

## **Report for the Methodist Recorder – Cumbria District Spring Synod 2023**

The opening of the Cumbria District was markedly different in atmosphere from that of autumn synod, which met in sadness following the Queen's death. The spring synod saw everyone in positive spirits as we met at Sticklandgate Methodist Church, Kendal.

Opening worship was meaningfully led by the Sandylands worship group and members of the Kendal circuit, based on the story of Jesus on the road to Emmaus and including a meditation 'He is Risen' written by Revd Wendy Thornton.

The Synod received reports covering many areas of District life, with gratitude expressed for the significant work undertaken. Synod received very favourable reports for both presbyteral probationers, with Revd Paul Harold recommended for ordination at the Conference in June.

The Cumbria County Circuit working group recommended that an open gathering should be held further to consider the possibility and issues involved, to which Synod agreed.

An update was provided regarding the Ecumenical County's Vision Refresh and developing strategies for implementation, including commitments to a mixed ecology of time-honoured and fresh expressions of church and the further development of ecumenical mission communities throughout the county, utilising the creative metaphors of 'a garden' and 'faithful improvisation'.

In her update on New Places for New People, Pilot Project Officer Emma Richardson reminded us that 'pioneering is not a label but an invitation to respond'. She noted that activities such as Messy Church and Café Church began as new initiatives but are now mainstream events. Breakout groups considered pioneering and Fresh Expression responses and possibilities in local contexts.

In the afternoon, the consent of all circuits in the Cumbria District to the proposed merger with others to form a North West England District was reported. The Synod debated the proposal, and approved the possible merger, voting 62 in favour and none against (with 6 abstentions).

Following final reports, agreement of correspondence and closing courtesies, the District Chair, Revd Dr James Tebbutt, presented and led closing devotions inspired by his visit last October to the District's partnership church, the Argentinian Methodist Church's Conference in Buenos Aires, and their commitment to Jesus Christ: the grace that transforms and the hope that frees.

Janice Rusling  
Cumbria Synod Secretary