

A NEW CIRCUIT: WHAT ARE WE DOING AND WHY?

WHAT ARE MINISTERS FOR??

'Staff' in the Circuit are ministers (presbyters and deacons) and lay employees. Ministry goes well beyond these people – all of us are involved in ministry, using our gifts in prayer, in caring, in witnessing, in worship, in administration.....

Presbyters (usually the ones we call 'ministers')

Presbyters are ordained to:

- *word* – preaching, teaching, helping all to share and interpret our Christian faith and experience;
- *sacrament* – presiding at Baptism and Holy Communion; helping people find ways of celebrating all that is significant in life;
- *pastoral responsibility* – leading churches, sharing in pastoral care, sustaining Methodist connectedness, enabling others to play their part.

Deacons

Deacons are ordained to:

- *service* – enabling all of us to serve the communities we're part of, including in care, acts of justice and mercy, and being a prophetic sign;
- *witness* – teaching, leading worship (including preaching for some), sharing and interpreting faith and experience in and beyond church contexts.
- *be members of a religious order* – living by a Rule of Life in the dispersed community of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

Lay employees

Lay people may be appointed (paid or unpaid) to a wide variety of roles in Circuits and churches. They may have specialist skills and experiences: in administration, in mission development or community work, in work with particular groups of people.

What mix of different ministries do we need, to fulfil our vision?

We're moving towards a new Circuit - 'LEEDS NORTH AND EAST'.

(What do you think of the suggested name?)

Why are we doing this? Is it because there's a vision of churches doing what God wants **better together**? Is it because there aren't enough ministers to go round? Is it because of financial problems? Because we're being asked to, nationally?

Yes – all of those! But mainly a vision of doing things better, and sometimes differently, which will only work if we're in it together, whole-heartedly.

So what's the vision?

- to **continue the best** of what we're doing (not necessarily everything we're doing);
- to **look outwards** for more effective service and mission that connects with the community (and the century!) we're in – taking the good news beyond our churches in word and action;
- to **refresh** what we do **with new ideas** (in worship, in caring, in sharing together);
- to focus on **deepening discipleship** for people who are part of our churches at the moment (opportunities for courses, groups, training, conversation);
- **RELEASING RESOURCES TO DO ALL THIS!**

Aren't we doing that already? Why a larger Circuit?

A larger Circuit could give:

- a broader mix of specialist expertise, interest and ministry (children's ministry; financial skills; online media expertise; experience with the church nationally or ecumenically; teaching and training skills);
- opportunity for some churches and some staff to work on particular areas or use gifts across the Circuit rather than every church trying to do everything;
- broader support for particular projects (Meeting Point; West Indian Family Counselling Service);
- less risk if one church had significant problems, or one member of staff had a prolonged absence;
- support to ask questions about the *most effective* use of resources.

What changes are involved?

Changes are already happening:

- the ministry of a deacon at Meeting Point in Harehills
- changes in the employment of lay people – an ecumenically employed youth worker in Chapel Allerton; lay employees working with presbyters in Leeds East; ending of the Moortown Children's Worker Project; increase in lay admin support;
- churches making decisions about the future in relation to resources and opportunities for mission, in Moortown (different pattern of congregational life and worship) and Woodhouse (sadly, the closure of the chapel) and at Newbourne (new resources of diaconal and lay ministry);
- the beginning of a project to explore internet-based media and social networking, with Christian mission in mind.

....and there are other ideas around....

- specialist work with children, young people and families;
- development of resources to support older people;
- inter-faith work, in a diverse city;
- building on community links in e.g. Moortown and Seacroft;
- more effective use of our buildings, as resource and witness in communities.

TO DEVELOP THESE IDEAS, RESOURCES NEED TO BE RELEASED – RESOURCES OF PEOPLE, TIME, ENERGY, EXCITEMENT AND MONEY!

So what other changes might be involved?

- different groupings of churches and ways of 'deploying' staff, to help ministers to work across the Circuit in some specialist areas, as well as being rooted in particular churches;
- perhaps using some Local Preachers in particular groups of churches, while others have a more 'Circuit-wide' brief;
- thinking about the use of (larger!) Circuit Meetings – how to make decisions effectively and how to be informed and inspired about the work of the whole Circuit.

Which of these ideas would you like to see worked on?

SCENARIOS BEING TALKED ABOUT....

Perhaps 3 'groups' of churches across 'Leeds North and East', with 2 presbyters per group, and appropriate diaconal or lay ministry beyond that, for specific areas of work.

Churches could be grouped:

- so there is a diversity of people and social situations within each group;
- so that current supportive relationships between churches are continued as far as possible;
- so that there is a good mix of large/medium/smaller churches in each group, with the strengths of some supporting the needs of others (eg close fellowship in the smaller churches as a challenge to some larger churches!);
- geographically – so that they can share mission in close proximity.
....but all of these at once may not be possible!

How do you think churches should be grouped, and why – related to the churches' mission?

(More specific suggestions about what groupings and why will come to the June Circuit Meetings. Ask your senior steward or Circuit Meeting reps about that.)

FINANCIAL ISSUES

There are financial issues to be dealt with in both Circuits, whether or not we create a new Circuit:

- in Leeds North East, financial constraints on some churches mean a significant hole in the budget from 2011-12.
- in Leeds East, the ministry of a half-time deacon at Meeting Point is not currently paid for within the Circuit budget.

Finances can be improved in a number of ways:

- cutting expenses (likely to mean less ordained or lay staff);
- releasing resources in unused / closed property;
- increasing resources through growth.

The sort of growth we would like to see needs resourcing!

How do you think we should be dealing with the financial issues?