



Advent greetings. When we remember again the difficult and complex times into which Christ was born we are reminded in the lighting of the Advent candles, week on week, of the growing light of God's presence to transform both people and situations.

As three circuits, Hemel Hempstead & Berkhamsted, Watford and Harpenden the call of God has challenged us to transform what we are now into a new way of working and being from September 2012. Our challenge is to move ahead together so that we may be strengthened in our work and witness, by God's grace using all our resources, people, places, skills, finance etc. to reach out beyond ourselves into the communities we serve. The Methodist Connexional model of Discipleship – shaped for mission, should be at the heart of what we do, growing and deepening our faith so that we are then able to share with confidence the love of God to those round about us.

The perennial question to anyone coming into a new situation is 'How are you settling in'? I am tempted to reply, 'Like a varifocal lens'! Whilst getting immersed in the local i.e. Harpenden Circuit it is fascinating to get to know the wider picture. My thanks to the Hemel Hempstead & Berkhamsted and Watford Circuits for the graciousness with which you have received me into your midst on a variety of occasions. I look forward to deepening this relationship as the year progresses. We have much to learn from one another. The prospect of coming together is both difficult but exciting.

Linda Woollacott (Superintendent Minister of Harpenden Circuit and Superintendent elect of the newly merged circuit from September 2012)

Circuit Implementation Group

This group is made up of 2 Circuit Stewards and 1 Presbyter from each circuit, Richard Armiger (District Training Officer) who has had experience of guiding other circuit mergers, Marilyn Spidell (Clerk to the meeting) and Linda Woollacott (Superintendent Designate). We are meeting on a monthly basis to guide the merger process forward. Although we can take decisions in some matters many of our conclusions will need to be ratified at individual circuit level. We have pledged to keep everyone fully informed by issuing bimonthly newsletters.

Circuit Name (to be agreed by all circuits)

West Hertfordshire Circuit. Many of our newly merged neighbours have taken a broadly geographical name, we suggest the same.

Circuit Meetings (to be agreed by all circuits)

3 per year – September, January and June.

We suggest that the September meeting is for Trustee business, the January meeting is 50% Trustee business and 50% mission and development i.e. hearing reports on different aspects of church work and mission, getting to know individual churches, presentations from outside agencies etc. and the June meeting being predominantly mission and development with only essential Trustee business transacted.

Circuit Constitution (to be agreed by all circuits)

Current thinking is:-

Trustees

All ordained staff; lay Mission and Outreach workers in the direct employment of the Circuit,

Circuit Stewards (though the number and responsibilities are still to be worked out)

Local Preachers' Secretary

2 representatives from each church (Methodist Guidelines suggest Treasurer and Steward but the church should decide who best will represent their interests)

Mission and development aspects of the Circuit meeting will involve a wider grouping than the Trustees, we are working on whom this should include as well as the possible need for a bigger representation from larger churches.

Bursar (already agreed by the Watford and Hemel Hempstead & Berkhamsted Circuits, awaiting ratification in the Harpenden Circuit))

We clearly need to appoint a bursar who will oversee circuit finance, payroll matters, as well as circuit level property matters, schedules, arranging quinquennial inspections etc. It is proposed that a part time (15 hours per week) appointment be made, beginning in July 2012.

Look out for details of the appointment from February.

Assessment levels (to be agreed by all circuits)

Whilst detailed negotiations are still to take place regarding next year's assessment a 3% increase is envisaged taking into account normal increases in running costs. This 3% increase would have been envisaged regardless of whether we had merged into a larger circuit or remained as three separate groups.

Staff Matters

Hemel Hempstead & Berkhamsted Circuit are pleased to invite Rev'd. Vindra Maraj-Ogden (who presently ministers in the South Bedfordshire Circuit) to have oversight of the Hemel Hempstead and Ley Hill churches. There is a huge redevelopment programme ahead for the Hemel Hempstead Church as well as exciting prospects in Ley Hill. Vindra comes with gifts to lead the churches forward and has a heart for mission in the community.

Whilst welcoming Vindra we must acknowledge the huge contribution Rev'd. Tony Cavanagh and his family have brought into the life of the present circuit. We wish them well as they move to Bournemouth in August.

We await the appointment of a probationer minister to the vacancy in the Watford Circuit following the retirement of Rev'd. Margaret Millar. We should have more information about this in January.

We also acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Margaret in the life of Watford Circuit and wish her and her husband well as they move into what is often now termed the 'third age'.

Manse Matters (to be agreed by Watford and Harpenden Circuits)

It is clear that we will need to replace the manse in Bury Hill, Hemel Hempstead and will look to do this now, at the changeover of minister. To make this as smooth a transaction as possible we want to purchase a new manse before we sell the current one and are currently looking into the best way of financing this transaction.

Circuit Logo

Are you good in design? We are looking for a Circuit Logo, can you help?

Next Urgent Matters

To draw up the circuit mission statement, to plan a launch event, amongst a host of other items on our time line 'to do' list.

Next Newsletter – February 2012

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