

London District Representative Synod Saturday 25th April 2009
Summary of the workshops

Ministry across language and culture

Workshop Summary & Suggestions
Facilitator Mike King

- Opportunities for further education and dialogue.
- Events which bring people together.
- How do we enable people from different backgrounds/languages within congregations to minister to one another?
- Ministers need to be willing to draw on each others expertise/experience
- The need for a Multi-lingual Hymn Book resource
- Information/publicity about what it means to be a Methodist and what the Methodist Church stands for in a variety of languages.
- The challenges and difficulties associated with peoples legal status
- Finding ways to understand and value culture and language
- The use of different liturgies from around the world.
- Visitors to our churches need to feel comfortable
- Initial Training and further training of ministers
- The need for sensitivity
- Food
- Sincerity
- To remember that connexionalism means that we are connected
- District sharing of stories
- Leadership in churches (stewards) need to model hospitality
- Gatherings for celebration/party
- Wider range and better quality of music used in worship
- Importance of the Eucharist to stress that around the table we are all one.

Notes by Revd Cameron Kirkwood.

‘Our Church and hospitality to Other Churches’

Facilitator Geoff Cornell

- 1 The Workshop was attended by 40 people. It began by people sharing the issues they faced, the concerns they brought with them. There was a torrent – clearly this is an issue that causes problems! The main concerns were:
 - i) other congregations not complying with requests or respecting church premises or breaching licences agreements. (e.g. wear and tear, cleanliness, getting keys cut, sub-letting, leaving without paying).
 - ii) safeguarding issues
 - iii) questions as to charitable status and financial probity of such groups
 - iv) having loud and sometimes fundamentalist voices on our premises which the community around thinks we agree with. What appears on a formal doctrinal statement may hide the reality and sometimes is clothed in Methodistspeak for our benefit. Such groups can be intolerant of other Christian traditions and certainly against other faiths. They may have views that deny equality to women, etc.
 - v) noise disturbing the neighbours, particularly loud music.
 - vi) the clashing or overlapping of worship times
 - vii) advertising, engaging in evangelistic outreach, even providing film for the God Channel where our building is assumed to be theirs.
 - viii) the enlarging of requests – from one room, then another – and the question of use of the church as opposed to a hall.
 - ix) deceit
 - x) our pretending we are hospitable and concerned for a partnership in the gospel when in fact all we are really after is the money
 - xi) power issues: we have it, with the building, the history, the place in the community in a way they don’t
 - xii) a recognition that we are host to tenant churches, whereas originally Methodism was a tenant.

- 2 The same small groups then examined three case studies and brought their considerable collective wisdom and experience to bear upon them. These offered way of tackling some of the problems.
 - i) the key matter was the licence – properly drawn up, signed, only for one year. This protects both tenant and host.
 - ii) some discovery as to why this group existed, what it’s history was. Is this a group we would want to encourage? Is it part of a wider organisation?
 - iii) it would be useful to attend their meeting – or, if in another language, getting a member of the church to do so.
 - iv) safeguarding. We should have proof that they have gone through the proper procedures e.g. CRB checks.

London District Representative Synod Saturday 25th April 2009
Summary of the workshops

- v) being satisfied that how they announce/advertise themselves does not compromise/relegate our work.
- vi) splinter Pentecostal groups were more trouble than established denominations.

3 The guide 'It's not unchristian to say no' was distributed, as were copies of the necessary Methodist consents and guidance (all downloadable from the Methodist church website). The agency that can deal with safeguarding matters for mainline denominations is the Churches Agency for Safeguarding based at Methodist Church House (CAS: www.churchsafe.org.uk), for independent and pentecostal churches it is CCPAS (The Churches Child Protection Advisory Service: www.ccpas.co.uk).

'It's not unchristian to say no'
a guide to other congregations on Methodist premises:

Christian congregations in search of a room to rent often turn to other churches. The variety of diaspora communities in London seeking to meet and worship in their own tradition coupled with the fragmentation of Protestant and Pentecostal fellowships means that Methodist churches will find themselves regularly approached for rooms. Christian charity, the desire to develop wider ecumenical links and the prospect of some ready cash may tempt Church Councils to accommodate other churches: 'The International Glorious Jesus' Redemption Church (Peckham branch)' or 'The Revival Wind Fellowship' may already be on the premises. But such relationships can often be difficult - disputes over noise or mess or a sense that a cuckoo may have been given room in the nest are not uncommon. Defending Methodist identity through seeing their Statement of Belief or through being satisfied that nothing is being preached contrary to our doctrines (as required by Standing Orders) is problematic when the Belief Statement shows signs of having been hastily prepared or when the language of worship is other than English. And when is the line crossed - when a belief in the Second Coming dominates all other doctrines, or when evangelism is a cover for Islamophobia?

- 1 Use of Methodist premises must be through permission of the Connexional Property Committee (Schedule 14a) and using a Formal Licence. This should have a probationary period and must be annually reconsidered by the Church Council. It is not unchristian to ask them to leave.
- 2 The Church should discover why the group wishes to use the premises. If they are a breakaway faction from another church then it is hardly ecumenical to welcome them! Enquiries could be made of the training of the group leader or pastor - the problems of Islam with fundamentalist imams should not be replicated within Christianity and untrained pastors. It is not unchristian to be thorough in research.

London District Representative Synod Saturday 25th April 2009
Summary of the workshops

- 3 Usual conditions of usage should never be waived: leaving the room in as good a condition as it was found, compliance with Safeguarding procedures, prompt payment of rent, not entrusting the group with a key or ensuring strict compliance with key usage and details recorded in the key register, etc. Given their lack of other overheads, it is not unchristian to charge such a group the full fee for the room.
- 4 Hospitality does not mean jeopardising our own witness and ministry in a neighbourhood: any posters advertising the presence of this fellowship should be temporary and only placed outside when the fellowship is meeting. Churches need to ensure that their own publicity is better! Noise should not disturb our neighbours: perhaps a decibel level could be set or only acoustic instruments approved? It is not unchristian to give a preference to our own presence and ministry.
- 5 If a group rents rooms for a number of years, or seeks more permanent signs of its presence (the ultimate sign of this is either having their own cupboard, or, even, their own crockery) then it would be appropriate to consider a different kind of sharing agreement - a partnership in the gospel involving shared responsibilities for the building, or perhaps baptising them into the membership and ambit of the Methodist church. It is not unchristian to invite people to be Methodists.

London District Representative Synod Saturday 25th April 2009
Summary of the workshops

- ◆ Local Councils are being invited to sign up to “Strangers into Citizens”.

Gordon Newton “London Churches Refugee Network”

- ◆ “LCRN” - informal network of individuals/groups working with Asylum Seekers, giving range of help (Legal Advice, Money, Food, Accommodation etc), about 250 people on mailing list. Quarterly meetings to discuss particular issues & provide forum for sharing good practice.
- ◆ “LCRN Hardship Fund” - registered charity (2007), offering grants to organisations/groups/local churches directly helping Asylum Seekers. (also needing income - church Benevolent funds ?)

Cathy Bird “Cities of Sanctuary”

- ◆ Campaign for cities to embrace a culture of hospitality (begun in Sheffield, & spreading!)
- ◆ Synod Resolution & Memorial to Conference (support expressed by this group)

TWO REQUESTS FROM GROUP

1. We are anxious that this issue be kept on the agenda of the District
2. Would the District (via Social Care Commission) produce a list of London Methodists with experience in this field to assist development of a network/support culture in which people can pick up a phone and call someone who may have ‘been there before’ to talk through possible responses?

Involvement of Group members with refugees/asylum seekers included:-

<i>Type of experience</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Circuit</i>
Work amongst students (WLM)	Cathy Bird	21
London Citizens “Citizens for Sanctuary”	Paul Regan	20
Work amongst homeless	Josephine Soneken	02
Work amongst the deaf	Anne Richardson	36
Sri Lankan	Janet Butler	30
Contact in Crystal Palace, Hayes, & Welling	Judy Turner-Smith	30
Advice Centre at one church		16
Some A.S. in congregation	Armstrong Fumme	16
Ditto	New River Circuit	22
“Strangers into Citizens” campaign	Madeleine Andrews	15
Church link with hostel for Zimbabweans	Bernadino Mandlate	12
Long term involvement with former student	Tony Brazier	22
Work with several in congregation -Thamesmead	Gordon Newton	03
Legal Benefits Advisor & Advisor to Home Office	Sam Ageyman-Mensah	20
Several others who expressed interest.		

London District Representative Synod Saturday 25th April 2009
Summary of the workshops

‘Ministry among the Homeless and the Rootless’

Facilitator: Revd Shaun Sanders

- The story was shared of Hackney Circuit’s involvement with Hackney Winter Night Shelter.
- Other experiences were shared including shelters and other work at Bermondsey, West London, Kings Cross, Chelsea, and Hammersmith & Fulham.
- These are examples of practical ecumenism. (Dogmatic ecumenism is a long way off.)
- We are providing hospitality - hospitality is the essence of the church.
- We are not service providers. However, there can be difficulties when with trying to meet certain standards but are limited by our resources.
- Some guests move on to become volunteers.
- Concern was raised about accepting local / central government money with strings attached which limit our ability to challenge or critique government policy.
- We need to think beyond our immediate work with homeless to thinking wider eg. Building partnerships with housing associations.
- Young adults find homeless work inspiring.
- Recommended book: The Word on the Street: Performing the Scriptures in the Urban Context - Saunders & Campbell.

London District Representative Synod Saturday 25th April 2009
Summary of the workshops

‘How others see our Church’

Facilitator: Revd Simon Leigh

Like it or not, our church buildings are a dominant feature of the community landscape. Often on main roads, they can be large but somewhat isolated buildings. The ancillary buildings can be well used and bathed in light at night, whereas the church is dark. This was the image that Carshalton Methodist Church exuded seven years ago, according to its Minister Revd Simon Leigh. The Church was significantly underused and generally considered irrelevant by most local people.

Simon and his Senior Steward, David Forty, explained that a Bible Society review in 2002 had demonstrated clearly that the Church was out of touch with local people. The Church interior had not changed since the 1950s. Unable to spend significant sums on their buildings, Church members agreed to embark on a change of culture that would enable the Church to serve Christ in the community.

A five year plan focussed on the Church’s spirituality; buildings image; outreach and publicity. Over time most Church members found themselves taking on new roles ranging from serving on a new leadership team to being welcome stewards and people who offered tea and coffee in the afternoons. Church members raised the money for a proactive young part time Families Worker who helped put ideas into practice over two years.

Spurred on by the success of their Families Worker, Church members created a new role of Outreach Worker and a District Advance Fund grant allowed the new worker to be employed full time. Nick Boddy, who now held this post, explained how he had sought ways of engaging with most organisations using the Church premises over the past two years.

Useful audience comments and questions probed the Church’s plans for reaching out to groups who did not use our Church premises. Simon Leigh reported that he was a hospital and prison chaplain. Nick Boddy was a street pastor. David Forty and others interested in film had developed a community cinema for local people. Many Church members were very active community volunteers.

Seven years after the Bible Society review, Carshalton Methodist Church had drawn up building improvement plans but on the outside it had still only installed new notice boards. However, it was now a recognised centre of activity within the community. Links were being made with local businesses and schools. Congregation numbers were rising slowly and new members were coming forward.

Simon and his colleagues stressed that the journey had been and still was a rocky one. They had endured disappointments, but had also experienced great joy. God had his own unanticipated way of doing things. The Church had lost

London District Representative Synod Saturday 25th April 2009
Summary of the workshops

its appeal against pedestrian lights outside the church only to realise that many more people noticed the Church as they crossed the road.

The Church had prayed for an influx of young families, but God had brought them the members of several group homes. They attended services regularly with their carers and had sparked an interest in how Carshalton Methodist Church might develop a mission for people with learning difficulties. The Church was on a journey which was transforming the way it is seen by people, institutions and the many varied groups that make up our community.