



Mission Partnership Agreement and Vacancy Profile for Norwich Area URC Mission Partnership



This profile/agreement includes an introduction and six parts:

Part 1: The Mission Context

Part 2: The Core Partnership priorities (funding requests)

Part 3: The Minister Specification

Part 4: Mission statements from each congregation

Part 5: Manse information

Part 6: The Partnership Structure

Introduction

This profile is presented within the overall context of the 'Principles of Mission Partnerships' (MPs) within the Eastern Synod of the URC.

The assumption in this profile is that the Norwich Area URC Mission Partnership will be allocated (with payment from the MoM FUND) one fully scoped (100%) permanent minister – plus possible support (see core priorities) of additional staff (see *note ¹ below*) input from other professional workers (resourced from Synod grants, local Church funds and other new sources (see *note ² below*)

The minister's role will be to develop and help sustain ministry and mission in the partnership – this will be primarily through short term focused work with one or more congregations, on particular initiatives and projects, while having oversight across the partnership. There will not be a % allocation of ministry time for each congregation.

There is the expectation that congregations will work more closely together (building upon the work already established by the Norwich Area Group). This working together will for example include sharing good practice, safeguarding protocols, pastoral care, social media resources, administration etc. It is hoped that this sharing process might benefit in some 'economies of scale' and may take some pressure from smaller or less resourced congregations within the MP.

This partnership is not using the MP hub model.

¹ Discussions will continue on whether additional staff will be recruited and employed by the MP, or a local congregation (or congregations) within the MP, or by the Synod.

² There will need to be discussions with the Synod and within the Mission Partnership about the balance of funding between new Synod funding, Synod grants and funding from congregations within the Mission Partnership, manse sales, rental income etc

We are seeking to move with some urgency to establishing the first MP within the Synod and to have an interim moderator appointed and to begin the process of calling a minister for this MP.

Part 1: The Mission Context

Eastern Synod has asked that all pastorates (both those in current vacancy and those with stipendiary ministry in place) explore forming new Mission Partnerships. Future vacancies and ministry deployment will be channelled through these new partnerships. The Synod recently appointed the Rev Alex Jacob to help churches explore how best to form Mission Partnerships. Alex has been working closely with the Norwich Area Churches since November 2023, and has helped the congregations to focus on issues around mission and discipleship,

Norwich is a regional centre and a thriving cathedral city, with two Universities (UEA and Norwich University of the Arts) a Norman castle and large open-air market. It has a long history of commerce and has a rich and varied cultural and sporting life. Road and rail links to London are very good and Norwich also has an airport.

In 2005 Norwich UR Churches began to explore the possibility of working as one church based in four locations. In 2008 this was expanded to include the URC congregations in Wymondham (Fairland), Wroxham & Hoveton and Mattishall. (Mattishall and Princes Street Norwich have since closed and at the time of writing Trinity has made the decision in principle to close). This 'one church' didn't happen but the churches continued to work together. The current group is known as the Norwich Area United Reformed Church (NAURC). The NAURC is within the Eastern Synod and operates within the Norfolk and Waveney Area Partnership.

Each of the four congregations (Ipswich Road, St Peter's Jessopp Road LEP (*see note ¹ below*), Wymondham, Wroxham & Hoveton retain their own autonomy but all are committed to working with the other congregations and all send representatives to a Joint Ministry Group (JMG) which meets regularly. Linked to this are preaching plan meetings and occasionally joint services are arranged. Ipswich Road and St Peter's are situated in areas near the outer ring road of the

¹ *Jessopp Rd is a LEP (URC/Methodist) and currently has about 25% ministry input from the Methodist circuit There is no expectation that the Mission Partnership staff will have any responsibility elsewhere in the Methodist Circuit. This has been agreed in principle with the Methodist Superintendent.*

city of Norwich, while Wymondham and Wroxham & Hoveton have very different locations. Bowthorpe LEP which is in the Norwich Area is in a different category. (See note ¹ below)

About the churches

Ipswich Road URC

Founded as a 'plant' from Princes Street Congregational Church in 1952, IRURC is located on Eaton Rise, on the southern outskirts of Norwich. Ipswich Road (the A140) divides two housing estates, whose residents have different socio-economic needs. The church is the only community building on Eaton Rise.



The church buildings have been developed over the years and are well used by the church and community groups. The Sanctuary is fully equipped for online worship and services are transmitted weekly via 'Zoom' and 'You Tube'. Worship is informal and varied and includes occasional café church services. There is an average congregation of 40-50 and the main hymn book is Mission Praise, but all hymns are projected. There is a monthly evening communion service and regular 'bring and share lunches'. Monthly Messy Church is well attended, as is the monthly community lunch and the weekly toddler group and Youth Drop In. The latter is held in Harford Community Centre which is more central to those who wish to attend. The church is a supporter of Norwich Pride, has been awarded the silver Ecochurch award and is a Fair trade church and foodbank collection point.

St Peter's Jessopp Road LEP

St Peter's Jessopp Road LEP is located within a relatively modern building in a concentrated residential area with a mix of private and social housing in the south west quadrant of Norwich.



¹ *On-going discussions are taking place with the leadership team at Bowthorpe LEP as to how this united single pastorate church (C of E, Baptist, URC and Methodist), currently with a full-time URC minister, situated in a 1980s development in the NR5 district of Norwich, will relate to the Mission Partnership. Currently this is unclear, yet it is known that the Minister appointed to serve within the MP will not have any ministry responsibilities with Bowthorpe. Currently their minister is a URC Minister and the expectation is that good ministry links and supportive relationships will flow between Bowthorpe and the Mission Partnership but this will need to be developed and reviewed over the years.*

The average congregation at Sunday worship is about 18 and services are a mix of traditional and Café Church styles. Each Wednesday morning there is a well-attended “Coffee Stop” and once a month this is followed by a meal and then a study group. Church members also run two well-attended weekly table tennis groups and a weekly craft meeting. The pews in the church have recently been replaced with chairs.

Wroxham and Hoveton URC (The Hub)

Wroxham and Hoveton are two villages separated by the river Bure but operate in most ways as one community. Wroxham is known as ‘the capital of the Broads’. The church often has holiday makers attend their services.



Wroxham and Hoveton URC was founded in 1969 as a church plant from Trinity Presbyterian Church in Norwich and initially worshipped in the Anglican church. Their own building was completed in 2013. It is located in the centre of Wroxham in a fairly affluent area, but Hoveton is more socio-economically mixed. Worship is Bible centred, informal, using Mission Praise predominantly, and the service is projected. The Hub has achieved a Rocha Silver Eco-church award. The church is committed to being inclusive of all who want to join them Their average attendance is 25-30.

Wymondham URC (Fairland)

Wymondham is a historic market town and the HQ of Norfolk Police is situated in the town. Recently there have been a large number of new housing developments. There is little social housing in the town. The church was originally established in 1652 and is a grade 2 listed building. In 2002 the pulpit and pews were removed, a new kitchen and accessible toilets were installed. The adjacent hall was also refurbished with full disability support facilities.



Wymondham URC continues to develop the spiritual life of the congregation through weekly worship with a largely elderly congregation, with an average attendance of 14. Members come from Wymondham and the surrounding villages and the church welcomes a number of preachers from different denominations to their traditional style of worship. The church holds a coffee morning and film show monthly. These are open to all.

Other information

All churches have projection facilities and wifi.

Ipswich Road URC website publicizes the details of the services in all the NAURC churches each week .

Websites:

IRURC: <https://ipswichroadurc.org.uk/>

St Peter's Jessopp Road:
<https://www.stpetersjessopproad.org/>

Wroxham and Hoveton: <https://wroxhamurc.org.uk/>

Wymondham: <https://www.fairlandurc.org.uk/site/> or via Ipswich Road URC website

You Tube Channel: 'Norwich Area United Reformed Church'



Part 2 : The Core Priorities for the Mission Partnership

Priority One: To work together across the congregations, to develop a missional focus and seek to maintain and develop mutually supportive and sharing congregations, aiming to provide a compelling Christian witness for future generations. (See *also note ¹ below*)

Priority Two: To have a minimum of one full time resident Minister to lead the Mission Partnership

Priority Three: To appoint, resource and develop a staff team to work alongside the minister.

These appointments would depend on finances being available- which may come from any of the following: New Synod funding, Synod grants, funding from congregations within the Mission

¹ NB: *There is no agenda that existing congregations will close or be forced to join up with other churches yet there must be an 'openness' to review from time-to-time existing patterns and resources within the MP (and ecumenically) and to be faithful to future mission-led change.*

Partnership, manse sales, rental income etc. It is hoped that the team would include the following:

1. A full-time children's and family worker



This post will build upon the children's work already taking place primarily at Wroxham and Ipswich Road, and look to developing new initiatives within the partnership.



NB: A job description already exists, as Wroxham and Ipswich Road, in the recent past sought jointly to employ a children's and family worker. Finance for part of this post has already been approved by Synod. The priority is to create this full-time post and embed it within a supportive staff team.

2. A full-time outreach worker



This is primarily to focus on visiting new housing estates in Wroxham and Wymondham and also strengthening and establishing community links across the pastorate.



NB: Depending on the 'skill set' and 'calling' of the post holder, it is envisioned that this worker could build up good links with the various premises' user groups across the congregations and work with the CFW in local schools and/or support the open youth group which is run by Ipswich Road, currently with support from 'Norwich Youth for Christ'. Also, it is worth noting that at the time of writing this vacancy profile, investigations are in place for two Time for God volunteers to work for a year with two of the congregations.

3. A part-time worker



This is to help manage the various user-groups and to act as a property manager/caretaker across the partnership.



Part 3: Minister Specification

We are seeking that the Minister who leads this newly established Mission Partnership will be a deeply committed Christian with clear pastoral and evangelistic gifts and skills.



The Minister will need to be a team player while also giving a pioneering lead.

The Minister will also need to be able to discern with others the missional priorities for the partnership and to display energy, enthusiasm and adaptability.

The Minister should be a good Bible teacher and help equip Elders and Church Members to be faithful and effective disciples.

This is a challenging ministry role, yet resources are available and clear opportunities exist to help the partnership serve, flourish and grow.

These specifications will be reviewed and refined, following the guidance received from the Moderator at the Mission Partnership Vacancy Meeting.

Part 4: Local congregational vision/mission statements

Ipswich Road URC



We have 4 main areas of Mission which are being developed, following a Mission Day led by our Moderator in June 2023. All build on existing activities.

- i. To be an Inclusive church reaching out to groups of people who might worry that they are not welcome eg LGBTQ+ community, all races and ethnicities, etc.
- ii. To work with the Elderly to discover, develop and provide the support needed by those living with a disability including dementia.
- iii. To develop our prayer life and knowledge of the Bible .

- iv. To further develop our children’s work with families and Messy Church, building on foundations laid by a previous Children and Families’ Worker. We are also trying to appoint a part time Youth Worker to expand our existing work with young people.

Being an Eco church is an important part of our mission in all areas.

St Peter’s Jessopp Road LEP



Our Mission is to develop our outreach as we share God’s Kingdom, through the Good News of Jesus Christ and fellowship with everyone. Our particular priorities centre around maintaining and developing the Wednesday and Sunday activities already in place. In addition, our building has potential for wider community use that we want to explore both through the Mission Partnership and the local Methodist circuit.

Wroxham and Hoveton

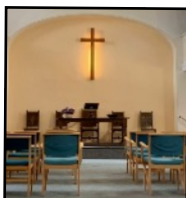


We have a lively Sunday School with experienced, committed leaders. We want to develop children’s work further, by outreach to the local school and providing more nurturing activities.

We have a weekly Community Café, alongside a Food Bank. This is very well attended by people with all kinds of difficulties, in addition to local residents. We want to be able to better reach out to all who come.

There are two large, new housing estates here which we would like to make contact with, but do not have the capacity to do so at present.

Wymondham



We are committed to seeking closer working relationships with other Wymondham churches and the wider community, to seek to serve the town and share the good news of God’s love for the human race and creation in Jesus Christ.

Our buildings are used twice weekly by the Pabulum Café run by Wymondham Dementia Support Group. 3 AA groups meet weekly. Choirs and keep fit groups are among regular hirers. Anon, store food for the homeless in our hall.

There are a number of new housing estates in Wymondham that we would like to make contact with, but currently do not have the capacity.

Part 5: Manse Information

For historical reasons the Norwich Area Churches have four manses: two in Norwich and one each in Wymondham and Hoveton. All are managed locally by commercial agents and are all currently tenanted.



One of the Norwich manses is an ideal family home adjacent to the Ipswich Road church.

The new Mission Partnership minister is free to select the manse they believe would be right for them. It is recognized that if none of the existing manses are deemed suitable at least one manse could be sold to help fund a replacement.

The Mission Partnership recognize that a future sale of any surplus manses could help provide new capital to fund further missional work-however the rental income can also be viewed as a significant funding stream for sustaining church outreach and general support.

The Mission Partnership is also asking the Synod to explore how surplus manses can be made available to future church staff (who are not ordained ministers or CRCW's) in order to create more attractive and sustainable staff posts.

Part 6: Mission Partnership Structure

In general terms existing local structures will be unchanged, so key local decisions will be discerned and acted upon via Church members' meetings, Eldership meetings and where applicable LEP processes. However, each congregation will be committed to exploring if new steps should be taken which will strengthen cooperation between partnership congregations. Steps such as joint services, meetings,

shared training events, prayer gatherings, shared resources etc. Following on from this, it may be deemed right that some congregations within the partnership consider some form of 'merger' with each other with the longer-term possibility of there being 'one recognized church' meeting across a number of sites. There is no expectation that this will occur but there should be an 'openness' in terms of testing this.

In addition to local structures one new structure will be formed, although in the Norwich Area Partnership the Norwich Joint Ministry Group (JMG) already exists and probably does some of the work this new structure will seek to do. This new structure will be named 'The Mission Partnership Leadership Team' (MPLT). This new group will replace the existing JMG and will take on the preaching plan responsibilities.

The remit of this team will be:

- To deliver the objectives as outlined in the MP proposal and as confirmed within the call process.
- To lead on defining the priorities of the office holders and staff members called or appointed for work in the Mission Partnership.
- To liaise with and share key information with the partner congregations.
- To review from time to time the MP proposal in order to make any changes which are deemed important in fulfilling the missional work of the MP.
- To be the link group with other MP's, ecumenical partners and the wider URC
- To oversee and coordinate the preaching plans of each partnership congregation in consultation with each local congregation

The structure of the group:

- The group will be chaired by the MP minister. If the minister is not present a chair will be appointed from within the team. If more than one minister is employed the chair will rotate between them as agreed by the MPLT, but each minister will be a permanent member of the MPLT.

- In addition to the minister(s) the MPLT will consist of one serving Elder or local leader from each congregation. (If a local leader is in place, they will have a permanent place on the MPLT). Each Elder will serve a three-year appointed term, but they can be re-elected for ongoing periods of two years, if this is the wish of their local congregation or the Mission Partnership Leadership team. If a congregation grows to a membership of over 75, two serving Elders will be present on the MPLT. If an Elder cannot attend a meeting, he or she can nominate a fellow serving Elder from their congregation to share fully in the meeting. Each Elder will be responsible for communicating back to their congregations and in bringing ideas, concerns and requests from their congregations to the MPLT.
- The MP leadership group will hold an AGM in which all church members are invited to come and ask questions. A review each year will take place of how the MP is developing, areas for celebration will be noted as will areas of concern and challenge.
- Any employed staff will be required within their job description to participate fully in the MPLT, although they will not have a vote.
- The MPLT will be able to co-opt up to three additional members¹ for up to 18 months at a time, if their expertise is deemed helpful in strengthening the work and discernment of the MPLT.
- The MPLT will meet as and when viewed necessary, but with the expectation that a full business meeting will occur at least quarterly and an additional meeting for prayer, reflection, study and fellowship will also occur quarterly.
- The MPLT will review the structure in July 2025
- Changes to remit and structure can occur if such changes are agreed to be necessary by decisions of the majority of Church meetings within the partnership. Any requested changes will be voted upon at the AGM.

¹ *This may include some of the current retired Ministers of Word and Sacrament who are currently offering significant ministry input in different contexts.*