

Diverse agenda for district executive

By Ruth Bemrose, secretary to the executive

At its March meeting, the district executive welcomed two **new members**: Roy Littlecott, who is the district's new property secretary, and the Revd John Anderson, who is the district's incoming ecumenical officer.

For several years, the district chair and, latterly, the director of mission have represented the district on the **East Midlands Churches' Forum**. This body maintains a link between churches in the East Midlands area of England and the government, as well as government bodies and agencies. Now, church leaders involved in the forum believe the setting up of a charitable company limited by guarantee might be a better way of handling this aspect of its work.

After much discussion, the district executive decided to recommend to synod that the district should engage with the proposed scheme and probably commit to it formally later in the year.

Why is it important for the executive to spend time on this issue? It is because the group believes it is necessary to maintain meaningful Christian contact with government at all levels in so far as this can be achieved.

The executive is involved in formulating proposals for projects within the district that may be put forward for consideration as part of **Venture FX**, the new national pioneering ministries scheme of the Methodist Church.


The executive also discussed the setting up of a small **district think tank** "to explore strategies to do the work of God in the Northampton District".

The executive was pleased to learn that the district **safeguarding** officer's recent increase in hours is enabling her to initiate ideas and projects, in addition to dealing with her case load.

The executive agreed to recommend to the April meeting of the district synod the appointment of four **new district officers**, and also that of the Revd Dave Warnock as the district representative to the **Methodist Council** from September this year. Several important district posts are still to be filled but we are ever hopeful!

The executive expressed its warm thanks to the **Revd Philip Taylor**, who will shortly retire as district ecumenical officer, for his long service in the post during which he not only dealt with all necessary paperwork but also developed valuable links with ecumenical partners.

District News

The Methodist Church 
Northampton District
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NOTHING VENTURED, NOTHING GAINED

By the Revd Tim Woolley, director of mission

A new Pioneering Ministries Scheme, known as **Venture FX**, is the Methodist Church's bold and exciting initiative to reach young adults, who have no personal Christian heritage.

The Methodist Church has always taken seriously the need to make the good news of Jesus Christ known to all people, and especially those who do not easily connect with the church. Over the next five years, **Venture FX** plans to identify 20 people with the gifts to pioneer new Christian communities among young adults, and 20 locations where this can happen.

The scheme will complement the grassroots development of our church's **Fresh Expressions** initiative throughout the church, and add a strategic dimension to what is already happening by focusing on this age group and releasing those who have pioneering gifts and skills to devote their energy and vision to this task.

As part of **Venture FX**, the Northampton District is keen to identify locations where such projects could be located and supported by the relevant circuit, as well as the district and Connexion.

If there is the potential in your circuit for establishing a Christian community amongst young adults with the help of a pioneer, please get in touch with me as soon as possible: Phone 01604 784424; email t.r.woolley.00@cantab.net.

Welcome for new district chair

The district is to hold a special service to welcome its new chair, the Revd Peter Hancock. It will take place on Saturday, 15 August at 7.30pm at Christ the Cornerstone in Milton Keynes. Directions to the church can be found at www.cornerstonemk.org.uk.

St Philip's Centre, Leicester

By the Revd Gareth Jones, interfaith development officer for the West Midlands Faiths Forum

I have been pleased to act as the Methodist trustee of St Philip's national ecumenical training centre in Leicester for the past year in succession to Jill Marsh, whose contribution the centre greatly valued.

St Philip's Centre for Study and Engagement in a Multi-Faith Society, to give it its full title, has two main purposes. One is to provide training for Christians to enable them to live with confidence in a multi-faith society, and to engage respectfully with people of other faiths. The other aim is for the centre to provide training and consultancy, primarily to public and private sector organizations in order to support them in developing faith awareness and understanding.

Both these areas of work are expanding rapidly, and the centre has established a positive reputation regionally and nationally. Meanwhile, St Philip's seeks to develop new courses and supplement its staff to include new areas of expertise. As a Methodist minister working full time in interfaith relations in the West Midlands, I am keen to support the continuing commitment of the Northampton District to the centre, and to encourage the district and individual circuits to make full use of the centre's resources. For more details visit www.stphilipscentre.co.uk.

Property matters

After eight years of service to the district, Colin Bemrose has retired as property secretary. His successor is Roy Littlecott, a chartered surveyor, who worked as a local government town-planning officer in Hampshire and Northamptonshire. Roy has also been a circuit steward and property secretary, so well understands the intricacies of filling in forms, when to do so, and to whom they should be sent!

The district property panel continues to meet on a regular basis and is pleased to hear of schemes at an early stage in their planning. This can save many problems later on. Contact Roy Littlecott on 01604 406200, or email rj_littlecott@hotmail.com.

Meet the new district ecumenical officer

"How did **you** become district ecumenical officer?" I have been asked. "Well," I reply, "I rang Alison Tomlin, the district chair, and asked her for the name of the new DEO. "Ahhh," says my enquirer, who then usually gives me a knowing look that seems to contain a mixture of sympathy, relief and utter bewilderment.

My name is John Anderson. I am in my first appointment as a presbyter in the Rugby and Daventry Circuit, which includes shared ministry at Christchurch in Brownsover, Rugby. This is a joint Anglican/Baptist/Methodist LEP (local ecumenical project). I candidated for the Methodist ministry from Christchurch, Clarendon Park, a Baptist/Methodist LEP in the Leicester Trinity Circuit.

Why did I become the district ecumenical officer? I was brought up in the Presbyterian tradition, and then became a member of the United Reformed Church. My faith journey since then has taken me through a variety of styles and traditions of church, and brought me to where I am now. Through it all, I have been convinced that what we hold in common is more valuable than what keeps us apart, that unity does not mean uniformity, and that not working together is usually just plain daft!

I see my role (I take up the post in September) as encouraging people to think ecumenically as a high priority. I want to help people understand that mission and ecumenism are inextricably linked, and part of my job is to guide you through the relevant paperwork and processes when and if you decide to go down that path. I look forward to hearing from you on 01455 552 364, or 07726 735 892; email john.anderson@methodist.org.uk

The Revds Dave and Alison Tomlin

A note from the Revd Alison Tomlin, Chair, Northampton District

During the stationing process, Dave was asked to come out of retirement and take on the superintendency of the Thames Valley Circuit for a year. He agreed but after further reflection suggested we job share the task. So, appropriate permissions having been received, we shall move to Slough this summer.