

Report for the Methodist Recorder – Cumbria District Autumn Synod 2022

Synod gathered at Carlisle Methodist Church, Wigton Road, the newly formed city-wide church across multiple sites. There was an air of dislocation and sadness following the death of HM the late Queen Elizabeth, but a lighted candle in front of a commemorative photo of Her Majesty provided an honouring reminder. Appropriate reflective worship was led by members of the North Cumbria circuit, giving thanks for the Queen's life and praying for the new King Charles. Following a reading from Revelation, the Revd Tokumbo Asogbon offered a fitting song from his native Nigeria.

The Chair, Revd Dr James Tebbutt, welcomed new members to synod, including new presbyters, Revds Grace Cauldwell and Tiras Dainty-Share. District officers were elected for the year; greetings were expressed; and a number of reports received. Revd Andrew Sterling was elected to join Gillian de Bourcier, Philip Jackson and Janice Rusling as representatives to the Conference.

Gill de Bourcier gave an insight into this year's Conference, lighting the candle that she, like other members of Conference, had received from the President. She highlighted the major items debated, and expressed admiration for the confidence and enthusiasm displayed by the young people present. All three of the memorials submitted by Cumbria District were accepted; the request to bring manses up to a good environmental heating standard is already being implemented.

The proposed special resolution to create a connexional council, including to replace the Conference members as the formal trustees for the Methodist Church, provoked a lengthy discussion, concluding with a large majority in favour of the resolution.

Synod was principally concerned with 'Refocusing to serve the present age'. The District Chair gave updates on the Northwest Districts Review; the development of strategies for implementing the Cumbria Ecumenical God for All Vision Refresh; and the proposed District pilot project for New Places for New People, seeking to encourage all circuits and churches in the District to become more confident in accommodating and initiating pioneering and fresh expressions of church.

Chris Hulme and Helen Hooley gave a presentation on reforming Cumbria circuits, including the possibility of creating a county-wide Cumbria circuit to share governance burdens given declining numbers and to release energy for ministry and mission. The meeting then broke into six discussion groups for animated discussions. There was a unanimous agreement that a circuit exploration group should continue to consider the future configuration of circuits in Cumbria.

The Synod concluded by singing in faith and confidence 'Captain of Israel's host, and Guide'.

Janice Rusling