

## Keeping on keeping on

### Ruth Bemrose reports on the latest meeting of the district executive

At our meeting on 17 June, the Revd Peter Hancock, who will become the chair of the Northampton District in September, sat in on our discussions. Much of the executive's work is either developing or continuing, so results mostly lie in the future. For example:

\*\*A diversity-monitoring project that has been on our agenda for several meetings is now being developed.

\*\*Methodist participation in the transformation of the East Midlands Churches' Forum into a charitable company limited by guarantee (as reported in the last issue of District News) may not happen due to a lack of commitment by some other denominations.

\*\*The district executive agreed to recommend to synod a grant of £8750 to help with the provision of improved facilities at Christ the Sower School in Milton Keynes. The school is the only voluntary-aided Methodist school in the Northampton District.

\*\*We agreed to recommend financial support to Launde Abbey, a retreat centre in Leicestershire that the district regularly uses. The centre faces possible closure if funds to update the main building are not raised by September. The executive recommended sending £100,000, with 90% of this as a two-year interest-free loan; the rest will be a gift. This is in line with district policy regarding grants for building schemes, and the loan will not cause any work in the district to suffer.

\*\*The Mapping A Way Forward process, in which circuits across Methodism are considering what it means to be a circuit, has two more years to run. We discussed a document that could act as a template against which circuits might measure their health. The MAWF group will continue to encourage circuits to be specific about their relationships with each other and other denominations.

\*\*The appointment of Graham Evans from the Amersham Circuit as lay employment officer from September was welcomed. Thanks were expressed to the retiring officer, Graham Wood.

\*\*Synod will be asked to elect two new representatives to the district executive, and to bear in mind the balance between men and women, as well as lay and ordained. Only four continuing members are lay and, with the departure of our present chair, the secretary - the author of this article - is currently the only female on the group.

Finally, the executive expressed its warm thanks and good wishes to the Revd Alison Tomlin at the end of her last executive meeting as chair, and also to Barry Wilford, retiring representative to the Methodist council

## District News

The Methodist Church  
Northampton District  
August 2009

### ALISON TOMLIN FOR PRESIDENT

The chair of the Northampton District, the Revd Alison Tomlin, is to be the next president of the Methodist Church in Britain. This year's Methodist Conference, meeting in Wolverhampton in July, elected Alison as its president-designate for 2010 to 2011.

Following her election, Alison said, "It is a great privilege to be elected as president-designate, and I am humbled to be trusted with this role by the conference. In my year of presidency, I will seek to help the church be more receptive to go where God is inviting us. The church has not always been very good at risk taking but it is easier to take risks when we are confident in God's love, and listening for God's voice."

Central to Alison's ministry has been the imaginative use of the Bible in prayer. She said, "The church has designated 2011 as the 'Year of the Bible', and this will be very important and exciting for me in my year of office."

Alison will be inducted as president at the beginning of the 2010 Methodist Conference, which will meet in Portsmouth from 24 June to 1 July.

Alison is about to leave the district for a new appointment as co-superintendent of the Thames Valley Circuit with her husband Dave. She has served the Methodist Church as a minister for 25 years, and was ordained in 1984 in the same town - Wolverhampton - in which she was elected as Methodism's next president. As Alison prepares to leave, she shares three concerns. She writes:

#### Launde Abbey

Launde Abbey is a place of refreshment and quiet space from which the Northampton District has benefited for many years.

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We go on retreat and hold a variety of gatherings there. Many of our people, ordained and lay, have spent time at the abbey to receive spiritual re-creation and continuing support. Launde Abbey has updated its stables block but is in urgent need of financial support in order to bring forward essential work on the main Tudor-Elizabethan manor house. Recently, a number of retreat houses have closed or said they will be closing, and we cannot afford to lose this ecumenical resource. Do visit the Launde Abbey Web site at [www.savelaundeabbey.co.uk](http://www.savelaundeabbey.co.uk), and please consider how you can help. Thank you.

### **Violence against women**

One in four local authority areas has no specialised support services for women who experience violence. The government is concerned about this because of the cost to our children, young people and, indeed, whole communities, when violence tears families apart. It is estimated that violence to women costs £4 billion per year, which probably helps concentrate the government's mind. God's concern may be more about asking what we are doing to help. The Methodist-linked charity Action for Children – [www.actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk) - is part of the answer but what do local churches offer?

### **Sri Lanka**

Thurairajah Samuel, known as the Revd Sam, is a Methodist minister in the Bristol District, and he has sent a request for support. The Rev. Sam runs a project that is responding to the suffering in Sri Lanka. Those involved began praying, sending aid, and visiting people in need just one month after a tsunami hit the Indian Ocean island nation on Boxing Day 2004. The project is now offering further help because of the thousands who are suffering in the former war zone in the north and east of Sri Lanka. For further information or to offer help, contact [revsam@btinternet.com](mailto:revsam@btinternet.com).

### **Counsel to the council**

**By Barry Wilford**

After 4 years, my term on the Methodist Council has ended. Its format is like a mini-conference, and faces well known via the Methodist Recorder have become familiar to me. I have argued with the best of them! ... →

### **Inspirational idea**

**The Revd Tim Woolley, director of mission for the Northampton District, reports on *Inspire*, a new, developing network of people committed to the growth of mission spirituality in the life and leadership of the Methodist Church.**

The vision of *Inspire* is to establish a network to promote "mission spirituality", which sees discipleship as a way of living a spiritual life that is essentially missionary in nature.

The *Inspire* network will bring together Christian leaders in small groups, or fellowship bands, so that they can hold each another accountable for their discipleship in everyday life. These fellowship bands will be networked together in order to gather, support and mentor leaders in the way of mission spirituality.

A school of mission spirituality is being developed alongside the *Inspire* network as a means for inspiring, equipping, and training participants, and the wider church. Missioners of the network itself will staff the school, and offer practical ministries, leadership mentoring, intensive courses, workshops and seminars. *Inspire* events will be delivered through the local church, conference facilities, and retreat centres.

*Inspire* will tap into a growing interest in spirituality and discipleship, plus a rising concern for mission and evangelism, and an emerging interest in a new monasticism. The network will have the characteristics of a Wesleyan "order of mission".

In 2010, the Northampton District will host an event as part of the launch of the *Inspire* network. Look out for further details to see what *Inspire* has to offer for your spiritual journey.

... → I have been on working groups dealing with the question of bishops (or not), a handbook for presbyters and deacons, and a new course for worship leaders, plus one that led to the appointment of a heritage officer. I wish my successor, the Revd Dave Warnock, the same satisfaction and enjoyment that I have had during my spell on the council.