

New Life in Leicester! (contd)

All the activities mentioned are carried out ecumenically. In addition, there is the development of an ecumenical response to opportunities within the new **Highcross Shopping Centre**. Anglican Canon Barry Naylor and I have met the centre's manager to discuss ways in which faith communities could minister to those who shop or work in Highcross.

A Churches Together **Lent course** took place on Wednesday evenings in the Market Bar, which is part of Lloyds Bar in the Market Place. The course attracted not only people who wanted to explore issues on the theme of justice but also those who wished to discuss using alternative venues. One area of the work in the city centre that has been greatly encouraging is the openness of **bar owners** to have the church involved in their businesses. This is due to regular visits and the work of street pastors through their involvement with Leicester's City Watch scheme.

Northampton to host Methodist Youth Conference

The annual Methodist Youth Conference has a remarkable effect on those who attend. It is definitely worth encouraging young people to go to this gathering.

In 2008, the youth conference will meet in Northampton at Kings Park. The dates are Friday 21st to Sunday 23rd November. For more details or to be involved as a volunteer, please contact Paul Taylor, the district's training and development officer, on 07779 241087, or email northamptondo@btinternet.com.

Bedroom to Bouverie

The district office has moved from a spare bedroom in the chair's manse to Bouverie Court, the Diocese of Peterborough's offices in Northampton. This now provides the district with a space where all its staff can be based, and district meetings held. It is also an opportunity for a closer outworking of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant. The new office address is, Northampton Methodist District, Bouverie Court, 6 The Lakes, Bedford Road, Northampton, NN4 7YD. The telephone number remains unchanged: 01604 630128.

District News

The **Methodist Church** 
Northampton District
March 2008

New life initiatives in Leicester

Deacon Andrew Carter, Leicester's city centre missionary, reports on new mission opportunities in the city.

Fountainhead is a group that has developed from meeting once to three times a week at lunchtimes. Each meeting now has its own flavour and venue. The Monday gathering at Bishop Street Methodist Church offers an opportunity to pray in the Celtic tradition, and attracts people who seek a reflective experience. The Wednesday meeting is at De Montfort University, and members lunch, pray and reflect theologically on the life of the city centre and students, though the group is considering moving back into a city centre venue as engagement with students at the university has not developed. Finally, the Thursday group is very informal and has gelled well. There is no agenda nor are there set prayers but only a commitment to pray for one another.

The work of Leicester's **street pastors** goes from strength to strength. The pastors patrol the city centre on Friday nights and one Saturday a month, though it is planned to increase the number of Saturday nights and possibly develop a day time version in conjunction with the regeneration of the city centre.

An ecumenical group is developing a "fresh expression of church" in the city centre's new **cultural quarter**. Following six months of planning and praying, the group is exploring the possibility of **monthly events** and establishing **Christian nurture groups** out of these events, the first of which is scheduled for Tuesday, 6th May and will be held in a bar within the cultural quarter. One bar wanted to charge £500 but the group managed to get another for £50 – a sort of tithing in reverse - though the money still has to be found and it is hoped that city centre churches will chip in and help.

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District executive

As Ruth Bemrose, secretary to the district executive, explains, although much of the work at the March meetings of the executive is of a routine nature, it is nevertheless important.

Every March, the executive receives and passed on applications for probationer presbyters to be authorised to preside at the Lord's Supper.

The meeting also compiles and sends for approval a list of ministers of other denominations who will serve in circuits, and passes to synod for approval the recommendations of the Finance and Grants Committee for the use of the District Advance Fund.

Every year, the executive has to collect or update various information. It must, for example, draw up a list of colleges of further education in the district, and the circuits in which they are situated. This can be tricky because colleges may exist on several sites in different locations across more than one circuit or, even, districts.

Probably, much easier will be the executive's task of drawing up of a list of minority ethnic congregations who meet on Methodist premises.

Facilitating change and encouraging progress is a key responsibility of the executive. Seeking a vision and then seeing it develop can involve patient work and prayer over months or years. So, it was good this March to receive an up-beat report on the developing work in Leicester's city centre. There are more details elsewhere in this issue of District News.

The district has asked all its circuits to consider how best they might carry out the mission of the church in the communities they serve. This may involve changes to existing structures and ways of working. The district's director of mission, Tim Wooley, as well as the incoming district development enabler will be much involved in working with circuits so that they can tackle these issues positively and well.

Cities of Sanctuary

Life for refugees and asylum seekers in Britain can be tough. Cities of Sanctuary is a new movement that seeks to build a culture of hospitality for forced migrants. Such cities are proud to be places of safety, where community groups and local authorities are committed to welcoming asylum seekers and refugees. Leicester is exploring becoming a City of Sanctuary. For more information, visit www.cityofsanctuary.com/leicester.

Busy schedule for presidents' visit

Rev. Martyn Atkins, the president of the Methodist Conference, and Mrs Ruby Beech, the vice-president, will make a weekend visit to the Northampton District from 16th to 19th May.

The president will visit St Phillip's Centre in Leicester, and, accompanied by the vice-president, will also meet street pastors in the city.

Dr Atkins, who has been nominated as the Methodist Church's next general secretary, will attend a meeting of circuit stewards from the whole district, and take part in two 200th anniversary services. One will be at Tackley near Oxford, and the other in Great Billing on the edge of Northampton. The president will also speak at a meeting of the district's ministers.

As well as meeting Leicester's street pastors, Ruby Beech will attend a 'barn service' in the Stamford and Rutland Circuit, and also visit the Aylesbury Vale and Milton Keynes circuits.

District Advance Fund

Grants of up to £5,000 a year for ministry and property projects are available from the District Advance Fund. Details are at http://www.methodistdistrict23.org.uk/resources_dg.htm. Each year, there are two closing dates for applications: 30th June and 31st December.