporting circuit activities.

Regular staff meetings for mutual support, prayer and forward planning. The Swansea & Gower circuit consists of 11 churches served by 1 Superintendent minister with 3 Presbyteral colleagues.

Welshpool & Bro Hafren (2/25)

To preserve, develop and grow the Christian cause around the circuit, with a focus on discipleship, mission, stewardship, and pastoral care

To identify where change and new initiatives will most benefit the strengthening of the circuit and its mission

To energise and encourage greater participation in community outreach

It is envisaged that the Superintendent and Presbyter will adopt a co-operative approach to ministry, which enables both to have input throughout the circuit, with the aim of drawing the different areas of the circuit together as a cohesive whole, with Newtown at the centre. (The Newtown church is the central hub for meetings of the various committees of the Wales Synod).

The Welshpool & Bro Hafren circuit consists of 7 churches served by 1 Superintendent minister with 1 Presbyteral colleague.

Wrexham (2/26)

The Circuit priorities were revised in September 2015, reflecting the felt needs of the whole circuit, which included: more prayer, better communications, a greater variety of worship styles, a circuit youth strategy and more effective outreach and evangelism. Accordingly, the Alpha Course, the Prayer Course and other short courses are running throughout the circuit, a group of worship leaders and local preachers are following the new training course and we are adopting a variety of worship styles from Praise & Worship to Taizé, together with different ways of offering prayer. Messy Church and Open the Book are now happening in a number of places (usually ecumenically) and churches are developing stronger community links.

The Wrexham circuit consists of 9 churches served by 1 Superintendent minister with 1 Presbyteral and 1 P/T Diaconal colleagues, and some P/T lay worker and Admin support.

Vale of Glamorgan (2/27)

Our mission is to proclaim the gospel of Christ and witness to God's presence in the world through word and action. Recognising the reality of declining numbers attracted to traditional worship, we are starting to challenge churches to explore new models of worship, mission and buildings use, rather than attempting to maintain the status quo. Within both church and circuit, we are at the early stages of seeking to focus our human and financial resources increasingly on:

- a) Mission based activity rather than maintenance
- b) Localities where potential growth is identified, (eg. we anticipate focusing on the expanding Waterfront Area)
- c) Areas of particular social need, (eg. reinforcing work in the locality around The Gathering Place, St Athan)
- d) Promoting social justice for those in need, (for example building on the initial work with Citizens Cymru Wales)
- e) Fostering local links and understanding with other churches, other groups and faiths in the localities we serve

The Vale of Glamorgan Circuit consists of 9 churches served by 4 presbyters (3 FTE) and 1 (0.75FTE) Diaconal Colleague.

4) Governance and Leadership in the Synod

In preparation for the launch of the new Wales September 2007, 2 Co-Chairs Revs. Will Morrey and Stephen Wigley were nominated to serve alongside the Synod Leadership Team (SLT) and Synod Policy Committee (SPC) and in conjunction with the SLT the Chairs worked out a 'matrix' of responsibilities and roles which sought to avoid the new Synod being split into regions, north and south.

This new model of working was challenged when in November 2007 Rev. Will Morrey left to take up a new role with Action for Children from January 2008. Following this, two separate attempts in 2008 were made to appoint a 2nd 'Co-Chair' to work alongside Rev. Stephen Wigley but without success. These attempts highlighted both the variety of understandings concerning the role of a 'Co-Chair' and difficulty of appointing someone to work alongside a Chair who was already in post and doing the job.

Discussion among the SLT in 2009 led to the proposal of a new model which was then agreed with the SPC and supported by the then General Secretary Martyn Atkins. This involved the appointment of 3 part-time Assistant Chairs to work alongside the current Chair, one serving in the north, one in the south-west and one in the south-east of Wales, each on a 25% FTE basis. The Chair would retain all the connexional responsibilities but each of the Assistant Chairs would share in the workings of the SLT, the pastoral care of ministers (especially supernumeraries), various representative functions, and take the lead on one particular aspect of Synod policy. In addition, the HE Chaplain in Cardiff would take on some of the ecumenical responsibilities of the Chair (including being part of the Commission of Covenanted Churches) with this funded connexional by the final 25% of the original 2nd Co-Chair.

This new model was implemented in September 2009 with the appointment of Revs. Keith Tewkesbury (N), Linda Woollacott (SW) and Lin Healey (SE) to the new roles. It was reviewed in 2012 after some 3 years in operation, when it was agreed by the SPC to be an improvement on the original model and worth continuing with, and has become the model which the Synod continues to use today.

Its strengths are that it offers a clear outline of responsibilities and leadership with the Chair taking the lead on connexional matters and with the Assistant Chairs offering pastoral care and an ability to engage locally in response to particular situations but without establishing formal 'regions' or a further level of governance. We have also been able to draw on the abilities and gifts of experienced ministers whether they be active or supernumerary.

Its weakness has been that by not attaching the role formally to a circuit appointment through the stationing process, we have for much of the period operated with only 2 of the 3 Assistant Chairs in place, and this has placed some added pressure on the Synod Chair, particularly in terms of travel when, as is currently the situation, the vacant Assistant Chair role is in the north of the Synod. The SLT continues to reflect on this situation, but for the time being remains of the opinion that the strengths of being able to appoint the right person through our own recruitment process rather than having to accept the outcome of the stationing process remains the right approach to take.

However, in all this we are also very much aware (see section 7) below) of our ongoing relationship with Synod Cymru and its officers, and especially with its new Synod Chair, Jennie Hurd, who came into post in September 2013. We are conscious of the review which Synod Cymru is undertaking of its current structures, in particular its consideration of what it means to be both a circuit and a

district. Accordingly, we would want to keep any future developments involving our own governance and leadership structures 'open' to work alongside whatever might be the outcome of that review.

5) Strategic decisions taken by the SPC

During the 9 years of its existence the Synod has taken a series of significant strategic decisions, in response both to its own mission policy and those of circuits that make up the Synod. These include;

5.1) Decisions to close churches for worship

Between 2007-17, the SPC has given permission for some 38 churches to close, reducing the total number of churches within the Synod from 223 to 185, ie. a reduction of some 17.0% over 10 years. (This corresponds with a 26.4% reduction in membership from 8,758 in October 2006 to 6,439 in 2016 and a 22.0% reduction in ordained fte stipendiary ministers from 68 in September 2007 to 53 in 2017.)

Bangor & Holyhead		
Bridgend	Broadlands, Kenfig Hill, Pontyclun,	3
Buckley & Deeside		
Cardiff	Roath Park, Splott, Trinity (Newport Rd), (Christchurch URC)	4
Ceredigion	Penparcau	1
Conwy & Prestatyn	St John's Colwyn Bay, St John's Prestatyn, Nant y Glyn	3
Gwent Hills & Vales	Harcourt Terrace, Tredegar & Victoria, Abersychan	2
Mid-Glamorgan Mission	Abercynon, Bronllwyn, Hirwaun, Hope, Miskin, Nelson, Tylorstown,	8
Neath Port Talbot	Cwmafan, Trinity (& Blaenrhondda)	2
Newport & Lower Wye	Caerleon	1
Pembrokeshire	Hill mountain, Neyland, Moreton, Pembroke Dock, Waterston	5
Swansea & Gower		
Welshpool & Bro Hafren	Berriew, Churchstoke, Llangurig, Providence, Stepside, Llanidloes	6
Wrexham	Rhosnesni, Ffrwd	2
Vale of Glamorgan	Eastbrook	1
Total (2007-17)		38

5.2) Provision of grant support from the Synod Advance Fund

In the period 2007-16 the Synod has also made significant investments in churches, circuits and synod appointments through its Synod Advance Fund totalling some £1.3 million; this in accordance with its Policy on Grant Support (located on the Synod website at http://www.methodistwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Policy-Guide-re-SAF-grants-18_12_14.pdf). Of this sum, 70% or £905K was committed in Ministry and Mission grants and 30% or £395K was committed to Property schemes.

In terms of the Ministry and Mission grants, £165K was committed to support 2 key Synod posts (to which we shall return later.) However, by far the largest part of this money was used to support ministry in local circuits, and within this there are perhaps 4 major categories to note, namely support: i) to diaconal appointments where circuits planned to undertake specific mission work
ii) to youth or children and family worker appointments
iii) to chaplaincy work in the 5 circuits with major HE institutions located among them and
iv) to provide administrative support particularly in circuits which had been 'reconfigured' for mission.

In terms of the grants made to Property schemes, these range in size and from small-scale repairs or improvements to ensure DDA compliance to major refurbishment schemes. However, they include:

- i) new build schemes at St Athan and the Waterfront in Barry,
- ii) major refurbishment schemes for churches in key strategic locations (eg. Llanyrafon, Newtown, Milford Haven, Mold, Sketty and Welshpool)

- iii) schemes to redevelop heritage sites for mission and outreach (eg. Pentre Llifior and Tondy)
- iv) schemes focusing on providing greater community use and access (eg. Lantern centre, Llanelli) and v) the provision of purpose-built office and meeting rooms for the Synod at Cyncoed in Cardiff.

6) Key Synod initiatives and appointments

In addition to working alongside local churches and circuits, the Synod has also undertaken some key initiatives and appointments of its own. The first is to continue with the appointment of a (nearly) full-time HE chaplain to Cardiff University, recognising the importance of working with student and staff in this major university at the centre of the capital city, working ecumenically out of the Anglican Chaplaincy centre and building on the work undertaken by previous chaplains over many years. The second has been to appoint the Rev Irfan John to a new 'Synod Enabler' role which allows him to build on his own previous experience and develop work both with asylum seekers and refugees, based primarily at the Trinity Centre in Cardiff and also with a range of 'Culturally diverse' congregations, and particularly with the establishment of Urdu fellowships meeting in Cardiff and Swansea.

Funding for these 2 appointments has been supported by grant from the SAF totalling £165K over the period 2007-16, as well as by significant Connexional grant funding. However, the largest part of the funding to support the appointments has come from Trust 14508, which holds the proceeds of sale from the previous International House in Penarth. Given the link with both students and the wider international community, the SPC has resolved that the funds in this account be used to support these 2 Synod appointments and the Reserves policy adopted for this fund reflects this.

7) Working with Synod Cymru, through Y Cyngor and D&MLN (Cymru Wales)

The formation of the Wales Synod was part of a package intended to strengthen the coherence of Methodism across Wales and which included the establishment of Y Cyngor as the body through which the 2 Districts, Synod Cymru and the Wales Synod would look to work together. This commitment is reflected in the final bullet point of the Wales Synod Mission Policy and has been supported also by the work of initially the Wales Training Network and since 2013 the Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network Cymru Wales which operates across both Synods.

During these 10 years, the working relationships between the 2 Synods through Y Cyngor has improved significantly and this is evidenced by:

- One circuit (Ceredigion) which is both a circuit in Wales Synod & an ardal/area in Synod Cymru
- Joint meetings for Safeguarding and for Candidating
- Joint Youth exchange to Jamaica and plans to work together through the Synod(s) Youth Work Action Group
- Joint hosting of Presidential and Vice-Presidential visits (for example in March 2016)
- Shared contributions from both Synods for (day 8 of) the Methodist Prayer handbook

The 2 Synods have also worked closely together through Y Cyngor in engaging with and responding to ecumenical developments, particularly as the Methodist Church in Wales has been one of the 5 Covenanted Churches in Wales since 1975 (along with the Church in Wales, the Presbyterian Church in Wales, the United Reformed Church and some Baptist congregations.) Y Cyngor played a major role in co-ordinating the response to the proposals launched at the Gathering in 2012, and though these proposals did not find widespread support, the process helped draw the 2 synods closer together.

Most recently, and following its own review process (to which the Wales Synod has contributed) Synod Cymru has invited the Wales Synod to have exploratory conversations about the possibility of forming one new Synod for Wales. The SPC has responded positively to this request and talks are underway which have led to some initial outline proposals. We wait to see what the outcome will be but affirm that the goal of working more closely together is very much part of the Wales Synod's objectives.

8) Ecumenical arrangements and aspirations

As noted in the previous paragraph, the Wales Synod is committed to working ecumenically, reflecting in turn its being a part of the Covenanted Churches in Wales, the commitment in the 'Priorities' about working with partners wherever possible, and its own Mission policy. The table below sets out the Synod's current engagement with LEP's and ecumenical working (principally with the URC.)

a) Circuit-based partnerships

Bangor & Holyhead	Penmaenmawr (St. Paul's)	LEP (URC)
Bridgend	United Area (URC)	
	Bridgend, Maesteg, Ogmere Vale & Porthcawl LEP's (URC; M also Bap)	
Buckley & Deeside	Connah's Quay & Penyffordd	LEP (PCW)
Cardiff	Cardiff East Ecumenical area	LEP (Covenant)
	St. Mellons & Pontprennau	LEP (Covenant)
	Fairwater & Taffs Well	LEP (URC; TW also Bap)
Llanelli & Carmarthen	Llanelli (Hall St.) (*)	LEP (URC)
Mid-Glamorgan Mission	Llanfair Penrhys	LEP (Covenant)
Newport & Lower Wye	Danygraig	LEP (PCW/URC)
	Ty Sign	Sharing agreement (CinW)
Pembrokeshire	Haverford West, Milford Haven (*) & Tenby	LEP (URC)
Swansea & Gower	Clydach	LEP (PCW/UWI)
	Sketty (*)	LEP (URC)
Vale of Glamorgan	Barry Waterfront (*)	LEP (URC)

(*) = new LEP's in period 2007-17

b) Synod and wider based partnerships

Chaplaincy

i) Higher Education	Cardiff University	Partnership (CinW)
	USW Ecumenical chaplain	Partnership (Covenant)
	Glyndwr Ecumenical chaplain	Partnership (CinW/PCW)
ii) Industrial & workplace	Chaplaincy to RWAS	Partnership (CinW/URC)
	Cardiff Bay	LEP (Covenant - under review)
iii) Prison	Cardiff	Multi-faith chaplaincy team (co-ordinated by CinW)

This table reflects a significant level of ongoing ecumenical commitment. However, the list is a shorter one than it would have been just a few years ago, reflecting amongst other things the dissolution of the United Area in Pembrokeshire (with the URC), a reduction in ecumenical chaplaincy working and the ending of our long-standing involvement with St Michael's College in Llandaff as a result of changes to training implemented both by the Methodist Church (after Fruitful Field) and the Church in Wales.

The Synod remains committed to ecumenical working where it offers the possibility of more effective mission and outreach, but it has also become more aware of how this needs to be supported by the strategic deployment of ministry, and it is significant that in the two most recent LEP's with the URC a clearer statement about the ongoing provision of ministry has been included in the agreement.

It is also noteworthy that despite the 40 years of the Covenant, there exists little by way of formal LEP arrangements involving the Church in Wales outside the Cardiff East Ecumenical area, which itself has faced challenging times since the failure of the Ecumenical Bishop proposals. The Commission has recently decided to look more closely at current arrangements allowing for the interchangeability of ministry, and we wait to see whether such a review will open up new possibilities for the future.

9) Engagement in new housing developments

The Synod remains committed to exploring possibilities of ecumenical cooperation in areas of new housing development, as gave rise to the new ecumenical churches at St Mellon and Pontprennau. We have been involved in ecumenical conversations concerning new developments in Llanwern, Llanharry and Coed-Darcy and are aware of the significant scale of the Cardiff Development plan. However, given the current ecumenical and economic climate (see above) these have not led to the development of new church building schemes, with the exception of the Waterfront development in Barry (along with the URC). We also recognise that local government thinking about such development has changed somewhat and is less supportive of new church as opposed to community facilities.

10) Summary and conclusions

It is always hard to analyse and summarise the life of such a diverse organisation as the Wales Synod in just a few pages. Even in its short history to date, we recognise that there have been significant changes of leadership, structure and governance in response to particular events and local contexts.

Reflecting as we have done upon its creation, its recent history, and the policies and process which it has adopted for its current practice, we can identify the following as key components for the Synod's future development and hence the key features in any future development planning.

- The clear recognition that the Synod exists primarily to resource and serve the circuits in their local mission and ministry
- Which means in turn that the Synod's main task is to encourage and develop those initiatives which arise from local church and circuit situations
- While also focusing on a few strategic initiatives to address those challenges that stretch across Wales and cannot be resourced from local circuit resources
- That these objectives require taking seriously the context of Wales, in which the Synod is committed to work more closely and coherently with our colleagues in the Cymru Synod
- That this is not at the expense of working with ecumenically, but it does mean that we need to have a clear sense as to how such ecumenical working will serve the local mission context
- That these objectives will require the Synod to prioritise its resources on helping circuits to 'regroup for mission', not simply in terms of changing circuit boundaries but in establishing a sustainable basis and vision for future mission (*)
- That this is a process which is already underway, but will require the Synod to offer further support and encouragement in the years to come (*)

- While remaining open to any changes which may result from decisions taken by colleagues in Synod Cymru or by ecumenical partners.

(* an example of this in practice is the formation of the new South West Wales Circuit from Sept. 2017)

However, the key strategic focus for the Synod during the course of this next year 2018-19 will be to build on the developments outlined in section 7 (in terms of seeking to work more closely with Synod Cymru) and see if the exploratory conversations and draft outline proposals do lead to the formation of one new Synod in Wales, which can enable Methodism in Wales to carry out its ministry and mission in both languages more effectively.

(SDW June 2018)