



Dear Friends

As we approach the end of the first year of the new London District we wonder what your summary of the main features of the year would be?

For us it has been a year of unexpected challenges mixed with occasions of great delight. Traveling around the District, we have been delighted to discover new initiatives and hidden talents. "Listening to London" in Lent – seven days of walking across different parts of the city to visit local churches, community projects and other faith communities - was especially enlightening and we are planning to repeat (and extend!) the exercise next year. Thank you for the welcome you have given us as we visited the circuits at other times to lead worship and join in various celebrations.

Here are some up-dates that we hope that you will find helpful and some indications of areas in which we would welcome your help:

Spring Synod

As always Synod embraced a range of local stories, formal business and wider community concerns.

We were delighted to note that Ruby Beech, a member and Local Preacher in the Harrow and Hillingdon Circuit, is to be the Vice President of Conference for 2007 – 08, serving alongside the President for that year, Rev Dr Martyn Atkins; and also that at Conference in Blackpool three of our probationer ministers Revds. Lena Ali, Eleanor Jackson and Robert Mpanduki will be ordained.

Synod heard of the national programme of events to mark **Set All Free** (on the 200th anniversary of the 1807 Act abolishing the Slave Trade) and indicated whole-hearted support for the **Strangers into Citizens** campaign for an earned amnesty for undocumented migrant workers. That campaign, organised by London Citizens, included a major event two weeks later when a number of Methodists attended a special Mass for migrant workers at Westminster Roman Catholic Cathedral then marched to Trafalgar Square to be addressed by Politicians, Trade Unionists and Religious Leaders, including the Rev Erial Kirby.

There was also a presentation of the proposals coming to Conference for a revamped Connexional Team. **'Team Focus'** will have major implications, not only for individual Team members, but also for the way in which the whole Church organises its work at a connexional level. There were also **reports of national and European conferences** that members had attended, while at a local level we heard testimonies of the **church's response to community need** in the wake of the mini tornado at Kensal Rise and the stabbing of a teenager in Leytonstone.

Altogether, there was much to ponder and to hold before God in thanksgiving and intercession.

Focus on Young People

From the very earliest stages of our planning for the new District, we saw it as vital to affirm the place of young people among us. The latest draft of the District's Core Values includes the following commitment:

- to give special attention to the perspectives of young people while promoting the spiritual, social and moral well-being of all members and adherents according to their needs and circumstances.

Consultation with a group of people in the District who are either young themselves or who work with young people has now led to the suggestion of some guidelines for the way in which the District might support such work:

- Enabling Youth Workers to get in touch with one another – establishing and sharing a database;
- Helping to increase enthusiasm among church attenders and members for working voluntarily with young people – focused recruitment, training and on-going support;
- Helping to identify places where the time is right a church or circuit staff team to include a youth worker and seeing how existing youth workers can help in planning or paving the way;
- Offering opportunities for teams of young people from the District to engage in mission and service in other parts of the world;
- Holding a District Event or Festival in which young people demonstrate and engage with the breadth of cultural and spiritual diversity that is to be found in the London Methodist District.

We are keen to act upon the commitment that we have made, but we want to be confident that any initiative is well grounded. Please let us know whether you support these ideas, or whether there are other possibilities that you would like to have explored. Also please let us have the contact details of the people in your Church and Circuit who work with young people so that we can be in touch with them.

Property Matters

The stated purpose of the Methodist Church is: *“to respond to the Gospel of God’s love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.”* But how can we fulfil this aim in our dealings with Property?

This was the question addressed to a gathering of Circuit Property Officers as the District Property Advisory Group put forward its draft property development and management strategy. The draft document was introduced by Sue Chadwick, who had drawn on her experience as a Solicitor specialising in Planning Law (both academic and practising) to create a valuable framework. Copies of the draft document were given to everyone present with an encouragement for them to consult with others in their circuit about the emerging policy – especially as it will have implications for the way in which building schemes are dealt with in the District.

Copies are being sent to Circuits that were not represented at the meeting in April and we hope that you will all offer feedback on the document.

Circuit representatives affirmed the value of meeting periodically to share insights and experience, but also asked that a database should be held at the District Centre that would list information about people who could be used to carry out Quinquennial inspections and building works. Please send such information to Chris Linford via the District Centre, chris@londonmethodist.org.uk. It was hoped that Circuits might begin to act jointly in their approaches to companies and consultants and so get better value.

Your District needs you

We are grateful to everyone who has taken some part in the leadership of the District so far: it has really felt more and more that there is a team involved and that has made the work so much more effective. There are still some roles and offices that need to be filled and some changes that will have to be made for the next Connexional year.

In particular, we will be looking for:

- A District Disability Adviser, to take over from Nick Palfreyman who will be working overseas for a year under the auspices of VSO; and
- Commission Conveners for the Vocational Development and for Congregational Development as previous office holders move to new responsibilities.

If you have names to suggest please let us know.

And finally

At the Inauguration service for our new District, we recognised the need for us to be people of Prayer. The District Prayer handbook is a valuable resource and we hope that it is being used regularly by groups as well as in private prayer. We believe, however, that it is important to involve a wider circle of people in focused, intentional prayer for the District. There are opportunities for growth and new possibilities for ministry; there are changes in Circuit staffing and mission; there are places where relationships are strained, where people are in pain and there is a need for healing; there are plans for re-developing premises to make them more suitable for ministry and mission today: for all of these we need the wisdom, grace and power of God – we need prayer.

We should like to invite you to join us in prayer and in suggesting ways in which shared prayer can become a regular and more dominant feature of District life.

Remember, you do have a part to play, alongside other members of the District, in shaping the patterns and programs of District life. We trust that in the months ahead we will find new ways of drawing on your insights and using your gifts to continue our work in this exciting City.

Yours truly

District Chairs

Some dates for your Diary

Coming up soon....

- **Representative Synod**
Saturday 8th Sept 2007 WCH 10.30am
- **Fresh Expressions Day Conference**
Saturday 22nd Sept 2007 WHC 10.30am
with Revd Dr Martyn Atkins at Westminster Central Hall
- **The District Celebration**
Saturday 16th Feb 2008 WHC time tbc
with Revd Dr Martyn Atkins at Westminster Central Hall

Training Days

- **Worship in the Global City**
Saturday 13th Oct 2007 Hinde Street 10.30am
A day for all those concerned to develop quality worship in their churches
- **Church Stewards Training Day**
Saturday 24th Nov 2007 Wesleys Chapel 10.30am
- **Working with Young People in the Global City**
Saturday 1st Dec 2007 WCH 10.30am
A day for youth leaders and others interested.

Full details on training days to follow soon!

Future Synod Dates

Representative Synods

Saturday 5th Apr 2008
Saturday 13th Sept 2008

Saturday 25th April 2009
Saturday 12th Sept 2009

Saturday 24th April 2010
Saturday 11th Sept 2010

Ministerial Synods

Wednesday 12th Mar 2008
Tuesday 10th Mar 2009
Wednesday 17th Mar 2010

More dates will be available in the District Directory coming out soon!