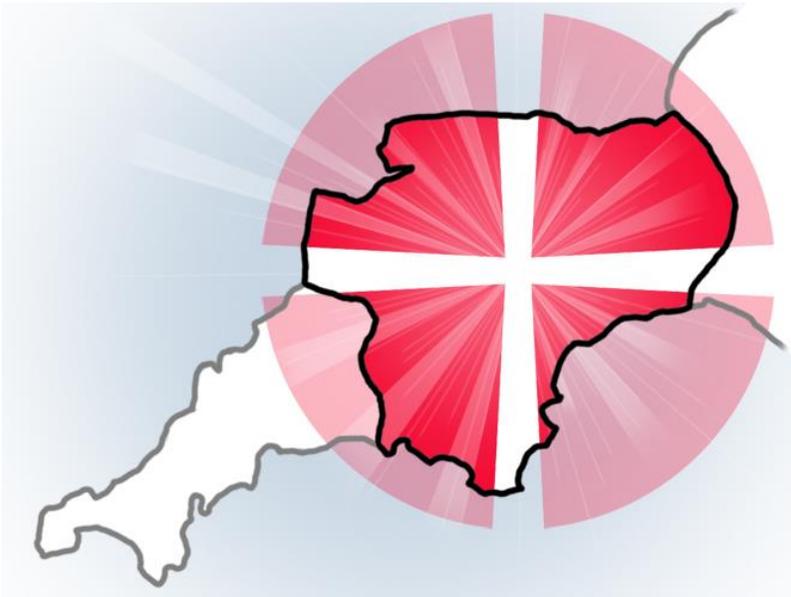


THE METHODIST CHURCH

THE PLYMOUTH AND EXETER  
DISTRICT

# Annual Reports

## Spring 2018



# Annual Reports - Contents

## Reports

SAFEGUARDING REPORT	4
DISTRICT POLICY COMMITTEE	8
DISTRICT GRANTS COMMITTEE	10
DISTRICT LWP (Leaders of Worship and Preachers) REPORT	11
DISTRICT EVANGELISM ENABLER REPORT	13
JOINT DISTRICT SELECTION AND DISCERNMENT PANEL 'CANDIDATES'	16
RURAL ISSUES	17
EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION	19
PLYMOUTH METHODIST MISSION CIRCUIT REPORT	20
ECUMENICAL OFFICER'S REPORT – SOMERSET	21
METHODIST WOMEN IN BRITAIN	23
MHA PLYMOUTH AND EXETER DISTRICT NEWS	244
DISCIPLESHIP AND MINISTRIES LEARNING NETWORK	266
LAY EMPLOYMENT REPORT	26
AUTHORISATION TO PRESIDE 2017-2018	27
APPOINTMENTS	28
DATES OF SYNOD	28

## REPORTS

### SAFEGUARDING REPORT

#### Governance

The Methodist Conference 2017 approved the following changes related to safeguarding: -

- Replacing Covenants of Care with Safeguarding Contracts for all those with proven and alleged sex and safeguarding offences;
- Introducing a more formalised process for independent risk assessment of known and alleged safeguarding offenders.
- Maintenance of records of all those subject to Contracts by the Connexional Safeguarding Team (CST) so that regular reporting and monitoring of consistent approaches can be achieved;
- Providing training for members of Monitoring and Support Groups so that they are suitably prepared and enabled to carry out their role;
- Implementing a process whereby all Contracts are reviewed at least annually and consideration is given to re-assessing arrangements by means of a new risk assessment every three year.

In addition, Methodist council have also been informed of the proposals for professional supervision of District Safeguarding Officers (DSOs)

The Proposal:

- The Connexional Safeguarding Team (CST) takes on all the professional casework supervision of the DSOs.
- Each member of the CST will supervise all the DSOs for a collection of Districts
- Changes to the structure and job roles of the CST be made in support.

#### Past Case Review.

The Chair of District Graham Thompson, the District Policy Committee (DPC) and the District Safeguarding Group (DSG) have agreed that the DSO in response to the Courage, Cost and Hope report from the Past Cases Review would seek to meet with circuits to present the Ten Themes from the overall report. This is to continue to further embed the

learning arising from the report. The DSO has met with some circuits and has planned visits arranged with others. However not all circuits have responded.

There remains a strong expectation of robust accountability processes in place for safeguarding in our churches. The new supervision structure for all Ministers and Superintendents continues to be embedded in the life and practice of the Methodist Church and some Ministers and Superintendents have commented on its value.

The District Safeguarding Officer has submitted the 2016 to 2017 district audit as requested by Connexional safeguarding.

### **Work of the District Safeguarding Team**

The District Safeguarding Team has made a collective decision to change its name to District Safeguarding Group as identified within the new safeguarding guidance. See link here:-

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/6618/methodist-safeguarding-policy-procedures-and-guidance-2017-0218.pdf>

The Independent Chair of the District Safeguarding Group, continues to identify key features of the group. This includes, “what is its core business and how does the group achieve its core business?”

The DSG now has a representative membership of ordained and lay people across the district including people with experience and/or professional background in safeguarding. This now includes representation of Circuit Safeguarding Officers and Ministerial input. Work continues the strategy through the definition of core objectives, and the associated actions to progress them.

### **Case work**

The New Safeguarding Policy still requires the DSO to be the focal point of contact for advice and making referrals on **ALL** safeguarding matters and to be informed of **ALL** disclosures or concerns about abuse. In addition, the DSO is responsible for advising and following through safeguarding concerns within the district, supported by the DSG. The Chair and the District Policy Committee must provide support and oversight for all ministers in implementing safeguarding policies and procedures in local churches and circuits. This means: -

- Provide a structure to manage safeguarding issues and practice.
- Support risk assessment work whether conducted locally or by the Connexion on individuals so that the Chair, the Connexional Safeguarding Adviser or others can evaluate and manage any risk posed by individuals and their work or activities within the church
- Provide access to training and support on safeguarding matters to local churches, circuits and districts in collaboration with the training officers.

In addition, with the support of the District Safeguarding Group

- Ensure relevant information about an (alleged) offender is reported to the DSO to ensure there is an appropriate formalised approach to all (alleged) offender concerns which is consistent with Methodist policy, procedures and standing orders.
- Support stronger levels of accountability locally to report safeguarding concerns and (alleged) offender attendance. There are still wide levels of inconsistencies of reporting and recording of incidents across the district. The Independent inquiry into child sexual abuse has identified that while church organisations are moving forward with safeguarding policy and procedures this is too slow and needs a greater emphasis on applying and implementing good practice.
- Support the development of district Blemished DBS work and internal risk assessments and the review of this work. These should be completed by the District Safeguarding Officer.
- Good practice suggests that two meetings are organised annually to provide support and information on safeguarding issues to Superintendents, Circuit and Church Safeguarding Officers. At present there is an annual network day and the independent chair of the DSG and the DSO have attend a superintendents meeting.

### **National Safeguarding Conference**

The Annual Methodist Safeguarding Conference this year encouraged reflection on Breadth, Opportunity and Partnership working. This was an opportunity to reflect on the churches' potential to offer meaningful contribution to community safeguarding. In addition, to have a better knowledge of new systems local authorities are developing to assess risk

in children's lives, that churches may well be able to learn from and use. We looked at the signs of safety model being rolled out by many local authorities. This is a model the DSO has used in her work over many years. However, the District Chair approved finance to attend a two-day training event in Torbay by a registered signs of safety trainer. This is clear evidence that the district is embracing partnership working with statutory services and others.

### **In Summary**

- The Methodist Conference 2017 have approved a number of significant changes to the safeguarding work which include Safeguarding Contracts and developing a more formalised process for independent risk assessments.
- Safeguarding Contracts to be reported and monitored to ensure a consistent approach to the work.
- Training to be provided for Monitoring and Support Groups to ensure they are suitably prepared and enabled to carry out their role.
- In addition, Methodist council have agreed proposals for professional supervision of DSO's.
- Some circuit have proactively invited the DSO to share the Ten Themes from the PCR. although this is not consistent across the district.
- There still needs to be a greater accountability across the district to reporting concerns or incidents.
- Work continues to identify the core business of the newly named DSG
- The New Safeguarding Policy needs to be embed in the life of the church
- There is good evidence of the district working in collaboration with others and contributing to community safeguarding.

**And finally**, Helen Cameron Chair of the national safeguarding conference this year finished the conference with Revd Dr Martyn Atkins apology. I leave you to again reflect on his words and note the comment "inaction is an action."

Speaking on behalf of the Church, the Secretary of the Methodist Conference and General Secretary the Revd Dr Martyn Atkins has issued a full and unreserved apology to survivors and victims of abuse in response to the report:

"On behalf of the Methodist Church in Britain I want to express an unreserved apology for the failure of its current and earlier processes fully to protect children, young people and adults from physical and sexual abuse inflicted by some ministers in Full Connexion and members of the Methodist Church. That abuse has been inflicted by some Methodists on children, young people and adults is and will remain a deep source of grief and shame to the Church

We have not always listened properly to those abused or cared for them, and this is deeply regrettable. In respect of these things we have, as a Christian Church, clearly failed to live in ways that glorify God and honour Christ.

I am certain that the Methodist Conference will want to resolve to do all in its power to improve its systems to protect children, young people and adults from abuse within the life of the Church and on Church premises, and to review them diligently on a regular basis."

**For those who are abused and those who abuse;  
for those who are careless about others and those who are careful;  
for those who offer guidance through the dark and those who  
endeavour to safeguard the vulnerable:  
good Lord, we pray.**

**Good Lord, give hope to the hurt and a sense of your love and  
rightness. May we all be led into safe and sound living. Give us  
your strength for today, your hope for tomorrow and the light of  
your love to guide us in all things. Amen.**

**Chrissie Slaney, District Safeguarding Executive Officer**

## **DISTRICT POLICY COMMITTEE**

### **General**

Since the last written report to the Spring Synod 2017, the Committee has held a “Strategy Day” in addition to its three regular meetings. The Committee has sought to carry forward the intentions set out in the District’s Policy document (earlier agreed by Synod) through setting up several working groups. Although progress has not been as rapid as hoped, three groups are making significant progress. A Structures Group is developing new proposals for the structure and work of the DPC itself, a Facilitating Ministries group is working with the West Devon Circuit on managing a reduction in presbyters while the “Making New Disciples Group” is addressing the evangelical implications of the Policy. A further group on “Facilitating Ministry” is now commencing its work. The Policy Committee hopes to develop the District Policy on the basis of this work.

Further, the Committee has engaged in a review of rural chaplaincy work and is strengthening the District’s commitment to this activity. The Committee has also been looking at the new housing developments in Devon and in West Somerset to determine the District’s proper response. This is in addition to its continued interest in the Cranbrook project, Sherford and the developments at Hinkley Point.

As an aid to circuit development the Committee has engaged a Fund raising Officer for the District which appears to be a successful development to date.

Although there have been some problems, our developing partnership with the Cuttack Diocese in the Church of North India is progressing well and the Chair and Synod Secretary have visited the Diocese recently.

Synod is asked to note current and impending vacancies for Assistant Synod Secretary, Devon Ecumenical Officer, District Property Secretary(ies), Inter-faith Officer, DPC Secretary.

### **Recommendations to Synod**

- 1. The budget and circuit assessments for 2018-2019.**
- 2. The appointment of Ron Jordan (currently Assistant Synod Secretary) as Ecumenical Officer for Somerset following the resignation of Glenys Allinson.**
- 3. The revised constitution of the Cornerstone LEP (Plymouth & Devonport).**
- 4. The revised constitution for Churches together in Somerset.**
- 5. Approved applications for authorisation to preside at Holy Communion. These are passed to Synod for any comment.**

**During the year the Policy Committee has:**

- Approved the closure of the following churches. South Zeal (West Devon), Bishops Tawton (Ilfracombe & Barnstaple), Colebrook (Plymouth & Devonport), Ashreigney (South Molton & Ringsash), Stable Green (South Molton & Ringsash) and Woodacott (Bude & Holsworthy).
- Set up a group looking at Equality Diversity and Inclusion in the District. The Committee is discussing the first report.
- Approved the three Exmouth Churches (Littlemead, Tower Street & Withycombe) becoming one church in three localities with a single church council.
- Completed the implementation of the recommendations of the Review of the District Lay Employment Committee.
- Set in motion the recruitment of a new Financial Administrator following the resignation of Ruth Sorenson.
- Entered into discussions with the Mint Church Council which would enable the District to temporarily release the large meeting room in the District Offices for other use. This room is currently rarely used.

J. Prebble (DPC Secretary)

## **DISTRICT GRANTS COMMITTEE**

Grant applications to the District Model Trust Fund (formerly the District Advance Fund) are carefully scrutinised with reference to the District Grant Making Policy which suggests generally missional criteria for grant awards. A ten-point checklist is used for each Project to help in systematic analysis and discernment.

When assessing Project Budgets, the extent of Churches' and Circuits' financial reserves are taken into consideration, as is the amount of District grant funding made to the Circuit in question in recent years. The District Grants Committee has also been encouraged to consider and allow for variations in indices of socio-economic deprivation across the District, in assessing priorities in grant making.

Recently, more grant applications are being received from Projects which are ecumenical and/or community based. These are considered on a case by case basis, with one key criterion being the extent to which the local Methodist Church/Circuit is already involved (or intends to be involved), financially and/or generally. Given that, the District Grants Committee seeks to bring Kingdom priorities to consideration of these Projects.

Sometimes, Projects are referred to Mr Paul Courtney (a Methodist professional fundraiser in the District), to help with grant sourcing and applications, and on occasion small grants are made to help pay for this consultancy work.

All grants agreed by the District Grants Committee are referred to the District Policy Committee for final approval.

The District Model Trust Fund currently supports over twenty Personnel Projects across the District, embracing a wide range of mission and ministry across all age groups in the name of Christ. Property grants are also made where there is clearly a missional/developmental dimension to the work involved.

An annual Monitoring and Evaluation Form (including a Financial Statement) must be completed for each Project in receipt of a District

Model Trust Fund grant. These Forms are carefully considered at the February meeting of the District Grants Committee, when any concerns are noted and followed up. Generally, the quality of work represented by these Projects is very high, with most Reports being satisfactory or excellent.

It is hoped that gradually this culture of self-assessment and reflection will become accepted as a valuable spur to the enrichment and improvement of Projects, rather than being seen as a bureaucratic exercise.

This review process is not only valuable in itself but it also helps Grants Committee members to develop further understanding of the strategic as well as the local practical issues involved, and this critical friendship may encourage creative thinking for the future development of Projects.

Thanks are due once again to the hard working members of the District Grants Committee.

Andrew Vidamour, District Grants Officer

## **DISTRICT LWP (Leaders of Worship and Preachers) REPORT**

The online Worship: Leading and Preaching course continues to pose a few problems. Many are finding it a more time-consuming course than at first envisaged and the Local Preachers Office now acknowledge that it will take longer for most to complete than the two years originally predicted. Those doing the worship leading only modules are certainly finding it quite laborious. There are still some doing the Faith & Worship course and the final deadline for submission of assignments is 31 March 2021.

We continue without a district tutor and many circuit tutors are ministers or supernumeraries and we are very grateful for their help. It is uplifting hearing of preachers being accredited or commencing training - especially younger people hearing the call.

There remains a fairly universal problem of lack of attendance at meetings across our district but this is also a problem across the whole connexion. Another difficulty occurs when trying to 'fill the plan' as ministerial

numbers decrease and even the larger circuits struggle with a shortage of dates being offered by preachers. Often this is not helped by large travelling distances and of course increasing age/frailty. One or two circuits thankfully have an easier time or even have more preachers than appointments available but they are rare. Refresher days are held in some circuits but poor attendance does discourage holding these even though they are essential. Many circuits took part in studying James during Bible Month.

Churches are finding more varied ways of worship to encourage growth both of membership and mission and LP's and some WL's are taking an active part in helping these churches and also with bible study, prayer meetings, worship groups, messy church, café church, pastoral care and such. PowerPoint is used now at many churches and chapels provided there is someone willing to operate it – which is not always the case. There are always those churches and preachers who feel unable to make any changes because they prefer the more traditional type of worship and these continue to have an important role. WL's are taking a more active part in several circuits though they may still not be fully appreciated in some churches and some do not have any.

It is rewarding to visit preachers who have had to 'sit down' during the year due to illness or age, or indeed any who are suffering, and assure them of the love and prayers of their colleagues in Christ. On some occasions certificates are presented to them, as well as to those still able to preach, as a more tangible record of their often long service. This is always a delight particularly when they are able to tell us of their many experiences throughout their ministry!

Despite our problems it is surprising that God is still calling ordinary people to work though His power to enable His kingdom to grow – or at least not decline too much! Praise and thanks to all who have or are responding.

Sue Bolt  
District LP Officer

## **DISTRICT EVANGELISM ENABLER RPEORT**

The post of District Evangelism Enabler is firmly established in the life of the District, and over the past year there has been a focus on building on the work already completed by returning to projects and helping them move to another level, whilst continuing to initiate new opportunities for engagement.

From September 2016 to January 2018 the focus of the DEE role has been on:

- building confidence in the Christian faith
- starting or re-establishing a community activity
- support in strategic thinking about mission

All this has (in the main) been achieved through:

- consultancy
- coaching (COA)
- project support

11 circuits and 31 churches have been supported in this way.

In a wider role, I have also chaired the Mission/Evangelism Enablers group with members from across the Connexion and been invited to speak at various ecumenical and Connexional events.

The most fruitful projects in our District have proved to be those where I can accompany a group of people on a journey from inception to independence. This type of project usually starts with a conversation/request to meet with a group from a church or Circuit to ascertain need.

I then offer a series of interactive sessions (dependent upon need) to establish possibilities, as well as time to work with the group to establish a project and deal with any 'teething problems' and suggest alternative routes and other missional possibilities, as the project evolves. I continue to work with the group until they feel able to independently continue the development of the project. I also provide consultancy support, in the background, for as long as is necessary.

Having a group to work with gives everyone a sense of belonging and a recognition that this is something that they are not solely responsible for. It generates a deeper sense of belonging and a willingness to tackle the harder things, knowing that it is a shared struggle.

All this is set against a background of a changing culture/mindset that I first had to tackle mostly through the District wide delivery of the MSI course and, as such, demonstrates a significant development in the thinking of many within the District. The language and development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century missional thinking and practice is becoming more noticeably embedded in the culture of the District.

My feeling is however that our willingness to engage in mission is not being matched by an increased confidence in evangelism; it seems that we are more willing to try new approaches to mission which aren't the traditional attractional models but still not using those opportunities to comfortably or credibly engage in conversations about faith.

The recognition of this has led me to develop a new project called Christian Communities in Conversation, which will aim to address this reticence and inspire new confidence in faith sharing. The focus of the project will be on enabling small groups of people to reimagine the language of evangelism and spirituality, renewing confidence and moving towards a more holistic approach to spiritual conversations and stories of faith.

The first cohort of 20 people will meet in April and June, after which some will be selected to offer facilitation across the District to further groups. It is hoped that after five years all churches will have had the opportunity to become a Christian Community in Conversation. This project will be led by myself, Revd. Jon Doble and Mark Davis from Shoreline Consultancy and will be evaluated as part of a sabbatical study. It will also run alongside work to look at increasing opportunities for evangelism in toddler groups and coffee mornings as well as underpinning a possible District mission in 2019/20.

The Initial response in the District and across the Connexion has been encouraging with a recognition that a more engaged approach to evangelism will hopefully be an experience of growth and renewal for many.

Looking ahead it is easy to become despondent, with an increasingly ageing membership, buildings which require high levels of maintenance and financial balance sheets which no longer add up along with a whole host of other problems which a Post-Christendom society is challenging us with. The most dangerous phrase we could use at this time is 'we've always done it this way'. As Einstein famously said ' . We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.' Perhaps we do not yet know what the shape of church will be in 5, 10, 15+ years and that is a good thing, if we did then we wouldn't need faith to see it come to pass. What we do know is that it will not look as it does now and that we will need to equip people in a completely different way to meet the creative opportunities which lie ahead. We cannot keep doing what we have always done.

We have made a start across the District by thinking about different models of mission, but there is still a long way to go and now we will be adding new models of evangelism to our thinking and practice. My prayer is that as a District we will embrace the opportunities for change which are presenting themselves, that evangelism and mission will not be seen as just another thing to tick off a very long 'to do' list and that Christian Communities in Conversation will be a catalyst to release people to wrestle with their own faith questions and in doing so enable them to be better placed to journey with others outside their Christian community on their faith journey.

I hope that this time next year we will see the beginnings of a new language and confidence around evangelism starting to take root in the District and with that an increase in the curiosity of our members and an openness to the curiosity of others about matters of faith.

Thank you for your support and encouragement throughout the year and please don't hesitate to contact me if you think that I could offer support or encouragement to you.

Jo Simpson, District Evangelism Enabler

## **JOINT DISTRICT SELECTION AND DISCERNMENT PANEL**

### **'CANDIDATES'**

Members of the committee met on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2018 and spent an enjoyable day exploring the call of God on the life of a candidate for the presbyteral ministry who had been nominated by the Exeter Coast and Country Circuit, after prayerful discernment the committee unanimously recommended the candidate to the Connexion for ordination training.

As this report is being drafted before the Connexional Candidates Committee meets between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> March we await with prayerful anticipation for a positive outcome.

After serving the District over the last seven years as Candidates Secretary and which, for the last three years, has included the Cornwall District the time has come to pass the mantle onto the Revd Dr Stephen Mosedale. It has been a privilege to have had the opportunity to walk alongside numerous candidates over the last seven years and to have heard through their discerning testimony how God had touched and directed their lives, it has been privilege because year by year I am reminded that God has never ceased to challenge and call individuals like you and I into the ministry of the Methodist Church and whilst statistically we are being told that the Church is continuing to show signs of decline the steady flow of candidates is a wonderful reminder that God hasn't finished with the Methodist Church in this land, that there is still more work for us to do, more blessings to come.

So, I pass over the mantle to Stephen encouraged by that thought and simply convey my thanks to the loyal members of the District and Regional Candidates Committee, past and present, who have served the Church in a stirring way and with whom it has been a joy to have known.

Yours in Christ.

## RURAL ISSUES

Over the past year we have been members of the joint Devon Rural Churches forum, which is made up mainly of members of the Anglican and Methodist Churches, together with other denominations and rural agencies, which has met on a number of occasions through the year. The meeting is chaired by Rev Dr Mark Butchers the Archdeacon of Barnstaple. The forum has a website which can be found at [www.devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk](http://www.devonchurchesruralforum.org.uk) which provides details of the meetings as well as resources for mission and ministry in rural areas. This partnership with the Church of England builds on the work that has taken place over the years and the forum gives an opportunity to publicise events as well as have conversations around areas of mutual interest as the church develops ministry and mission in rural communities.

The District also encompasses parts of Cornwall, Somerset and Dorset, each with their own local distinctiveness. Over the next year I hope to have conversations with the Rural officers in these Counties to explore the possibility of similar meetings in other parts of the District.

As part of the District's development of rural issues a small group are meeting to draw up a Rural Strategy for the District as a whole. We have met with individuals who are involved in rural communities and are putting together a strategy which seeks to reflect the work in rural areas across the District. Once this has been agreed then the strategy will be a starting point for our conversations around Mission and Ministry across the District.

The work of Andy Jerrard and the Market chaplaincy teams continues to develop and consolidate. This work is in many places an ecumenical partnership as chaplaincy teams are made up of lay and ordained people from different churches. Through the chaplaincy, many conversations take place with farmers, agricultural workers and auctioneers and the team are involved in many different pastoral situations because they are well known in the markets across the District. This chaplaincy has developed over the years and is part of the fabric of support which the Church offers across the rural parts of the District. A new district management group is being set up to support this work which together

with the existing support group will explore ways of supporting this work, financially, prayerfully and practically. The chaplaincy work has been supported by Connexional funding over the past three years although this is coming to an end and while the possibility of continuation funding is being explored, this is not certain. The work is also supported from District and Circuit grants. The management group and the support group will be exploring ways for funding this important work in the District in the future. I would like to thank all those who support that work, Andy, the chaplains and support group members from North Devon; Circuits, the District and Connexion for funding and members across the District who provide pastoral and practical support to many people in our rural communities.

We were saddened to hear of the sudden death of the Rev John Peak, who was involved in many different ways in rural life, farming and the rural church as a Presbyterian and as the District Agricultural Chaplain. We have lost a true champion of rural life and ministry in our District but John's influence continues in many ways in the communities of Mid and North Devon for which we give thanks. Our condolences go to Elaine and the family.

Rev Philip Wagstaff, Rural Issues Co-ordinator

## **EDI: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION.**

In June 2017 the District Policy Committee agreed to the establishment of an EDI Committee, and to its remit, based on relevant Standing Orders.

Two volunteers offered, or agreed, to join the Committee: Rev Paul Collings, and Rev Alison Richardson. Lay representatives are being sought, to reflect the full diversity of the District: Please forward any nominations or offers to [verity.phillips@methodist.org.uk](mailto:verity.phillips@methodist.org.uk) (01769 580213).

The Committee met for the first time on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February. We briefly reviewed two District Policies (Mission and Grants), from an EDI perspective. We reflected on how any policy depends on its implementation. We reviewed the constitution of the District Policy Committee and made some recommendations concerning the balance of age, circuit representation, and gender representation, and concerning the duration of appointments.

**We now have an initial web-page on the District Web-site, which we hope will be useful.**

Over the coming year we hope to develop the webpage further; to provide an awareness-raising leaflet for every church; and to produce an EDI access audit for each Circuit which could be copied and used or adapted to suit each church's local circumstances. We intend to consider how we might enable Circuits and churches looking to recognise the needs and opportunities which arise as we become more inclusive of diversity.

On the Connexional website there is a short house-group type course available for churches ready to explore inclusion with particular reference to disabilities. There is a link to this on the District website.

Verity was consulted once during the year concerning the inclusion of someone with a disability. She also wrote to a church to thank them for taking steps towards more effective inclusivity for people with differing needs concerning sound; this church now has its own EDI officer.

Please contact Verity, Alison, or Paul, for more information or support.

## **PLYMOUTH METHODIST MISSION CIRCUIT REPORT 2017-2018**

Like many city and large towns around the country, Plymouth city centre is in the throes of significant change. As retail units fall empty, they are replaced by Charity shops or cafés. Property developers are grabbing vacant buildings and sites and constructing high rise student accommodation. Rough sleeping, homelessness and serious poverty are very evident alongside significant wealth and extravagance. Our calling is still to find our place within this great city centre and to proclaim God's compassion, grace and transformation in Jesus Christ.

We are delighted that Deacon Linda has completed her two year probationary period successfully and, subject to MPOC, will be ordained at Conference. She has been a great asset to the team and will play an important role in the period of transition for a new Superintendent in September.

**Central Hall** continues to be a lively, all-age, multi-cultural hub of Christian worship and service. Listening to God and each other in worship, prayer and through Scripture has been important for us in a year during which we have been through the stationing process, supported Linda in her probation and grappled with a major refurbishment, which has put our multi-use hall out of action for four months.

Our links with students through involvement in the University chaplaincy has made us very aware of the pressures on our young people today. Equally, we have discovered through supporting the outreach work of the Christian Union what a joy it is to welcome new, young disciples of Christ.

Having taken a step of faith to appoint a part-time Under 5s worker last year, the task of linking the activities of toddler groups, pre-School nursery, Messy Church and Sunday activities is slowly bearing fruit. The vision for this work has been rewarded, as we recently received confirmation of a significant grant from the Connexion to support the establishment of a Soft Play area. This will both enhance our work with young families and provide income for the worker, making the appointment more sustainable.

**Keyham Methodist Community Centre** provides welcome, support and advice for people in a particularly deprived area of the city. Deacon Linda and Deniz Carey the Keyham Family worker put huge energy into the lunch club, toddler groups, youth club and other activities to connect with the local community. With few volunteers to support the work and a huge

apathy in the area, we are reviewing how we should respond and what the vision is for this initiative.

**The Oasis Project** in Stonehouse also grapples with how best to serve those in great need. The Centre provides practical training, emotional support and spiritual guidance. It is home to the Oasis Café and Plymouth Foodbank, whilst also working alongside many other statutory agencies. Again, we have a wonderful staff team who work tirelessly to respond to the many complex issues and to raise funds to keep the project resourced. Food donations still regularly appear, but consistent funding is more of a struggle.

We are in process of gradually reviewing how all these various initiatives demonstrate our response to God's call on us here in the city. We are truly grateful to God that we continue to see people helped, supported, comforted and discovering the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

### **DISTRICT ECUMENICAL OFFICER (SOMERSET)**

January 2018 saw the transfer of the role of DEO(Somerset) from Glenys Allinson to Ron Jordan. Glenys would like to thank Graham Thompson and Synod for the opportunity to work as DEO, to thank the Somerset Circuits for their help and vision and her colleagues on DPC for their support and fellowship. Regretfully, family responsibilities have meant that her time and focus has had to be re-directed.

Churches Together in Somerset has continued to provide a network for ecumenical work in Somerset. It hosted a very impressive lecture in autumn 2017 by Anthony Reddy on the Legacy of the Reformation, and the annual forum in Spring 2018 with Roy Crowne of Hope.

Glenys also attended, on behalf of the District, the Churches Together in England 2017 Conference at Swanwick, entitled Responding to the Reformation, which was well supported by most denominations across the spectrum from Russian Orthodox through to Pentecostal. The speakers were of a very high calibre, the interaction between all

attendees was extremely interesting and the ease of worshipping together was a joy and a privilege to experience.

She also attended the annual Connexional DEO's meeting in London in April 2017. The current ecumenical focus connexionally is the Mission & Ministry in Covenant report from the Faith & Order bodies of the Church of England and the Methodist Church, which proposes changes of legislation for both denominations, in order to enable an interchange of presbyteral ministries where it is locally desired and agreed. For the Methodist Church, this would involve a change of role of the President to that of President-Bishop. (You can find the full report on the web – if you prefer to read selected paragraphs first, I would suggest you read from para 21, from para 37, from para 82 and from para 97 before you read the report in full.) It will be brought to this year's Conference for debate and decision. If Conference agrees, there will then be a 2 year period of consultation on the required changes to clause 4 of the Deed of Union, which will involve Church Councils, Circuit Meetings and the District Synod. It is worth noting that, throughout the world, most of the Methodist Church has Bishops.

In late 2017, Glenys and the Bath & Wells DEO Rev Tim Price, together with County Ecumenical Officer Alan Dixon, conducted an informal review of the Covenanted Partnership between Broadway Hill and Horton Parish Church. This resulted in some minor proposed amendments to the covenant, which will be referred to DPC and then the autumn Synod for agreement.

2017 also saw the approval by the District Synod and subsequently the Diocese of Bath & Wells for the Covenanted Partnership of the Methodist and Parish Churches of Pawlett. It is anticipated that this will be officially signed by the Chair and the Bishop at a service of celebration on the evening of May 6<sup>th</sup>.

## **METHODIST WOMEN IN BRITAIN**

Little did I think, when I moved to Plymouth in May 2015 that I would find myself District President of MWiB two years later! But then God moves in mysterious ways.

We've had a busy and interesting year. Last May we met at Tedburn St Mary and following our business meeting and lunch our President Sharon Canning told us something of her journey with God and MWiB.

In October, I was inducted as President at Ridgeway Methodist Church with Rev Andy Day leading the service supported by Rev Donna Leigh. Connexional MWiB Vice-President Anne Browse preached. We then had an update from Phil Pugsley on Amigos our current overseas project which supports people in Uganda through various programmes to enable them to support themselves. We have raised £8841 with more to come through various activities by Circuits during the summer. In the afternoon we heard from Dave Mann who told us about SAT7, which operates via satellite television network broadcasting in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish across 25 countries in the Middle East and North Africa and 50 countries in Europe spreading the Good News. The people broadcasting are all local to their area so they know their people and their needs well.

In November over 100 of us gathered at Sidholme, in Sidmouth, for our annual Residential under the leadership of Jill Barber former Vice President of Conference. Her theme was "Harder to make Peace" which she took from a speech made by Gerry Adams. It was an interesting and challenging time – is it really more difficult to be peaceful than to wage war? As a change we enjoyed a concert on Wednesday evening given by the Brunswick Singers. This year we look forward to being led by Carolyn Lawrence, Area Officer of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women. The title is "*Chosen people – called to proclaim*".

The District Executive have met twice during the year – we meet at Buckfast Abbey occupying a table in the corner of the restaurant! At the last one we decided to change the format of our District Days – hopefully to make them more interesting and more worthwhile for our speakers – some of whom travel a distance. So minimum business and maximum enjoyment.

We're looking forward to an interesting year – our Spring District Day is at Fremington on 2<sup>nd</sup> May with Audrey Standhaft speaking about her recent visit to Cuba. In June a Quiet Day is planned at Buckfast Abbey and in October we look forward to welcoming Rev'd Jane Sperring as Vice President at Wonford.

Our new charity for September 2018 -2020 will be the Air Ambulance and as the District includes part of 3 counties this will be Devon and Cornwall and Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulances.

MWiB is much more than local meetings in churches – it's a worldwide resource for women in the Methodist Church. We've raised awareness on Domestic Violence, People Trafficking and the plight of women less fortunate than ourselves and have made a difference. Improving the position of women also benefits men. The World Federation aim is "To know Christ and to make Him known". And that is what we are trying to do.

*Di Smart*  
*President 2017-2019*

## **MHA NEWS**

### **Celebrating MHA's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year - 2018**

75 years ago the Methodist Conference agreed to set up MHA and the charity is continuing and improving on the care it was created for. Fast forward to 2018 and MHA now runs 90 care homes, 72 retirement living schemes and 61 Live at Home schemes, supporting more than 17,800 older people across England, Scotland and Wales, employing 7,000 staff and enjoying the support of over 5,500 volunteers.

*On Saturday 13 October 2018 there will be a 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary Service of Thanksgiving for MHA at 3 pm in Derby Cathedral. Please keep an eye on the MHA website for details on how to attend.*

### **Methodist Homes Sunday – 10<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

This year our theme of worship is: '**Full of Years**' and we invite church groups to celebrate **Methodist Homes Sunday** by taking our theme and looking at ways in which we can help one another to support older

members of our church and society as well as recognise and value the unique insights and perspectives of those who are in later life.

An Order of Service and other worship resources can be downloaded from our website at [www.mha.org.uk/mhs](http://www.mha.org.uk/mhs) or contact Lesley France on 01332 296200 or email [lesley.france@mha.org.uk](mailto:lesley.france@mha.org.uk) for printed copies.

### **Impact Report 2017**

Our latest Impact Report shows examples of where our money comes from and where it goes. With the help from our supporters, we are delighted to report an increase in the number of Music Therapists, Chaplains and Live at Home schemes, services which are all supported by our charitable income. You can download a copy of the report from our website or contact us as above for a printed copy.

### **MHA's New CEO**

In February we welcomed MHA's new CEO Sam Monaghan who began with a busy schedule of visits to MHA's Care Homes and Schemes. At the start of his role he said "It's important that we improve others' understanding and recognition of the work MHA does. This will help to expand our supporter base, both in terms of fundraising to increase the range of services we can offer, and in terms of influencing and shaping policy to support those we work with and for. Sam is a member of his local Methodist Church where he is involved in worship and youth leadership, as well as worship for people with dementia and learning disabilities.

### **MHA wins Prestigious Award**

Congratulations went to MHA's Chaplaincy Team who recently won a 3rd Sector Charity Care award for our end of life care programme. Our approach to end of life care is encapsulated in our specially designed programme called 'The Final Lap' which aims to make sure all our Care Homes are places where death and dying are faced openly, positively and with support.

**Thank You** – we are very grateful for the support MHA receives from our friends within the Methodist Church and for sharing our mission to improve the quality of life for older people, inspired by Christian concern.

## **DISCIPLESHIP AND MINISTRIES LEARNING NETWORK**

I would like to report on the activity of the team since the last synod as examples of the sort of work we are involved in. We cover both Plymouth & Exeter District and Cornwall District and each team member contributes to the delivery of Connexional events and initiatives. We are involved in working with our ecumenical colleagues where we can but also initiate and deliver Methodist opportunities as appropriate.

In October, Sharon Rowe was part of the team delivering the conference called 'Wholeness' in Exeter, with a focus on mental wellbeing of children and young people. She has been active in getting the National Parenting Initiative off the ground in the South West and promoting 'Kids Matter' as part of that. She was part of the team that put on this connexional year's 3generate event to an unprecedented number of young people from all over the Connexion. She is the line manager for the One Programme Participant who this year is in Liskeard and Looe circuit. She brings together lay workers to form a community of practise that meet together several times a year to build relationships with other practitioners and learn together. Sharon went on adoption leave at Christmas after the arrival of the latest addition to the family, a little boy. Steve Jones is working as a consultant to the team in her absence, particularly picking up work around safeguarding, One Programme Participant applications and communications from Alison to free her to continue some of Sharon's areas of responsibility.

Jon's focus is on Ministerial Development and he organised this year's Joint Ministerial Retreat at Treloyhan manor which featured renowned academic theologian Prof Morna Hooker and Andrew Robertson, author of 'Exploring spirituality in video games: Encountering meaning in digital spaces. An interactive and lively set of workshops from Andrew balanced the erudition and biblical reflections offered by Morna in a beautiful setting.

Our region is the first to have a fully graduated Local Preacher from the Worship: leading and preaching course of which Jon is a moderator. The Pioneer Pathway continues to bring together active pioneers for encouragement, learning and challenge. Jon has also been very active

as Project Manager of the West Devon district pilot into local lay ministry as part of the lay pastoral strategy group set up by the DPC. He is working with Rowbarton Methodist Church and MWiB to deliver a training day called 'Gender Matters' 14<sup>th</sup> April and a day on counter cultural living based on his PhD but involving other speakers at the New Rooms, Bristol in June. More information will follow.

Alison has been part of the writing team for the new Advanced Module of Creating Safer Space, working with Safeguarding officers and other members of the learning network to create an interactive training package for the replacement for the Leadership Module which is due out after Easter. She is working with several other regions on the Training for Ministers called 'Responsible Grace' – the Supervision training. She is part of the planning group for Connecting Disciples Conference of lay workers that has just taken place at High Leigh. Within the region she has delivered the 'Growing through Conflict' training and, with Rev Paul Booth, has recently been trained to deliver the next level of training 'Beyond Bullying and Harassment'. Alison has acted as the convenor of the 'Making New Disciples' working group, commissioned by the DPC to develop a strategy for the District.

The rural conference has not taken place this year, but in its place, the Diocese of Exeter and Germinate Arthur Rank collaborated to offer a training day at Hatherleigh Community Centre. Delegates were trained to offer the course called 'Enterprise' which develops skills to start a business or social enterprise. We have also seen the development of the Devon Churches Rural Forum as a focus for thinking around issues effecting ministry and mission in rural communities. A small group are working to understand and articulate ways in which the District can respond supportively to the particularly rural nature of our District.

As I write this the Reimagine conference has just taken place at the Bridge in Launceston and so 50 'reimaginings' coming together with Trey Hall and The President of Conference, Rev Loraine Mellor as well as others, to imagine together new and different ways of celebrating the love of Christ in a way that connects with our every changing world.

We continue to look for more ways to understand and respond to the needs of the Methodist people as they seek to serve Christ in their communities. Going forward there will be a greater emphasis across the connexion on vocation and evangelism and growth and as part of the Connexional Team we will be exploring ways to support learning around this focus.

Alison Ball

Coordinator of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network

### **LAY EMPLOYMENT REPORT**

On convening on 4th October 2017, the Committee welcomed to their first meeting Revd Kate Konrad, Revd Paul Collings and Mr David Bradford.

The Committee was advised that in the year to 31st August 2017 there had been a significant increase in its workload. Completed applications relative to 2015/16 were up from 13 to 19 and pending applications for the same period rose from 2 to 11. General Enquiries were similar at 11 (previously 12).

The applications cover a wide range of posts including Youth Workers, Administrators and Caretakers. The next Annual Meeting is scheduled for 13 November 2018.

Malcolm Pillar-District Lay Employment Officer

## **AUTHORISATION TO PRESIDE**

The following applications are being made to the 2018 Conference:

### **For a First Year**

24/11	Bude and Holsworthy	Muriel Hodges	L
24/11	Bude and Holsworthy	Clive Smale	L
24/20	Ilfracombe and Barnstaple	Martin Reardon	L

### **For a Second Year**

24/10	South Devon	Rachel Mitchell	L
24/11	Bude & Holsworthy	Michael Reeves	L
24/11	Bude & Holsworthy	Courtney Drew	L
24/16	Tiverton & Wellington	Anne Browse	L
24/16	Tiverton & Wellington	Hilary Young	L
24/20	Ilfracombe & Barnstaple	Sylvia Edwards	L
24/22	South Molton & Ringsash	Gloria Manning	L
24/22	South Molton & Ringsash	Arthur Mildon	L
24/23	Torrige	Elsie Potter	L
24/24	West Devon	Daisy Bray	L
24/24	West Devon	Barry Searle	L
24/25	West Somerset	Margaret Lintern	L
24/27	Ringsash	Colin Rice	L

### **For a Third Year**

24/20	Ilfracombe & Barnstaple	Geoffrey Harding	L
24/20	Ilfracombe & Barnstaple	Brenda Prentice	L
24/20	Torrige	David Ley	L

## **APPOINTMENTS**

Ecumenical Officer - Somerset  
Vocations - Candidates

Ron Jordan  
Rev. Dr. Stephen Mosedale

## **SYNOD DATES**

### **Autumn Synod 2018**

Saturday September 8th  
Plymouth Central Hall, Plymouth

### **Spring Synod 2019**

Saturday April 6th  
Queens College, Taunton, Taunton Deane and South Sedgemoor

### **Autumn Synod 2019**

Saturday September 7<sup>th</sup>, Central Church, Torquay, Torbay Circuit

### **Spring Synod 2020**

25th April 2020, venue to be confirmed