

MAPPING **A WAY**  
**FORWARD**  
REGROUPING **FOR**  
**MISSION**

The response of the Northampton District to the  
'Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission'  
report to the Methodist Conference 2007

## What makes a 'healthy circuit'?

The 'task' outlined in *Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission* (Methodist Conference 2007) attempts to achieve two things:

- sustainable and relevant circuit structures which will serve and oversee the mission-obligations of the Church in the early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- new ways for Circuits to fulfil their responsibilities and purposes in line with Standing Order 500: 'The Circuit is the primary unit in which Local Churches express and experience their interconnexion in the Body of Christ, for purposes of mission, mutual encouragement and help'

If we are to take this task seriously, we need to ask ourselves what a 'healthy circuit' might look like in the 2010s? If we could answer this question we could be on the way to addressing the two aspects of the task outlined above ... and then we would be able to explore what this sort of circuit might look like.

### What might a 'healthy circuit' look like?

We have taken, as our starting point, Standing Order 500 and Our Calling:

**Standing Order 500:** 'The Circuit is the primary unit in which Local Churches express their interconnexion in the Body of Christ, for purposes of mission, mutual encouragement and help ... (its) purposes include the effective deployment of the resources of ministry, which include people, property and finance.'

**Our Calling** ... is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. It does this through:

- **Worship** ... to increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love
- **Learning & Caring** ... to help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care
- **Service** ... to be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice
- **Evangelism** ... to make more followers of Jesus Christ

By incorporating these two we have produced a list of statements that we feel begin to explore what a 'healthy circuit' might look like – these statements can be found opposite.

### A proposal

We propose that we take some time to consult on this list of statements with circuits, both individually and in groups, to produce an agreed list that describes a 'healthy circuit'. Once this has been achieved we will then invite circuits to use this information to assess what a 'healthy circuit' might look like in their particular part of the District.

In order to achieve this we propose the following timetable:

- Synod – Sep 2009 present and distribute process for consultation; agree timetable
- Friday 15 Jan 2010 end of consultation
- Synod – Apr 2010 agree and launch process
- Synod – Apr 2011 approve final recommendations
- Sep 2011 onwards implementation of recommendations

*NB. 'process' refers to the production of a list of statements that defines a 'healthy circuit'*

### Consultation

You are invited to reflect on the statements opposite and consider the following questions:

- do these statements paint a realistic picture of a 'healthy circuit' for today and the 2010s?
- are there any statements you would like to change ... remove ... or add?

*NB. it is important that you divorce your consideration from the situation of your own circuit at this stage*

You may like to respond to these questions individually or discuss them in the circuit and then make a circuit response. However you want to respond, we would welcome your feedback by Friday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

Please send any feedback, in writing, to Paul Taylor (Director of Learning & Development)

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Thank you.

## A healthy circuit<sup>1</sup> might look like this ...

A series of statements that describe a 'healthy circuit' in the 2010s.

### Worship

A healthy circuit is able to ...

- ... make available well trained people to preach and lead worship
- ... offer appropriate, regular training and development, both initial and ongoing, for preachers<sup>2</sup> and worship leaders
- ... make available a variety of styles and traditions of worship across the circuit, both on a Sunday and during the week
- ... encourage the development of fresh ways of worship, including those accessible to the wider community
- ... offer appropriate support and encouragement for the use of technology in worship, both audio and visual

### Learning & Caring

A healthy circuit is able to ...

- ... develop and deliver a circuit wide training programme, relevant to the needs of the circuit<sup>3</sup>
- ... encourage and resource small groups across the circuit for learning and pastoral support
- ... offer appropriate opportunities for particular groups who might be best served at circuit level<sup>4</sup>
- ... develop and resource a discipleship programme that responds to EDEV<sup>5</sup>
- ... provide an overview and support for safeguarding<sup>6</sup> across the circuit
- ... provide appropriate support and pastoral care for the Circuit Ministry Team<sup>7</sup>
- ... offer appraisal opportunities for members of the Circuit Ministry Team<sup>7</sup>, in line with connexional requirements
- ... ensure all buildings<sup>8</sup> in the circuit are fit for purpose

### Service

A healthy circuit is able to ...

- ... reach out and connect with the local community
- ... discover and share needs and discern 'those that need you most'<sup>9</sup>
- ... encourage the appropriate use of church buildings and the development of relationships with user groups
- ... ensure that time and resources are used in ways that are consistent with our beliefs and values

### Evangelism

A healthy circuit is able to ...

- ... offer appropriate faith sharing training
- ... encourage and support faith exploration courses and mission events, advocating ecumenical co-operation
- ... integrate and resource the planting of new congregations and fresh expressions of church
- ... explore the place of new congregations and fresh expressions of church within the circuit

### Interconnexion

A healthy circuit is able to ...

- ... support a viable, mixed Circuit Ministry Team<sup>7</sup> that makes best use of the gifts and talents of its members
- ... explore ecumenical working and opportunities where appropriate
- ... provide appropriate budgets to support the work of the circuit
- ... effectively communicate<sup>10</sup> the decisions made and opportunities offered by the circuit

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### Notes

1. ... in the early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century
2. 'preachers' includes Presbyters, preaching Deacons and Local Preachers
3. the 'needs of the circuit' might reflect the policies of the circuit as well as training and support for those holding particular roles, eg. stewards, pastoral visitors, small group leaders, children's & youth worker
4. eg. young people, under 45s; those often under represented in the local church who may benefit from meeting at circuit level
5. EDEV - extending discipleship, exploring vocation: exploring God's call; reflecting on being a follower of Christ; explore Methodism; learn more about faith (some of this involves signposting to other agencies/resources)
6. safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults
7. 'Circuit Ministry Team' could include presbyters, deacons and lay people; full-time and part-time; paid and volunteers
8. including churches and manses
9. John Wesley (????)
10. 'decisions made and opportunities offered' by the circuit, local ecumenical groups, the district and connexion

# How a healthy circuit<sup>1</sup> might be achieved

## What next?

Once we, as a District, have agreed a series of statements that define a 'healthy circuit' the next stage will be to invite circuits, both individually and in groups, to consider what a 'healthy circuit' might look like on the ground. Both Tim and Paul hope to meet with individual circuits to support this process and then will organise groupings to discuss the implications on a wider scale.

## What might a 'healthy circuit' look like on the ground?

You may feel that your circuit is currently healthy, ie. is able to achieve all that is outlined in the statements (on the previous page), and that the current shape of your circuit is the most appropriate for the next decade. However, you may feel that your circuit needs to be a different shape, and there are a number of ways in which this could be achieved.

### 1. a Federation of Circuits

A Federation is a group of Circuits working together to gain mutual benefit through the sharing of expertise, staff, volunteers or resources across a larger structure, while retaining autonomy in some or all areas.

### 2. an Ecumenical United Area

A united group of churches from different denominations (see SO 512 for further details)

### 3. a Circuit with one or two large churches as a hub for smaller churches

Large churches have formal relationships with particular smaller churches, which could range from sharing worship and events to operating under one Church Council, and could offer benefits to all churches, benefitting from the strengths of each other.

### 4. a number of Mission Partnerships

Mission Partnerships are groups of churches that work together, often with a discrete Ministry Team, some shared Officers and one Church Council, sharing their resources to further the mission of the individual churches and the partnership.

### 5. a realignment of local church groupings to create a new Circuit

The redrawing of current Circuit boundaries that could amalgamate current Circuits or redraw current boundaries to create new Circuits.

These potential ways forward give a flavour of some of the solutions that could be adopted and their could be others. Paul and Tim will be working on these over the next few months to offer more detail, some strengths and weaknesses and some examples.