

'about a change in culture.' It is about working much more closely together, as close as 'one church in many places'. Another says 'there are as many different ways of working as there are teams!'

Central to Methodist models of Team Ministry appears to be the belief that;

- lay and ordained should work closely and collaboratively
- through this resources of people, property and finance are better developed and utilised
- any structures within the circuit should exist only to enable this to happen.

What is clear is that when such a model is developed the 'change in culture' affects every aspect of church and circuit life and is therefore challenging as well as exciting.

For Reflection: What do you think are the possible benefits and drawbacks of working a Team Ministry model? What might these be in your situation?

For Further Reflection

- 1) What are your immediate thoughts or reactions to the examples and their situations?
- 2) How do any of the issues raised or the questions asked relate to your own situation? How might they begin to be discussed?
- 3) Think again about the three issues of:
 - the model of circuit structure and operation
 - the nature of Superintendency and how the role is fulfilled
 - the development of Team MinistryWhat do you find new or challenging about each of them within the examples?
- 4) As your church and circuit engages with the *Mapping A Way Forward* process what are the key issues or questions to arise? In each example new ways of approach were devised which transformed not only working practices but also attitudes. Are there possible ways of approach in your current context which might have similar effects?
- 5) The focus in all the examples was a desire and need to enable the whole church to engage more effectively with mission. In your context are there relatively small or possibly even radical changes which might enable this to happen?

Some References & Resources

1. *The Constitutional Practice and Discipline of The Methodist Church* (Methodist Publishing House)
2. 'What is a Circuit Superintendent?' (2005 Conference Report - www.methodist.org.uk/)
3. 'The Nature of Oversight' (2005 Conference Report - www.methodist.org.uk/)
4. 'The Missional Nature of the Circuit' (Faith & Order 2008 - www.methodist.org.uk/)
5. *Called To Love & Praise* (Methodist Publishing House)
6. *Team Ministry Overview* ([http://plymouth-methodist.org.uk/Documents/Team 20Ministry% 20Overview.pdf](http://plymouth-methodist.org.uk/Documents/Team%20Ministry%20Overview.pdf))

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The Methodist Church Lincoln & Grimsby District

Mapping A Way Forward Reshaping for Mission

***Ideas for Discussion
& Reflection***

Throughout the *Mapping A Way Forward* process a number of recurring issues have emerged in circuits as they have engaged with it. Three in particular are inter-related and are to do with how a circuit might organise and develop its life:

- the model of circuit structure and operation
- the nature of superintendency and how the role is fulfilled
- the development of Team Ministry

One of the inevitable consequences of the *Mapping* process is change. For circuits the impetus for this can be externally (Connexional or District) or internally (Circuit) driven. Experience from circuits is that where specific, significant changes have been made it has been in order to meet perceived challenges and opportunities the circuit itself has discerned. Thus it is contextual and does not always 'travel well'. However, others may be able to learn from the experience.

Circuits which have made changes appear to have a particular positive 'can do' mindset. Without this any changes are likely to flounder. The prevailing mentality needs to be 'what is it we need to do?' rather than 'CPD' says.....' with its negative implications. CPD has been known to be changed in the light of experience and to play catch up with practice! There has to be a will to change based upon a wide understanding of the nature of engagement with mission.

Circuits thus engaged believe they are involved in a dynamic, developmental process not one which is static. Change becomes a part of the way the circuit works and is therefore not seen as threatening or a one-off event.

The examples which follow raise some issues and questions when reflecting on the three inter-related aspects of circuit life described above.

Example 1

A rural circuit had a Superintendent and two other ministers to cover nine churches. When the Superintendent was due to leave none of the other ministers wanted to take on the role. All were in their mid-forties and in their experience had seen the toll superintendency could take on an individual's health and ministry. All were involved in significant 'off-premises' community work and did not want to lose this.

Having looked at the role of superintendency in CPD they agreed it was largely functional and decided to split it three ways. All stated what they were passionate about, comfortable with or found draining relating to the task. All took on some roles in each category.

It was decided not to rotate these roles between them each year. However, a different name would appear annually in the Minutes of Conference. The Superintendent's allowance was split three ways. The group wanted to model a style of life and ministry and therefore had to be open with one another and develop positive relational and working practices. They agreed to meet bi-weekly but not in a manse believing that this would contribute to a different style of working.

In practical ways circuit life has been little affected by the changes. Those things which needed to happen continued so to do. The real difference came about in the positive relational working of the staff and the positive impact this has had on all aspects of their ministry.

Superintendency

The 2005 Conference Reports '*What is a Circuit Superintendent?*'² and '*The Nature of Oversight*'³ describe the history, functions and current practice of a circuit Superintendent together with its practical context today. The primary role is that of oversight which is expressed in three particular areas: leadership, governance and management. There is room however for much flexibility as to how this works in practice.

The reports make it clear it is not an exclusive role in oversight as this also involves lay officers and other groups, 'oversight is not complete if groups of officers (lay) and presbyters do not collaborate and interact' (para. 2.27)³.

For Reflection: How are the three areas of oversight described above fulfilled in your circuit? How is this done collaboratively? Could it be done more effectively?

Example 2

In a geographically large rural circuit with four presbyters there were several factors from which emerged a catalyst for change. The frequent ill-health of presbyters had resulted in a maintenance formula for churches. There were limited opportunities for mission development.

A review of staffing levels sought to identify how to move from a sectional, independent model of working to a more collaborative style of ministry. In this way the gifts of ordained and lay people might be utilised better. A review of churches in the circuit concluded that some were 'mission churches' with identifiable areas of potential development and some were 'fellowship churches' which would require a different kind of resourcing. The process was part of an attempt to bring about a change in the default mind-set position to one of 'we can do'.

The areas of pastoral support and schools work were identified as key development areas. Two Pastoral Assistants were employed. Teams of lay people were identified and trained to work in these areas. An administrative assistant was employed and a circuit office created to be open at some time each day. A 'medical centre' model was begun whereby people wanting to access the resources of the circuit contacted the office rather than an individual. These requests were then passed on to the appropriate person. Regular meetings of the Pastoral Visitors, the Circuit Leadership Team with representatives from circuits, Local Preachers etc. were held. Local Preachers were encouraged to engage with churches to determine how worship might be led to express the mission of that church. Worship leaders were trained.

A change in culture ensued in which the concept of 'team' was paramount. Each presbyter had a working knowledge of all the churches and acted as a 'link minister' to some. Work could be picked up easily by another person. Help was always at hand to deal with complex situations and people began to feel more valued. The gifts of the presbyters could be better used. The quality and continuity of pastoral care increased and more people were visited.

Above all mission was high on the agenda and the circuit no longer felt it was just 'keeping the show on the road'. It was acknowledged that being different and difference were acceptable. No one size fitted all. Presbyters understood better that they could not do everything and were not expected to. Effective communication was seen as essential to all this.

The Circuit

Information concerning the purpose and nature of the circuit can be found in Conference documents such as *The Missional Nature of the Circuit* (Faith & Order 2008)⁴.... and CPD (SO 500)¹. Here are three quotes:

'The Circuit is the primary unit in which local churches express and experience their interconnection in the Body of Christ, for the purposes of mission, mutual encouragement and help.' CPD¹.... 'There seems to be no limit to the size of a Circuit or to the specific roles of individuals within the ministry-structures within those Circuits. While this may raise concerns for some within Methodism, for others it reflects the historical and missional nature of the Circuit – a means of effectively deploying resources for mission rather than a set structure. '... Thus the shape of our Circuits today should be a response to the local and the contemporary mission of the Church' (3.53)⁴.

For Reflection: How is mission enabled and resourced by your circuit? What have been practical examples of this? Can this be developed? What might need to be done to bring it about?

Example 3

An urban circuit with five presbyters, some involved in Fresh Expressions and in working alongside other agencies, engaged in local church audits and in a demographic mapping exercise. This plotted where buildings and resources were placed in relation to affluence and deprivation. A more comprehensive picture of the area emerged which enabled resources to be used more effectively.

There was a desire to move away from individual pastoral charge of churches by presbyters to a team ministry model. As a result five 'Partnerships' were established to include the twelve churches and Fresh Expressions. Each Partnership has a Council which replaced the Church Council. General Church Meetings are still held but a Circuit Council replaced the Circuit Meeting.

The Team Ministry model is emphasised through the chairing of all meetings being shared between lay people and presbyters. The circuit believes it is lay led. Each Partnership has an unpaid enabler to help it function effectively. There are paid staff working in specific priority areas of work. There is a paid circuit administrator and a circuit office and resource centre, the hub of the circuit. Presbyters work collaboratively, operate an 'on call' system at certain times and have devised their own charter for ministry. All this has taken time to come about with much reflection, talking and working with people. They are being encouraged so that they believe in their own capabilities. It is clear that within the circuit one size does not fit all contexts. However, in a developing flexible working culture where relevance is emphasised and difference accepted this is not a problem.

Team Ministry

What is meant by *Team Ministry*? One circuit which is working in this way describes it as being