



District News

Cash available from District Executive!

When it met on Monday, 20 February the District Executive dealt mainly with routine matters though among the details there is news of an exciting opportunity for circuits to receive funding for the training of local preachers and worship leaders.

The executive decided:

- o to advertise in May 2006 for the post of District Director of Mission, commencing in September 2007;
- o to accept proposed Methodist Church Fund contributions for 2006/07 and recommend them to synod;
- o to offer a grant of £1,000 from the Local Preachers' Fund to each circuit in the district on receipt of a specific scheme to forward the work of preachers and worship leaders in the circuit;
- o to review the most suitable venues for synod in the light of formats currently used, and cost implications;
- o to support three new applications for authorisations to preside at the Lord's Supper, and the continuance of four others for a further year;
- o to extend the 'on trial' period for a local preacher by one year.

It was also agreed that secretaries of district committees would be asked to contact their opposite numbers in the London North West District to gain information necessary to the functioning of committees in the new Northampton District which comes into being in September.

A report was received of the recent meeting of the Methodist Council. The executive also received a list of ministers of other denominations who will be "Recognised and Regarded" (RR) or "Associate Ministers" (AM) in the district from September 2006. A similar list from circuits who will join the Northampton District is awaited.

District Chair's sabbatical

During Rev. Alison Tomlin's sabbatical (March to May). Sheila Phillips, Alison's PA, will be in the district office Monday to Thursday, 9.15 a.m. to 1.45 p.m., except for the week beginning 8 May. Please address any queries during this time to the relevant district officer or Sheila (01604 630 128). The District Executive Committee has set up a team to deal with any pastoral emergencies that may arise; Martin Smithson (01235 763 321) is the point of contact.

History is bunk ... or is it?

By Rev. Dr Martin Wellings, synod secretary and church historian.

Churches are good at abusing their history. We may use the glorious past, viewed through rose-tinted spectacles, to criticise the present or simply wallow in nostalgia, which, of course, isn't what it used to be... Alternatively, we may dismiss history altogether, forget our roots, or succumb to institutional amnesia, and boast that we are "relevant" and "up to date".

Next year there will be a wonderful chance to get the balance right by engaging with our history (warts and all), exploring our identity as Methodists, and making connections between our heritage and our present day mission.

The opportunity is presented by several big Methodist anniversaries, principally Charles Wesley's 300th birthday and the 200th anniversary of the first British Methodist "camp meeting", which led to the Primitive Methodist movement. In 2007, it will also be the 75th anniversary of Methodist Union, and this will remind us that different theologies, styles and emphases co-exist, sometimes uneasily, in modern Methodism. In addition, because Charles Wesley lived and died a member of the Church of England, and wrote hymns that Christians of all sorts sing, we will be able to make our celebrations truly ecumenical.

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What might we do? Here are some ideas:

- an ecumenical Songs of Praise, using Charles Wesley's hymns and exploring their message and spirituality;
- an open air act of worship and witness in the tradition of Primitive Methodism;
- an exhibition of the history of our local church that could offer a chance to involve the community, including schools, and to contact people with church or Sunday School links and memories (and photos);
- services or house groups to explore the message of Methodism, past, present and future;
- a study day for preachers on what it means to preach "our doctrines" today.

History books often make best sellers. History programmes feature prominently on television and radio. We can use our Methodist heritage not only to inform ourselves about our roots but also to make contact with people in the community outside the church. It just takes a bit of imagination. Make sure to check the Internet for ideas, information and worship resources at www.methodistanniversaries2007.org.uk.

Be aware of Schedule B

Those responsible for returning "Schedule Bs" are asked to send them to Colin Bemrose, District Property Secretary. Please ensure you weigh any parcels and pay the correct postage; the district has had to pay surcharges in the past.

Stationing briefing meeting

This meeting is the first stage in the process for all those who might, or will be involved in the stationing process in September 2007. The briefing will work through the whole stationing process from the decision about an appointment being extended, to arrival in a new appointment. The meeting is for ministers, their superintendents and circuit stewards. It will take place on Saturday 13 May at St Andrew's Methodist Church, Northampton. *This is a change to the previously advertised venue.* The day will begin at 10 a.m. and will finish as soon after lunch as possible. Some changes to the stationing process are expected this year and so the briefing may take longer than on previous occasions. More information is available from Brian Thornton (01778 343018) or Paul Taylor (01933 276771).

New district

On 1 September, the current Oxford and Leicester District plus five circuits in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes will combine to become the Northampton District.

This event will be formally recognised at synod on 9 September during which Andrew Carter (District Mission Development Officer) and Paul Taylor (District Training and Development Officer) will present a report.

In preparation for this, Andrew and Paul are currently visiting circuits to hear about the exciting things that are happening and issues being faced.

Pray without ceasing

The Methodist Church has designated this year as a year to "pray without ceasing". Each district has a two-week slot when they are invited to respond to the challenge. The Oxford and Leicester District's fortnight is 28 April to 12 May, and this offers us all the opportunity to focus on prayer. To support this, the district has produced a resource booklet that should be available in all circuits. If you have not seen one or would like a copy, please e-mail acarter@fish.co.uk and you will receive a pdf version.