

## Launch of Synod Mission Fund

It had taken two years, admitted synod moderator Rowena Francis, for the resources questionnaire that every church had been asked to complete to lead to this point—a mission fund to empower Northern Synod churches. The fund, synod learned, will be divided into two parts: the first, with a provision of £10,000 for the first year, is for small mission grants that can be used for activities such as holiday clubs, taking children to a camp, running a luncheon club with mid week worship, or the like. The second will be used to support Partners in Mission over a longer period of five to ten years—and these Partners include CRCW projects, chaplaincies, and the St Cuthbert's Centre.

Churches and individuals can give to Mission4Life, as the new fund is to be called—and they will be able to sign up and develop a relationship with one of the seven Partners that are currently being supported. Prayer support will also be valued—and individuals' cash gifts can be gift-aided.

Synod then watched the launch video which outlines the work of four of the Partners: the rural advisor based in Northumberland, the Grindon CRCW project, the Newcastle city centre chaplaincy, and the St Cuthbert's Centre on Holy Island. One copy of the video was made available for each church, together with a plentiful supply of appeal leaflets: you may even find your own copy in a church magazine together with this news sheet.

**Mission4Life**  
Empowering Northern Synod churches

## Report from Bethlehem

Methodist minister Enid Gordon, currently serving in Gateshead, gave a searing account of her experiences earlier in the year as a member of the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine/Israel.

Using her own photographs, she described the sufferings of the people of Bethlehem whom she was living among at the time of the Gaza crisis in January, and the pressures experienced more generally by Palestinians in the West Bank, especially as a result of the wall.

In response to questions, she urged synod members to make these things more widely known within our churches, and left leaflets answering the question "What can we do?"



## Who can unlock the book?

Neither moderator, clerk, nor minister of the host church succeeded—but a little child proved able to lead the way and open the scriptures in a moving moment within the opening act of worship.

The focus once again on the Bible in this first year of Vision4Life included extracts from some of the good news stories from the two volumes of **Acts Then and Now**, produced by our churches and telling where God is active among us today. These were placed at the front of the church, and were well read by synod members during the lunch break.

## News of People

Synod heard of ministers soon to be on the move: Greg Thompson to Brecon later in the month, and Jan Maxwell to Scotland at the end of the year. Paul Cleever-Thorpe had been welcomed to SENEA, and Les Dinning now serving at Stamfordham was given a welcome in person.

Janet Turner and David Peel had completed their terms in synod posts, but David had been welcomed back through his induction to St Andrew's Monkseaton and St Cuthbert's Heaton.

On the geographical edge of the synod, Jan Berry was taking up a post at the Holy Rood Centre for Healing at Thirsk.

Synod also remembered individuals who had recently died: Pamela Munkley and Muriel Tasker who had both been active children's workers, and ministers George Bindemann, formerly at Berwick, and Henry Gordon, who was originally from High Heaton.

Worship was a significant feature of this synod. At the end of the morning session the moderator presided at the first celebration of Holy Communion within a synod meeting for many years. And at the end of the afternoon we were joined again by the children, who had been working in their own children's synod on a *whole body worship* theme, and who were now able to lead in a signed version of the Lord's prayer.



Margaret Humberston and Janet Flawn reading Acts Then and Now

## Money matters

◆ Since the beginning of the year finance and property matters have become the responsibility of the Synod Trust. Trust Secretary James Breslin surprised synod with an upbeat report focusing on some pieces of good news. The first was that, after a long period of negotiation, the Trust was now a registered charity. Second, the much-publicised crippling charges made to churches by water authorities were to be rescinded by legislation; and third, synod investments were now providing a better income than had at one point been feared. He thanked synod churches for their understanding that in the present climate we were unable to do all that we might have wished.

In response to questions, James promised that the Trust would give a financial up-date at every synod meeting, and that efforts would be made in future to provide members with simplified user-friendly accounts.

◆ Speaking as Chair of the Board of the Keld Resource Centre, David Peel noted that church projects can have particular difficulty in attracting outside funding because we are perceived to be too rich: our property and sometimes financial assets make us appear far less deserving than other bodies. This was one of the reasons for setting up a limited company to further the plans for the Keld Centre. David spoke appreciatively of the launch of the Synod Mission Fund as a way of allowing some of those assets to work for us in a mission-focused way today.

◆ Illness prevented the URC Agency 1Church: 100 Uses, who have been working for some time within the synod, from giving the major report which was on the agenda (we hope this may happen in March). But the Moderator gave a brief outline of some of the work undertaken - notably at Blyth, where our congregation are now worshipping in smaller premises within the Catholic church across the road. Negotiations by 1Church: 100Uses have led to our building being used by NE Music Factory, while allowing the church occasional use for special services. Meg Robb spoke of the help given by the Agency in seeking funding for development at Redcar - however, the current financial climate meant that many funding bids had not succeeded as had been hoped.

## Walking Together

Receptive Ecumenism is a buzz phrase around just now. St Andrew's minister Peter Rand and another member of the LEP (Local Ecumenical Partnership) showed through a homely conversation what it really means - an openness to receive gifts from other traditions, not least where we have perceived a lack among ourselves. The Ecumenical Group also brought a resolution reminding synod of the ministry that we share with the Methodist Church, formally welcoming newly appointed Methodist ministers who are members of synod.



*St Andrew's minister Peter Rand tunes up in preparation for closing worship*

### **Get your Church Noticed**

Training Day for publicity officers etc with URC Press Officer Stuart Dew at Wideopen URC - Oct 31st 11-4

*Book now - contact John Durell*



## In Brief....

- ◆ Watch out for the taster day on Reformed Spirituality at Durham on February 27th
- ◆ David Whiting is the new convenor of Ministries & Training, and Chris Eddowes the new TLS coordinator
- ◆ Peter Forrest is serving as lay chaplain at Newcastle and Northumbria Universities
- ◆ Pilots Officer Marilyn Armstrong promises a great day out with Pilots at Warwick on May 15th - and there may be room on the Hartlepool bus!
- ◆ People from all over the world go to the St Cuthbert's Centre on Holy Island - even from Lindisfarne, Tasmania!
- ◆ We hope to have our Mozambique link up and running again over the coming year

## Afternoon workshops

*Participants in Messy Church and Café Church workshops. Also on offer were The Bible in Preaching and The Bible in Taizé Worship - all taking up the Bible theme of Vision4Life Year 1.*

