

## Conclusion

The distribution of churches of other denominations across the District, the way in which Anglican personalities can affect the implementation of the Covenant, and the differing histories of local ecumenism suggest that the ecumenical dimension of *Mapping The Way Forward* may be different in each circuit. The questions may be the same in each area; the answers will be unique.

Help in identifying and responding to them can be obtained from the contacts below.

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### Contacts

Revd. Jonathan Hustler  
District Ecumenical Development Officer  
Tel: 01507 522045  
email: [jrhustler@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:jrhustler@tiscali.co.uk)

Chris Jones  
Development Enabler  
Tel: 01522 754782  
email: [methodistjones@btconnect.com](mailto:methodistjones@btconnect.com)

Simon Dean  
CTAL Facilitator  
Tel: 01522 504071  
email: [simon@ctal.org.uk](mailto:simon@ctal.org.uk)

## The Methodist Church Lincoln & Grimsby District

### *Mapping the Way Forward – Reshaping for Mission*

#### An Ecumenical Perspective

This leaflet has been prepared on behalf of the District to encourage circuits and churches when engaging with the *Mapping the Way Forward* process to reflect on issues related to ecumenical relationships. There is no one prescribed way in which this could or should happen. However, through reflecting on the subjects raised and the questions which follow it is hoped some of the key aspects of relating ecumenical matters to a local situation will be addressed.

#### The Church of England

The Lincoln Diocese is in the midst of its own reshaping process (New Era post-2008). Aware that our processes run in parallel, representatives of the District and Diocese have met regularly to share information and to identify useful areas of cooperation.

Key issues for the Diocese revolve around the dearth of resources (particularly in terms of ordained, stipendiary ministry) that is anticipated over the next decade. More responsibility for the conduct of worship will be placed in the hands of trained and authorized lay people who will have completed the Parish Foundation/ Lay Ministry programme which is available to participants from both denominations

#### ***For Reflection:***

1. Has the circuit explored the possibilities of sharing ordained and lay ministry with its Anglican neighbours to maintain Christian presence in the communities both seek to serve?
2. What could be the advantages of this?
3. What might be the first steps which need to be taken to enable this to happen?

The deanery is developing its importance as a unit of Anglican organization. Despite superficial resemblances, a deanery is not equivalent to a circuit. However, as the deaneries take on more responsibility for mission in their area, they present themselves as the most natural partners to the circuits. John Cole produced an helpful paper on this (*Embracing the Covenant* (2008), pp136-45).

The diocese is hoping to reduce the number of deaneries and to redraw boundaries.

**For Reflection:**

1. Has the circuit discussed its mission strategy with the deanery/ies? If not how could this be explored?
2. What channels of communication exist to enable this to take place and what might need to happen to enable and encourage this?
3. How will any changed circuit boundaries sit against the deanery and vice-versa? What might be the mutual benefits of closer co-operation between the circuit and the deanery/ies?

A major development is the introduction of Area Mission Forums. There are seven of these, broadly corresponding to Local Authority boundaries. They will have some oversight of resources for mission across their areas (with some, limited, funds) and be the voice that speaks to local government and other bodies at that level. Methodist involvement has been or will be invited.

**For Reflection:**

1. How can the circuit relate to and be represented on the Mission Forum?
2. As this might also involve neighbouring circuits how will your circuit liaise with them?

## Other Ecumenical Partners

Five other Christian denominations (the Roman Catholic Church, the Baptists, the United Reformed Church, the Salvation Army, and the Society of Friends) are members of *Churches Together in All Lincolnshire (CTAL)* as is the Ground Level Network. Apart from (possibly) the URC, none of these is interested at present in organic union or the sort of covenant relationship that we have with the Church of England. For various reasons, with some (the Quakers, Roman Catholics, and Ground Level) 'institutional ecumenism' (such as forming an LEP) is at present simply not an option. However, all our partners are interested in mission and the focus in CTAL is on enabling mission ecumenically.

Recent developments in ecumenical thinking have focused on 'receptive ecumenism'. As its name suggests, this suggests ecumenical activity is not so much to bring our 'traditions' richest store' as to receive from others what they have to offer. This may also entail the humility to recognize that others do some things better than we can do them.

**For Reflection:**

1. What are our ecumenical partners engaged in that serves our purposes as well as theirs?

Basic to all of this is simply knowledge of other churches. Some denominations (e.g., the Baptists) operate a congregational ecclesiology which leaves each church to plan for mission (though with some encouragement and resourcing). But all are changing. Ground Level continues to grow and to plant new churches. The URC is adjusting to a radical simplification of its structures. The Baptists are engaged in a programme called 'Lincs for God'. The Roman Catholics are the denomination most affected by the influx (and departure) of migrant workers.

**For Reflection:**

1. Somewhere in the *Mapping* process each church and circuit needs to ask the questions:  
'How aware are we of what is going on in the other churches in the area and how might this affect our mission priorities?'