

ASA NEWSLETTER

SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

In my last newsletter I flagged up that changes were going to happen in respect of Ministers appraisals, and I pledged to keep you updated. The details of the new scheme are still to be worked out, but the broad outline is emerging.

Conference approved a resolution in June 2006 to introduce 'a formal review or appraisal that is circuit or district based, using a standard set of questions, with input from a group of people in the circuit (possibly stewards), facilitated by an outside person (the facilitator being appointed by the district). All involved will receive adequate training'. The resolution 'strongly encouraged' ministers to seek support – although it is up to each individual what form that support will take.

Since Conference the Methodist Church has decided the broad outline of the new scheme will:

- involve an annual review involving all presbyters and deacons
- be circuit based
- use a standard set of questions
- involve a facilitator appointed by the district (to enable the process to happen fairly)
- use people from the circuit to carry out the review

Subject to Conference approval of the details in June 2007 the new scheme will in all probability come into operation in January 2009.

On a personal level, and having been involved, in one way or another with ASA since the inception of the scheme, I feel very sad that nothing of the old scheme will be incorporated into the new. I feel concerned that the new scheme does not in itself involve support for the minister. I think many of us accepted ASA needed reviewing, but I think few of us suspected the scheme would be for 'the chop'. I understand that pressure has been brought on the church by the Department of Trade and Industry to introduce an appraisal scheme which conforms to the DTI's 'best practice', but I think we have probably thrown the baby out with the bath water. I think most of all I am saddened that there is no recognition of the fantastic resource the church has in the trained body of accompanists. Until 2009 however we keep on keeping on...

WELCOME

This is my first newsletter as DAO of the Northampton District, and I would like to warmly welcome you all. For many of us the change has been one of nomenclature only, but for some the change has been fundamental. They now look north rather than south to the centre of things, and whilst they look forward to all which Northampton District has to offer they have left behind much which they cherished.

TRAINING DAY

Alison Tomlin spoke to us about Enneagrams. For those of you unable to attend Bernard Gudgin has prepared an extremely helpful resume of the day. It isn't capable of editing and I have attached it as a standalone paper which you may wish to keep for reference.

SUPPORT EVENING

We have booked Roade Methodist Church for the Support Evening on 5th June 2007 at 7.30pm. Please make a note of the date.

2007 PAIRINGS

I shall be writing to you in the early New Year with details of your match/forms etc, and any problems please drop me a line or give me a ring. In the meantime joyful tidings and a very blessed and peaceful Christmas to each of you.

TRAINING WEEKEND

An exhausting, exhilarating, enjoyable and hugely satisfying training weekend was held in September. Following the weekend three new accompanists were approved by Synod:

- Caroline Hutchings, from Peterborough
- Christopher Pursehouse, from Peterborough
- Alison Saunders, from Blaby (Leicester)

Chris Pursehouse reflects on, 'a weekend to remember'

It was with a mixture of emotions that I travelled to the ASA training weekend at Moulton. What had I let myself in for? Would I be put on the spot and be embarrassed? These questions and fears were quickly forgotten when, as accompanists, we met with our two trainers, Bernard and Christine. With grace and sensitivity they quickly made us feel at ease as we began to introduce ourselves and learn more about the ASA process.

Through a variety of different learning techniques and exercises over the weekend we were able to understand the different components of the process and have the opportunity of putting our knowledge into practice through role-play exercises which we entered into or observed. We each took turns to play the part of a minister or accompanist as we began to put into practice our skills.

We covered a great deal over the weekend and we were worked hard, but there was a great deal of personal sharing punctuated with bursts of laughter. It is always a good sign when those involved in the learning are able to laugh at themselves and with each other.

On the Sunday morning it was particularly helpful to meet a minister who shared his experience of using ASA and how helpful the process and the accompanist had been in allowing him a safe space to reflect on where he was and how he could develop. It was deeply moving and challenging to hear how difficult it can be for those in full-time ministry to find that safe oasis of quiet to reflect and to consider their own personal development.

I came away from the weekend with a great deal of enthusiasm and commitment for the ASA process and what a valuable asset the Methodist Church has. Many thanks to Bernard and Christine for their leadership and training, to my fellow trainee accompanists, and to the staff of the Poplars who made us so welcome.

NEW 'OLD HANDS'

Christine Hodgson, Bernard Gudgin and I had the pleasure of meeting some of the accompanists who arrived in Northampton from London NW at a coffee morning in Milton Keynes recently. I only hope they enjoyed themselves as much as we did.

Our new old hands are:

- Peter Green (Aylesbury)
- Anne Marie Lord (Chinnor)
- Roy Slocombe (Hughenden Valley)
- Roger Watson (Aylesbury)
- Coralie Stocks (Milton Keynes)
- Peter George (Milton Keynes)
- Pam Harvey (Bletchley)

Roy has agreed to be co-opted onto the District Appraisal Group (DAG).

£100 GRANT

The Growth in Ministry report which received Conference approval in 2005 offers ministers an annual sum in respect of meeting their training needs. On offer from the Connexion is £100 a year. Your self appraiser may not be aware of the scheme so do make a note to mention the availability of this money to him/her. If s/he knows the money is there it may be the impetus to get some training that previously might have seemed unobtainable. There are conditions though and before you self appraiser gets too carried away please suggest they contact:

Paul Taylor

Training & Development Officer

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Northampton District Appraisal Group

Bernard Gudgin	DAG Chair
Alison Tomlin	District Chair
Jane Proctor	District Appraisal Officer
Dorothy Hewitson	Ministerial Rep
Christine Hodgson	ASA Trainer
Bill Tompkins	ASA Trainer
Roy Slocombe	ASA Rep
Paul Taylor	District Training & Development Officer

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