

The Methodist Church in Scotland



# In Touch

## Issue 7 Winter 2016

Edinburgh & Forth

Strathclyde

Ayrshire & Renfrewshire

Central

North of Scotland

Angus Dundee &

Inverness

**Dear Friends,**

You will see in this issue that the District continues to consider the challenges that we face and the opportunities that have been presented to us. Somehow or other we often seem to find it easier to focus on the former of these rather than the latter. But I do believe that even in the most challenging of situations that there are opportunities for the Church. Listening to the reports at the Inverness Synod, I was encouraged by the ways in which many of our Circuits and Churches are picking up opportunities and running with them.

As we share in the season of Advent and Christmas, we can be reminded that God incarnate, Immanuel, God with us, did not wait to be born into an ideal world but rather one that, like ours was in many ways broken and hurting. Yet into that world came the light of Christ, the message of the angels, the guiding star for the Wise Men, and through it all the possibility of shepherds, wise men and others coming face to face with the mystery and wonder of the presence of God.

My prayer is that God's people called Methodists in Scotland will so live out in their lives the reality of the presence of God that others may be faced with the mystery and wonder of the presence of God. In other words, as I keep saying, that they may be enabled to 'engage with what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, with integrity'.

But Jesus wasn't just born into the particular world of Shepherds, Wise Men or Mary and Joseph. Bethlehem was part of the wider Roman Empire with its arbitrary cruelties, as well as its finer points. Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem, because they were obliged to go there. This year, as we celebrate Christmas, there are people across our world caught up in the cruelties and injustices of our time – some seemingly arbitrary, other deliberate. Please continue to remember the people of Syria, Iraq and the other places that drift in and out of the news headlines – or never seem to be mentioned at all – and all those millions who have been driven by all of this to be refugees and wanderers in an increasingly unwelcoming world.

On that rather sombre note, I wish you, nevertheless, a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Every blessing,

David

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**Dr Margaret Batty**, who wrote what is now the definitive history of Methodism in Scotland *Scotland's Methodists*, died in November. As well as being an historian, she was a gifted and gracious person in many other ways. She and her late husband, Harry, a Methodist Minister, served the Church faithfully in many ways over many years. As Local Preacher, she preached her last sermon just a few weeks before she died.

## Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network

We are delighted that Gary Williams, who as you know has been a member of our DMLN team for several years, has been appointed Co-ordinator for Scotland and Shetland Districts, following Helen Wareing's decision to move on to pastures new. Gary will be working full-time in this post alongside Sally Robertson who will continue to work in a half-time capacity. Other people from across the Connexional Network will be drawn in from time to time to help with specific pieces of work.

Congratulations, Gary, we look forward to working with you in your new role.

## Churchless Christians and Missing Methodists

As most readers will know, the Scotland Synod has been exploring for some while the possibility of undertaking some new work among 'Churchless Christians' – those who claim to be Christians but don't attend Church, either because it doesn't appeal to them or because they have left – and 'Missing Methodists' – those many in Scotland who call themselves Methodist but who, often because they live a long way from one of our churches, are not part of our worshipping community.

In the Spring of 2016 we applied for, and were successful in receiving, a major grant from the Connexional Mission and Ministry Grants Committee to fund a half-time post for five years to enable us to carry out mission among these two communities of people. The post will run alongside a half-time appointment in the Angus, Dundee and Perthshire Circuit.

A joint profile for this post was taken to the first round of Stationing and we are delighted that several ministers expressed real interest in this innovative piece of work. Nicola ('Nik') Wooller came to visit in November and we are delighted that she was offered and accepted the appointment (subject always, of course, to final agreement by Conference next summer). Both

the Circuit and the District look forward to working with her as we seek to encourage people to engage with what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

## Collaborating and Connecting

In June, whilst David Easton was on sabbatical, the Superintendents met for their quarterly meeting. One of the matters they discussed was the challenges facing our circuits in terms of resources, the challenges of finding ministers (next year we will be looking for at least five new ministers in stationing) and other related issues. They felt that we need to explore ways in which we could better collaborate across and between the circuits. Following a conversation with David on his return it was agreed that the September Synod would be largely devoted to this subject. Those of you who were at Synod in Inverness will remember that in the morning we heard accounts from Circuits underlining the opportunities and challenges which they felt they had.

In the afternoon Synod split into seven groups and reflected on the morning's input and drew up their own lists of the challenges and opportunities that they felt we commonly faced across the District. The flipcharts that each group filled in – and some covered several sheets of paper whilst other restricted their comments to one or two – were looked at by the Deacons and Presbyters at their annual overnight gathering the following week. Looking at the opportunities as well as the challenges we face they felt that there were two main priorities that we should pursue.

The Circuit Stewards' Day, which was brought forward from its usual spot in the Spring, met in November in Stirling and, in turn, looked at the flip charts which were displayed around the church.

Like the ministers they were asked to pinpoint common challenges and opportunities facing us. They then went on, in the light of that conversation to decide some priorities. When this was done they looked at the priorities suggested by the ministers, which they had not seen until this point.

Bringing together the reflections by these two groups, a joint recommendation was brought to the District Policy Committee the following week. (see P.5). A really helpful conversation took place at the DPC and it was agreed that it would set apart a day in January (21<sup>st</sup>) to spend some time together to pray and to draw up a District

development plan from which we could also decide our priorities. The day will be facilitated by Ruth Pickles, a former Vice President of Conference, and her husband, David, a member of the DMLN Team in the North West Region.

Please pray for this meeting and for members of the DPC and others in leadership across the District as they look for God's guidance for the future.

## Shoe Box Appeal 2016

This year Wallacestone Methodist Church Central Scotland Circuit has again participated in the shoebox appeal.

This appeal is supported ecumenically, for long term projects in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Volunteers in our church worked with people within the local community and wider community, supported by Tesco, the Co-op, Morrisons Weight Watchers, Braes High School, Tayavalla, a Respite Centre run by Action For Children, this also included members of these outlets sharing with our own people to wrap shoe boxes in Christmas paper, fill and label the boxes with their content and this over 4 Saturdays in October.

Other boxes were also handed in, that had been packed at home by members of the public.

Rev Hilda Warwick our Presbyter, worked tirelessly with the above groups to secure their support and also to ensure that we had boxes from various shoe outlets to allow us to reach our aim.



Her leadership and dedication to this project and to bringing our vision and mission to the community has most certainly not gone unnoticed.

Last year we sent 33 boxes to the appeal and targeted ourselves with 100 for this year, with the

endeavour and support that we received, we will be sending this year approximately 250 filled boxes.

We thank God that we will hopefully bring Joy to others at Christmas, as we shared fun, laughter and fellowship, working together to reach our goal.

## Scottish Rural Parliament

The second Scottish Rural Parliament was held in the new Brechin Community Campus over three days in October. People from all over rural Scotland were invited to attend, either representing their local community or a rural-focussed organisation.

The opening address was given by Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity; and the final session was a debate on Brexit with panel members representing the SNP, Labour, Conservative parties as well as the National Farmers' Union of Scotland.

Workshops formed the main part of the Rural Parliament. Topics for these workshops had been identified mainly from priorities identified at local rural events run by Scottish Rural Action leaders (the organisers of the Rural Parliament) in various locations throughout the past year.

I attended the Rural Parliament representing the Scottish Churches Rural Group and led an evening fringe workshop on 'what do you think the churches in rural Scotland could, or should, be doing?' Those who attended felt that much more imaginative use could be made of church buildings. Offering space for a range of activities to help reduce social isolation was seen as a priority. The group also recognised that in any community there are Christian people keen to help and that churches could do better at working in partnership with other organisations offering care and support. An interesting and useful idea from one participant was that an online 'information and idea-sharing' site be set up that would enable churches to find out about what congregations in other areas of the country are doing and to get advice from each other.

The workshops I attended were on 'what do people in rural areas feel is necessary for their well-being?' and 'how to improve mental health services in rural areas?' It was encouraging to learn at the latter of an initiative by Support in

Mind to bring together a range of organisations at a meeting to be held in November, to begin to identify ways of working better together throughout rural Scotland, and that the potential the role for churches is to be discussed that day. Sadly, I would not be surprised if you are reading this and thinking, 'I have never heard of the Rural Parliament.' Scottish Rural Action has not done enough to publicise the Parliament nor made its purpose clear, but it is to be hoped that this will improve.

The 'Manifesto for Rural Scotland' is on the Rural Parliament website –

[www.scottishruralparliament.org.uk](http://www.scottishruralparliament.org.uk) – so do look at that. And if you would like to encourage SRA to make more efforts to listen to local communities, and to help individuals and organisations, including churches, to be more active in rural Scotland, do contact them by emailing [info@scottishruralparliament.org.uk](mailto:info@scottishruralparliament.org.uk)

Lorna Murray

### EMU Review process

The **E**piscopal, **M**ethodist, **U**nited Reformed Partnership formal Statement was signed on 23rd January 2010 and included provision for a Review process after 5 years. This duly took place towards the end of 2015 when a Group convened under the auspices of was invited to assess the past 5 years and, in that context, to consider the future of EMU itself and / or to suggest pointers for future closer growth.

The Review Group's Report was circulated to members of the EMU Group at the end of 2015 before presentation and discussion at a meeting on January 19<sup>th</sup> 2016 when there was a thorough consideration of the Review and its 4 recommendations including termination of the partnership, continuing but with sharper focus on working together, closer links with and within ACTS. These recommendations were then forwarded to the three Partner Churches for further consultation within their structures as appropriate.

The EMU Group meeting in November 2016 considered the results of this consultation process, which for the Methodist Church had taken place in the Scotland District Ecumenical Forum. Each of the Partners appeared to have come to a different view of the way ahead, but the

Group's ensuing thorough discussion showed clearly that much common ground underpinned the different recommended outcomes, and, after a lengthy discussion, a common mind was reached on a proposal to come to the 3 Partner Churches.

This looks to further collaborative working by EMU over the next 2 years, with a stated intention to focus more sharply on 2 parallel strands –

1. identifying and developing work in specific areas where it is clear that realistic outcomes may be expected and where working together is preferable to working separately;
2. opening conversation with ACTS as to the relationship of the EMU Partners within and with ACTS, with the hope that this will enrich and further develop the work of ACTS and EMU's other ecumenical partners.

The conversation showed clearly that, while EMU has not been able, for various reasons, to achieve many outcomes that can be clearly identified, it does provide a framework of relationships and cooperative mutual support and work, which it was felt important to retain and build on, at least in the immediate future.

### People

During the past year we shared the pain of URC friends at the deaths of two dear colleagues – the Rev Zam Walker and the Rev John Humphreys. Zam's time on the EMU Group was comparatively short, but she made a lasting impact through her enthusiasm and positive contributions to our thinking.

More recently, we also felt the widespread shock at the news of the death of John Humphreys, soon after his retiral as URC Moderator in Scotland; John's warm and welcoming friendship, together with his gifts of insight, leadership and sensitivity, made him a much loved colleague of us all and he will be much missed.

We also have said "farewell and thank you" to Elspeth Davey, the SEC's 'Ecumenical Officer' who retired from that post in December. We all have valued not only her gifts in administration, but the enthusiasm and breadth of experience she has brought to EMU, and indeed, to the wider Church. We wish her well in her no doubt active retiral.

Jenny Easson (29.11.2016)

## **Response of the Circuit Stewards to Synod Group Discussion**

### *Challenges*

- Buildings
- Finance
- Membership Age Profile
- Geography
- Shortage of Ministers
- Supporting the 'traditional church', whilst finding time to do things in new ways
- Resources

### *Opportunities*

- To learn from one another about what works in Circuits and Churches (one circuit was interested in finding out more from another one about Messy Church, for example)
- Collaboration across Circuit boundaries
- Mars! (Thinking outside the box or outside of the 'planet' of the familiar. 'Would it be possible to live on Mars? Would it be possible to be Church in totally different ways?')

Following the above feedback, the group were asked to list some District Priorities. Among them were the following:

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Harnessing People Power
- Discovering what skills people have
- Seeing and taking opportunities.

## ***Response of the Presbyters and Deacons to Synod Group Discussion***

Looking at the feedback from the Synod groups, the Ministers felt that the District Priorities should be:

### **1) Sharing of Resources**

Personnel  
Finance  
Buildings

Therefore, there is a need for a conversation about Stationing and what each Circuit can, and is prepared to, offer.

### **2) Calling People to Discipleship**

Setting up an 'Internet Group'  
The person appointed to work with  
'Churchless Christians' and 'Missing Methodists'  
Discipleship Focus in our Circuits

Looking at the feedback from the Synod groups, the Ministers felt that the District Priorities should be:

### **3) Sharing of Resources**

Personnel  
Finance  
Buildings

Therefore, there is a need for a conversation about Stationing and what each Circuit can, and is prepared to, offer.

To the above, the Circuit Stewards wanted to add the following:

- 4) Looking for Opportunities and taking them**
- 5) Collaborating** e.g. Sharing ideas that work.

## What does C.M.C.U stand for?

### What does C.M.C.U stand for?

Churches' Mutual Credit Union provides ethical savings and loans for eligible members of the Anglican Churches of Britain, The Church of Scotland, The United Reformed Church and the Methodist Church. Since our launch in February 2015 we have processed over 900 applications for membership, taken £2.2 million in deposits and amassed a loan book of over £1.5 million.

Churches' Mutual is an essential resource for Methodist ministers, employees and trustees and their households. We offer a variety of saving accounts to suit different needs

- the Regular Savers' Account helps to build up a nest egg straight from your stipend, salary or bank
- the Premier Investment Account if you are looking to make a lump sum deposit.

And for organisations

- the Corporate Savings Account provides an ethical investment and easy access option for church funds.

**CHURCHES – Lasting Values – Building on our past, planning for your future**

**MUTUAL – Committed partners – Serving with you, working for you**

**CREDIT UNION – Financial Stewardship – Saving wisely, lending responsibly**

### What does C.M.C.U stand for?

Churches' Mutual offers a number of different loan products for wherever you are on your journey. Car Loans and Personal Loans from £250-£15,000, First Post Loans for probationary ministers about to be stationed, Restructuring Loans for those who need to take back control of their finances, Commutation Loans for ministers within three years of retirement.

**CONVENIENT - apply via our website, repay direct from stipend or salary or straight from your bank.**

**MANAGEABLE - borrow over a fixed term, you know when your repayments will begin, and even better, when they will end.**

**COMPETITIVE - Our rates are amongst the lowest for comparative loan products, or lower**

**UNAMBIGUOUS - You'll never get caught out - at Churches' Mutual we let you know the interest rate and amount repayable before you apply.**

### What does C.M.C.U stand for?

**CO-OPERATIVE** – Churches' Mutual aims to be of benefit to the whole church family— money invested by our members means the credit union can make affordable loans to the people who need us. When those members borrow, the cost of their loan helps to build up the savings of all our members.

**MEMBER-LED** – Churches' Mutual aims to be responsive to the needs of our members both in the savings and in the loan products we offer. To provide access through our online service you can access from home anywhere in the country plus a human voice at the end of the phone if needed.

**CONTROLLED** – Churches’ Mutual aims to be an exemplar of good practice in the Credit Union sector, demonstrating good governance and a viable alternative to main stream savings and lending organisations.

**UNDERSTANDING** – Churches’ Mutual aims to know its members well and treat them fairly. To understand the particular needs of people in ministry and the Christian employment sector, the way they think about money, credit and debt and the demands that are made on their resources. For this reason we assess everyone on their individual needs and are never a “computer says no” organisation.

## **THE CREDIT UNION DIFFERENCE**

Lending is more than a business—the loan must always make a significant improvement to the borrower’s circumstances and help them to budget and save.

If you have always managed money well and been comfortably off it is sometimes hard to understand how easy it is for things to go wrong. But some 20% of the population have no savings and of those that do very few have enough to maintain their standard of living through a major crisis.

For Rosie\* the tipping point came with the illness and death of her mother. The household income was already overstretched, the need to fund considerable travel expenses and ultimately the cost of the funeral had resulted in credit cards, HP and mail order debts of around £8000. The family were under considerable stress and desperate for a holiday but this seemed impossible.

Debt counselling was not the answer, Rosie had a good credit rating and did not want to lose this by asking to reduce payments or freeze the interest: however over 25% of her salary was going towards credit repayments. Ironically while keeping up the payments was causing severe hardship they were having little impact on the overall debt – in the case of the mail order account the payment of £120 reduced the balance by a mere £30 per month.

Rosie approached the credit union for help to clear some of the balance of her credit card with perhaps a smaller advance towards a holiday but after discussion with her it was clear that her situation called for more direct action. Churches’ Mutual offered Rosie a Restructuring Loan of £9000 over four years with repayments of £272 per month, recognising the family’s need for a holiday. This freed up £200 per month to finance the kind of household expenditure, clothing and travel, which had been previously facilitated through credit and even allowed her to start putting a small amount away for a ‘rainy day’.

Belinda Letby

## **Report on the Heritage Meeting held in Rosyth last month**

“Following the visit of the then Vice-President, Jill Barbour, to Arbroath on Saturday 27th February of this year, a further consultative meeting of persons interested in Methodist Heritage was held in the Rosyth Church on Saturday 8th October 2016. This was a lively group of people from both the west and east of Scotland, sharing with each other. The Chair, David Easton, led a discussion upon the importance of being able to tell the Methodist story, and to ensure that records, archives and memorabilia are conserved and interpreted for future generations. David Cowling made a presentation based upon the Montrose Archive which had been recently examined and catalogued . He drew out of it some of the stories which give at least a glimpse of the life of an East Coast Methodist Society over a period of more than 200 years. The conclusion of those gathered was that there should be a Heritage Group in Scotland. The next step will be a meeting of a smaller representative planning group in Edinburgh on Friday 2nd December in the Central Methodist Church. This group will also be joined by the new Methodist Heritage Officer, Owen Roberts, who will be in Scotland visiting the Methodist Churches in Dunbar, Arbroath and Paisley.”

David Cowling

## District Dates 2017

Month	Date	Event
<b>January</b>	9 - 11	District Chairs & Connexional Leadership Forum/Stationing Group 3 (London)
	28	District Candiadates Committee (CEMC)
	25 - 26	Methodist Council
<b>February</b>	1 - 3	Regional Probationer Retreat (Cumbria)
	4 - 5	District LP Conference (Coatbridge)
	6	Ecumenical Forum (Stirling)
	8	DAF Meeting 2.00pm - 4.00pm (Chair's Manse Stirling)
	17 - 19	MWiB Forum
	23	Ecumenical Stakeholders Meeting (London)
	27	EMU meeting, SEC offices Edinburgh, 10.30am to 2pm.
<b>March</b>	3	World Day of Prayer
	4	MWiB (Scotland) District Representative meeting 11.00am - 3.00pm (Armadale MC)
	6 - 8	District Chairs & Connexional Leader's Forum
	11	District Policy Committee (Stirling MC)
	16	District Probationers Committee (Dunblane)
	15	Relief & Extension Trustees (Dunblane)
<b>April</b>	1 - 3	Methodist Council
	21	Ministerial Synod (Stirling MC)
	22	Representative Synod (Grahamston United Church, Falkirk)
	21 - 23	President & Vice-President Visit to Scotland
<b>May</b>	2 - 4	Diaconal Convocation
<b>April</b>	22 - 23	Conference - Presbyteral Session (Birmingham)
	23 - 25	Solas Festival (Perth)
	25	Conference - Ordination Services (Birmingham)
	24 - 29	Conference - Representative Session (Birmingham)
<b>July</b>	4 - 7	MWiB "Area 3" Region Event hosted by Cumbria at Rydal Hall Theme: To be a Pilgrim

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this issue of "In Touch"  
 If you would like to submit an article to the Spring issue, please send to Fiona Inglis at  
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