

Leeds North East and Leeds East Methodist Circuits

2nd joint paper on “A Way Forward for Mission”

Introduction:

Two meetings between representatives of Leeds East and Leeds North East Circuits recommended closer working together between the two circuits, including consideration of one enlarged circuit. Both Circuit Meetings in March 2010 agreed to this recommendation and asked their representatives to consider exploring the options. The representatives requested a joint meeting of the Circuit Leadership Teams (CLTs) from both circuits thus allowing a wider representation to take this further.

The two CLTs met on 27th April 2010. They supported the connexional thinking about “A Way Forward for Mission”, and recognised the challenges to the Church in the coming years. A serious exploration of our mission and consequent use of resources was regarded as a responsible way forward.

The district consultation paper on possible new circuits was borne in mind, but realistically it was felt that any new circuit for our area should be based on the eastern/north-eastern segment of Leeds.

At that meeting there was a very positive spirit in exploring the possibility of creating a new circuit, starting afresh together with a “blank sheet of paper” to work out how Methodism might sustain its ministry and mission in the north eastern segment of the city of Leeds in the years to come. The discussion identified a number of “positives” and “negatives” which influenced the group’s thinking and recommendation.

Positives

On the positive side, it was felt that there is a natural similarity of geography, both in terms of place and people, in the areas currently covered by the two circuits. A new circuit based on our united area would:

- give a richer pool of resources for the churches to draw on for the purposes of mission and could make it easier to fill key posts.
- make it easier for Methodism to sustain its presence in the poorer communities
- enable the sharing of expertise in particular areas
 - e.g. hosting foreign national congregations
 - issues facing suburban churches
 - help with current ecumenical developments, particularly in our villages
- make ministerial support more secure, with a bigger grouping of ministers
- enable a wider variety of ministries to be developed across the area
- encourage us to think on a wider canvas.

Negatives

From a negative perspective, it was noted that change is difficult and unsettling for some people, although it could also be a very positive experience for others.

There was a concern that any new circuit should not result in the loss of the mutuality currently present and strong in both our circuits.

There would undoubtedly be a loss of both circuits' current identity and some may feel a new circuit would be too large.

Any new circuit would result in a review of resources and practice, and could lead to changes in pastoral oversight.

A new larger circuit would be a challenge for a Superintendent minister.

Carrying out such a huge project, with all the work involved, whilst being exciting and challenging for some, could be burdensome for others.

Conclusion

After thoughtful and prayerful discussion, the joint meeting of the CLTs felt very positive about the possibility of a new circuit and would want to pursue that option as the circuits' way forward in mission, with a view to its establishment in September 2012. The resolution for each Circuit Meeting to achieve this would read:

This Circuit Meeting resolves to seek to create a new Circuit based on the current Leeds North East and Leeds East Circuits with a view to its inauguration on 1st September 2012.

However, it was felt imperative that before this was taken any further both Circuit Meetings should have the opportunity to reflect on and discuss this proposal. Therefore, the joint meeting on Tuesday 27th April 2010 agreed to offer the resolution above to their respective Circuit Meetings, in June 2010 for discussion and in September 2010 for decision.

Meanwhile, it is proposed that the CLTs, between June and September, continue their joint exploration of the issues involved, taking into account the views of the circuits.

Therefore the following resolution is offered, to be moved at the June meetings after discussion, to enable this process to happen.

Resolution for the June Circuit Meetings of the Leeds East and Leeds North East Circuits:

This Circuit Meeting

- receives this report
- resolves to make its decision upon the proposal contained in the resolution above at its meeting in September 2010
- encourages the Circuit Leadership Teams of the two circuits jointly to continue their exploration of the issues involved, taking into account the views of both circuits, and to report back to the meeting in September 2010.

4th May 2010