

London District Synod Saturday 11th Sept 2010

Address by Revd Jenny Impey

Ephesians 4:1-16

4:1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, **beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called,**

4:2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

4:4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

4:7 **But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.**

4:8 Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people." (When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.)

4:11 The gifts he gave were that some would be **apostles**, some **prophets**, some **evangelists**, some **pastors** and **teachers**,

4:12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

4:13 until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

4:14 We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. **But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,**

4:16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Better Together? Belonging Together?

I once caused quite a stir. I was the preacher at the town's ecumenical week of prayer for Christian Unity. Most of the churches were represented, most of the clergy present and I began by saying that to pray for Christian Unity was heretical. It certainly got their attention and they continued to buzz long after the sermon had finished.

I'm no longer as convinced as I was by the truth of the statement but it arose out of a frustration that the only time the churches really got together was to pray for Christian unity – the unity that Christ prayed for, the unity that the writer to the Ephesians declares - **we are all one**. Simply to pray for unity suddenly seemed cheap and easy when what was really needed was the building of strong relationships across the denominations which would enable us to be a force for good in the town as we sought to be good news and to make a difference for Christ. In Christ we **already are one, we are already are united. We belong together.**

As we reflected on this synod we'd originally called it Better Together? (with a question mark!). It seemed important to us to give over much of the time to reflecting on the District review together. But Better Together suggests a focus on what we do together and almost subconsciously the theme became Belonging Together as it embraced not only the review of the District, but our relationship with the Conference, with the City and with ecumenical and interfaith partners. A stronger phrase that it concerned much more about the quality of our relationships and the way in which our words and actions impact on others.

Belonging Together is a fact. There is one body and one Spirit, just as we were called to the one hope of our calling. We belong together whether or not we acknowledge it; whether or not we notice it, whether or not we act on it – for better for worse, for richer for poorer. It is the quality of those relationships and the actions that flow from them that determine whether we are or will be better together!



The London District was born 4 years ago. Do you remember the fanfare? The packed Central Hall? The joyful Ghanaian Choir? The exquisite Korean dancers? (If you don't, thank you for joining us, and for bringing your questions and your challenges to us as you help us to develop the story)

The London District Launch

What about the crosses which were given to representatives of each of the churches in the District and which are still given prominent place in the vast majority of our churches? A sign of our belonging together in Christ.



The London District Cross



Page from the London District story book

And what about the story book? That visible sign of our commitment to one another, as representatives of each circuit prepared their page of the book and brought them forward to be bound together as we inaugurated this District.

We belong together and since that day countless links have been generated across the district as we have travelled around and told our stories – for good or for ill. We belong together for better or for worse and this global city is impacted by those relationships.



The London District story book



9/11

We gather on the anniversary of 9/11. A day that was devastating to individuals and impacted personally on many thousands of people.

A day that has shaped subsequent history and highlighted the impact our words and actions and relationships have across the world.



9/11 twin towers



Pastor and church in Florida

A day that continues to evoke strong reaction and highlights the way in which the actions of a thoughtless few can have ripples across the world. Over the last few days all the media focus seems to have been on one small church of 50 members in Florida. One pastor, 50 members, dangerous publicity and the world is on edge. If only it were that easy to get good news into the press! Our words and actions are capable of changing the world.

We belong together but will we make choices and build relationships that make us better together?

For me the world seems to have shrunk since the London District came into being. Barely a day goes by when there is not something in the newsheadlines that causes me to pray for individuals around the District.

When I hear of earthquakes in New Zealand, my thoughts are with Roger and Carole Wiig



New Zealand Earthquake



Roger Wiig

Of course they are in the North but the school where Hamish and Anne Galloway live is in the heart of Christchurch.

When I hear of flooding in Pakistan and attend a welcome service in Richmond and Hounslow we pray for our brother and colleague Kaleem.



Pakistan floods



Kaleem John

What happens around the world profoundly impacts the life of the London District as families and friends and relatives are caught up in it all.

What happens in the life of our District and in the life of the Connexion no less profoundly affects the life of the world and our relationships with others at a local level.

As the Chief Rabbi said in his Rosh Ha Shannah message – we all have a part to play in writing the script



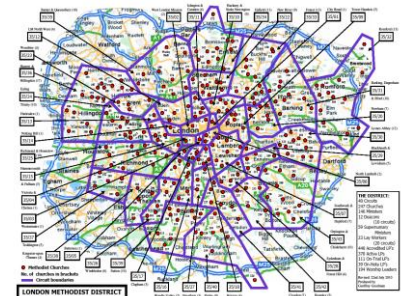
Chief Rabbi



The Methodist Church is regrouping for mission and each and every circuit, and now each and every district is being asked to make choices about how we will relate to one another and to the areas in which we live and work. What are the relationships that need to be built, what are the difficult choices that have to be made so that we might indeed be better together and make a greater difference in our communities?

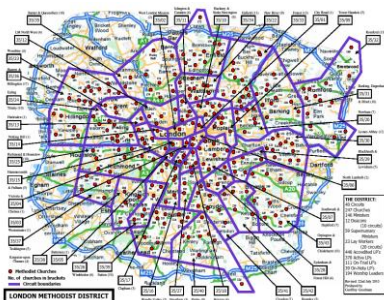
Southwark & Deptford Circuit

Today's synod is the beginning of the next stage on our District journey. Others brought the District into being. Others set up the structures and confirmed the recommendations. Now we have choices to make. What will our belonging together mean? What is our vision for the District today? How will we develop the relationships between us in ways that will help to build up the body of Christ in love and equip the saints for ministry. Who will be our partners on the journey.



London District Map

The choices we make as we engage with one another today and in the coming days will shape the next chapter in our history. For the truth is: District is us! The 23,000 members, 247 churches and 40 circuits are the District. (Did you know there are 23,000 Bus drivers in London – the same number as Methodists – if ever I think there are only a few of us, the sight of a red London bus reminds me we can still make a difference!) We belong together – dare we speak the truth in love to each other and grow together as we build even



The District is Us!

stronger relationships with one another and with our partners as we seek to play our part, alongside all who are willing to work with us, in being good news for this global city and beyond?