

THE LONDON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Getting to know the members....

Gerry Davis, BEd. MA. - A personal profile



'Writing the Next Chapter' will help you to meet key people in the life of the District. In Volume 1, Gerry Davis, a member of the District Council talks about himself, how he became a Council member, what the role involves, and his vision for the new District.

Tell us a bit about yourself...

I was born in St Vincent, West Indies where the first school I attended was the local Methodist school. My family emigrated to UK in the late 1950's. I have lived in various parts of London for 43years. I am married to Kim a devoted Christian Vietnamese woman whom I met while working in New York in 1970. We are blessed with a daughter and a son. My family was Anglican in the Caribbean and since coming to England we have experienced the Presbyterian, Seventh Day Adventist and Baptist churches. Kim and I have been very happily settled at Park Lane Methodist Church, in the Wembley Circuit since 1981.

I have had a career in education and local government and worked in 5 different London boroughs as a teacher / school inspector / deputy director of education and director of community development. In addition I worked for 6 years as chief executive of a regeneration company.

What would you say are the key challenges facing your local church?

There are a number of issues.

Firstly, although there is a steady core membership there is a considerable turnover of attendees typical of geographically mobile communities. This may affect the level of effort expended to involve new people. *Secondly* there is the challenge of succession planning for youth leadership.

Thirdly, the church seems to operate a little in isolation and could benefit from more social and worship events with the other churches in the circuit. *Finally*, the church is located in a very racially mixed community but it is of concern that it seems that the local white community is no longer interested in attending church. It is possible that when a church reaches a certain % of black members the white community perceives it as a "black church" and hence do not attend?

How did you become a member of the District Council?

All circuits were asked to submit nominations and the implementation group engaged in a selection process which has led to a Council that is as representative as possible of the District. The Superintendent of my local circuit consulted me about the role and nominated me for the London Council. He forwarded my name and profile to the Implementation Group.

And what are the responsibilities involved?

The responsibilities involve clarifying and communicating the vision for the District and determining policies and strategic objectives to achieve that vision. Also to ensure that funds for which the District is responsible are properly spent.

That sounds rather daunting...

I have held many leadership roles in my career and had responsibility for large budgets of millions of pounds. I have developed the ability to examine options and make decisions based on the available information and in keeping with the vision of the organization as determined by the governing council and in this case as directed by God. I have serviced boards as a chief executive and company secretary. I also have many years' experience of sitting on committees and governing bodies. Currently I am Chair of Governors of a large college (15000 students).

So, why is the new London District important?

It is important because a cohesive body working towards a common vision probably most efficiently administers the governance of Methodism across the city. Parochialism in small communities is not conducive to good governance and it is helpful to have a district that covers an area similar to the political boundaries covered by the mayor and the GLA.

What in your view are the particular challenges that London faces?

London is a city in which the world is represented in terms of religious cultural and ethnic groups. The society appears to be increasingly secular and the District is challenged to raise the profile of Christianity in general and Methodism in particular.

In our multi-faith society it would seem that the overwhelming view is that we should develop a "faithless society". In the context of the infamous publicity given to some faiths we need more than ever to see the assertion of Christian values beliefs and principles. It is possible to respect other faiths but only from the position of valuing your own faith and not by abandoning any concept of faith altogether. Thus the opportunity exists for the assertion of Methodist Christian approaches as a basis of living in our complex urban global city.

What must the District do to succeed?

In order to succeed the District must seek and obtain a presence at the tables and forums at which the decisions are being made about the life and work in the city. The District has set up a number of commissions dealing with the key aspects associated with life in London and the mechanisms for the Methodist church to work in partnership with other denominations and faiths to establish a better London. This means becoming involved in such matters as the 2012 Olympics and the regeneration of many disadvantaged areas of the capital. It also requires that the Council works in a way that reflects God's call to help develop a just and fair society in London.

QUESTIONS:

- How many of the challenges facing Gerry's church are similar to your own? What other particular challenges do you think your church is facing? What can be done to make a difference? What is your reaction to Gerry's final concern for the local church and the question he raises?
- What do you think he means by 'parochialism' in small communities? Why might it develop? How far do you share his concern about the negative impact it might have? What can be done to help our churches avoid the possible dangers of parochialism?
- What do you personally hope the new London District will achieve?
- What would you say are our basic beliefs and principles? How can we show we value them?
- What local partnerships is your church involved in? In what ways are they making a difference?

- Where do you see injustice and unfairness in London today? How might we respond?

Bible Study: Gerry chose **Ephesians 4:1 – 16** as the Bible passage that inspires him in thinking about the future of the new District and its governance. The passage speaks of the unity in the body of Christ particularly in v.16 “*From him [Christ] the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*”

QUESTIONS:

- What is the special challenge of v. 3? How can we best work towards it?
- What are the gifts God has given? What is the purpose for which they are given?
- What challenges and opportunities do you see in this passage for our life in the new District?