

The **Methodist** Church in Scotland



In Touch

Issue 1 winter 2014

Edinburgh &
Forth

Strathclyde

Ayrshire &
Renfrewshire

Central

North of
Scotland

Angus Dundee
& Perthshire

Inverness

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the first edition of *In Touch*. This new newsletter is in response to a widespread complaint I have heard since becoming District chair: 'We don't know what's going on!'

We are not absolutely certain at the moment, but it is likely that three editions will be produced through the year - one each in Spring and Autumn to allow distribution via Synod and the other at Christmas/New Year. It is hoped that a copy of this will be given to each member of every congregation across Scotland as well as being pinned to notice boards etc.

You will see that this is a pretty basic sort of newsletter. The reason for this is that it will greatly reduce the cost in terms of time and printing. The important thing here is getting news out to people rather than producing a glossy brochure. Among the District leadership group there has been some discussion about whether or not this should be mostly distributed online or in a paper format. Copies of this will appear on our District Website, but I have decided that in the first instance, at least, printed copies should be given to everyone. This will, in a sense, act as the official launch of the newsletter and let everyone know that it is in production. It will also acknowledge that many of our members do not have access to the internet or would not normally turn to it as their first source of information. Ironically, although the internet allows ease of sending information, precisely because it is so easy, people sometimes get overwhelmed with stuff landing in their inbox. (I wonder, if you are a member of Synod, whether or not you read all the numerous bits of information that are sent to you from our District Office each week!)

In this first edition much of the material has been produced by me, or people I have asked to contribute. I hope that, in future, there will be items by folk from the Circuits and Churches. I'm not looking for reports on your Christmas Fair, for example, but any matters or events that you think would be of interest to the wider Methodist Church in Scotland would be welcome. Brevity would be appreciated!

Kindest Regards
David Easton

It had been intended that the first edition of this newsletter should be sent out in September 2014, but for various reasons it is being launched now (Christmas/New year 2014/15)

The District Website

In 1989 when Tim Berners-Lee gave the World Wide Web to the world so anybody could have free access to it, communication across the world changed for ever. Over the last few years we have been using a web page that has become less inviting, and not fit for the purpose of communicating to those within the Methodist Church in Scotland. It is not the window we would like it to be for those who wish to explore and find out more about the Methodist Church in Scotland. A small group of people over the last few months have been working on designing a new improved website, which will have the same web address as before:

www.methodistchurchinScotland.org.uk

This new website will be launched at the Synod in September, after which training will take place within each Circuit, so two people will be able to update information at a local level. We hope you will, if able, visit the new website, and give us your feedback. If in the meantime you would like to add something to its contents, or see ways in which you feel we can improve it, then please either Email me on philhaggis@gmail.com or phone me on 0141 639 8045.

Please remember this website is only as good as the information that we are given to put on, and only successful if people use it on a regular basis.

Phil Haggis, District Property Secretary, who has headed up the District Website Group.

One Circuit Proposal

Most Scottish Methodists will know that for the past few years there has been a discussion in Synod, Circuits and Churches about whether or not we should become one circuit. At our Spring Synod this year at Pollokshaws, the Chair of District proposed that we should not proceed with this at the present time. This was overwhelming approved by Synod. David said that his reasons for bringing this proposal to Synod were that he did not feel that there was

sufficient support for the idea in the circuits and churches and that there were at least two circuits where it was probable that the suggestion would be rejected making one circuit impossible anyway.

In proposing to put the matter to bed, he said that this did not mean that we should just accept the status quo. He pointed out that our biggest need is to make new disciples, as well as deepening our own discipleship. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will see some suggestions about ways in which we might help this happen.

Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network

Two years ago the Methodist Conference approved the *Fruitful Field* report which has radically affected several areas of our Church's life, including how our ministers are trained – both deacons and presbyters; training and support for Local Preachers, as well as more local needs in circuits and churches. One of the main outcomes of the changes has been the establishment of the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN). This operates across the 'Connexion' (the term that goes back to the time of John Wesley and is the official title of the Methodist Church in Britain) in a number of regions. These regions are made up of numbers of Districts; some have as many as seven. Scotland is in a region with Shetland but, because of reasons we don't need to go into here, Scotland District is, effectively, a region on its own.

These regions are staffed by DMLN Officers – often now referred to as 'Network Officers' or 'Regional Officers'. They are Connexional Officers and are paid for by, and accountable to, the Connexion. Their role as Connexional, rather than District, Officers is recognised, for example, in the fact that they are not members of Synod. In Scotland we have the equivalent of two full-time officer posts shared between Helen Wareing who is the Regional Co-ordinator and Gary Williams and Sally Robertson the other two regional officers.



Ecumenical and Church and Society Forums

The Connexional budget for the Scottish Region for the coming twelve months is £170,000, which is an indication of how committed the Connexion is to this new way of working.

The work and priorities of each Region are determined by a combination of Connexional priorities and regional priorities emerging from the districts and agreed at Regional Forums. The Forums are made up of the Regional Officers, the Districts Chairs and representatives from the Districts and Connexion. In June it was agreed at our District Policy Committee (DPC) that Scotland's priorities for 2014-15 should be to: continue the work of supporting and developing Small Groups across Scotland (some in areas where there is no Methodist Church); improving communications (the updated website and this newsletter are in response to that priority); to support and 'energise' lay leaders in the circuits and churches; to explore ways in which women's voices may be heard (this will be one of the items in the Spring Synod) and to encourage individuals and groups to step out in new and different ways. (This last is deliberately vague to allow people who want to take up this challenge to think 'outside the box.')

Until August 2014, the Connexion paid for Scotland to have a Connexional Liaison Officer (CLO), a post filled by Dr Bill Reid. Following the termination of that post the Connexion and the District have considered ways in which the work that Bill did could be furthered. In the District, that has resulted in reviving the Ecumenical Forum which has a membership drawn from those who represent us on more purely ecumenical bodies, such as ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland). The Secretary of this Forum is Rev. Dr. Helen Jenkins a minister in the Edinburgh & Forth Circuit. We have also established a Church and Society Forum composed of those who represent us on Social and Civic Ecumenical bodies, such as those concerned with Racial Justice and Education. The Secretary of this group is the Rev Lorna Murray a supernumerary minister in the North Scotland Mission Circuit and who represents us on the Scottish Churches Rural Group.

It is hoped that brief reports from these and other District Committees will appear in *In Touch* from time to time.



Conference 2014 article for District Newsletter

This year the District's representatives to Conference in the NEC Birmingham were David Easton (as our Chair), Rev Helen Jenkins, Deacons Brenda Letby and Sarah MacDowell, David Easson (Lay Synod Secretary), Jenny Easson, and Kate Curtis. Together with Jeremy Dare (Chair) and Sylvia White from Shetland we formed the "Scotland" bloc, our allocate seats indicated not only by the official name sign but the artistic draping of a Methodist Tartan Tie!

As is so often the case at Conference, some of the most memorable business came through Notices of Motion (business brought by members of the Conference). The Conference expressed its concern and encouraged prayer for situations in Syria, Nigeria, Pakistan and North and South Korea, encouraged action on issues of caste discrimination and wrote to the Board of Hilton hotels (which includes the hotel Conference was held in) to request that they pay a living wage to all their staff and use Fair Trade products. Conference also called on Members of Parliament to oppose the replacement of Trident, and became the first church to support the 'No More Page Three' campaign which is asking the Sun to voluntarily remove Page Three - there's a petition on www.change.org if you want to sign it.

Conference has commended various forms of material on current issues for the Methodist people to study and, as appropriate, act upon. The topics include the sensitive and complex issues around Israel- Palestine and questions of “boycott, divestment and sections, same-sex marriage and the CTBI report “Good Society”. The Scottish Referendum – process and outcomes - together with the people of Scotland and the rest of the UK were commended for prayerful consideration by all. For the official record of Conference, go to www.methodistconference.org.uk or the relevant Methodist Recorder issues. Do talk to those who went, too!

Conference is as much about people as business – meeting old and making new friends, surprised by unexpected reunions and encounters, gathering as part of the wider Methodist and church community and also sharing individual stories. There were also “big questions” and “wee nuggets” to ponder, then and now – a presentation Bible too big for the lectern (Martyn Atkins thought that somehow symbolic); the leaving uncovered of the Elements after an Ordination Communion by Alison Tomlin, a former President (‘God always has more’ - for those present, those who would have been present, and those not yet ready or wishing to be present’).

Our prayers are invited for Ken Howcroft, Gill Dascombe, Steven Wilde, and Jill Barber as they undertake and prepare for this year of ministry in “The Presidency”.



Other News

Our District Office has moved! As part of our need to work within a balanced budget – the District Policy Committee has set up a Budget Group to consider our very parlous financial state, largely brought about by changes in Connexional funding policy and increased demands – we have downsized our District Office. It is still at Old Churches House, but in a smaller space. We are grateful to Fiona our Administrator who has worked hard to achieve this and other savings in our budget. The Office address and phone number remain the same.

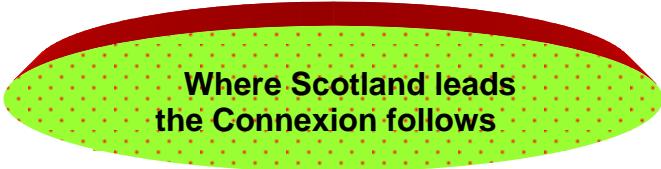
Welcome to the new Strathclyde Circuit. This circuit is the result of the merging of the former Lanarkshire and Glasgow Circuits. It was launched at a special service in Motherwell on September 3rd. We wish them well.

In the autumn we welcomed two new ministers to Scotland. Deacon Anita Shaw comes to the new Strathclyde Circuit from Lytham St. Annes, and will be based in Lanarkshire. Anita is pleased to come to Scotland, especially as she has grandchildren here. Hilda Warwick is beginning her ministry as a Probationer Minister in the Armadale and Wallacestone section of Central Circuit. Hilda was brought up in Glasgow but has spent many years in Cumbria where she first became a Methodist and candidated for our ministry.



New Synod Secretary

The District Policy Committee will be bringing the name of the Rev'd Dr. Helen Jenkins to the Spring Synod to be the new Synod Secretary of both the Representative and Presbyteral Sessions in the District. Helen is a Presbyter serving in the Edinburgh & forth Circuit.



Where Scotland leads the Connexion follows

In the New Year the Methodist Church will be launching a new magazine, *the connexion*, for distribution to everyone across Britain. Like us in Scotland, there is a recognition of a need to keep people in touch with what's going on. Also like us, it will be distributed in paper format – although it will also be online. So, look out for *the connexion*; it should be arriving at a church near you very soon.

An update on the Stationing of Ministers

When David Easton went to the first round of Stationing in November he was looking for four ministers – three Superintendents and a Presbyterian. The Connexion had already agreed that the Edinburgh and Forth Circuit could request a Probationer Presbyterian for the Livingston appointment. These appointments are made in January. We are pleased to be able to report that there were ministers wanting to be stationed in Scotland. Andrew Baker, who is currently in Slough, has been invited and accepted an invitation to Strathclyde; Mary Patterson, currently in Angus, Dundee & Perthshire, will move to Ayrshire & Renfrewshire and Nick Baker will go to Angus, Dundee & Perthshire. These are the three Superintendencies.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to find someone to fill the appointment on the Moray Coast in the North of Scotland Mission Circuit. This is the second year that this has happened. Currently the work there is being covered by Roger Brown, Ray Cummins – two retired ministers – and a team from across the Circuit. We are really grateful to them for all that they are doing but, clearly, this situation cannot continue indefinitely. This is not the only place in the Connexion where it has so far been impossible to find someone. It is estimated that we will be about forty ministers short this year. Stationing continues through further rounds into the New Year and then through the Stationing Action Group until Conference.

Inverness Circuit has found itself in the position of no longer being able to sustain a minister and so next year David Easton will be acting Superintendent. Please remember Nigel Rodgers, the current Superintendent, who has had to curtail his appointment in Inverness and his wife Kim.

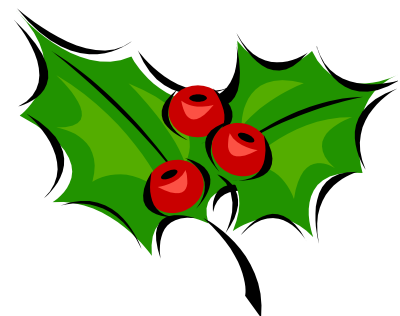
News from the Ecumenical Forum

The Ecumenical Forum came into being after Bill Reid's post came to an end, and is a space where anyone in the district with an ecumenical role/interest can gather to share news and experiences and for support.

We met in October and were updated on who represents the district on various ecumenical bodies, of which there are many! Perhaps one of the most important of those is EMU, the gathering of representatives of the Scottish Episcopal, United Reformed and Methodist Churches in Scotland as we are committed to working in partnership. EMU is due to be reviewed next year and we look forward to the opportunity to see how this partnership might develop further.

Some of our LEPs (local ecumenical partnerships) are also in the process of being reviewed (or have been recently) and we hope to be able to look at and learn from those reviews in future. We are always on the lookout for good ways of ecumenical working from which we can learn.

The forum next meets on Wednesday 21st January, 11am at Stirling Methodist Church, and anyone with an interest in all things ecumenical is welcome to join us. For more details contact the secretary, Rev Helen Jenkins, at revhelen@chjenkins.plus.com or 01506 464567.



Unpacking Fresh Expressions*

An Open Event for Methodists in Scotland led by John and Olive Fleming Drane

Glasgow, 21st February 2015 (venue to be confirmed)

If you would like to find out more about the phenomenon of Fresh Expressions then please come along on 21st February. John and Olive Fleming Drane will guide our thinking as we explore the rationale behind Fresh Expressions and discover many different examples of these new forms of church, some led by full-time workers and some led by volunteers with busy lives. Whether it's Messy Church for and with families on a housing estate or church for punk rockers, we will find out more about how God is prompting folk to get involved in mission which is complementary to more traditional forms of mission in the increasingly 'mixed economy' that is Church.

This exciting event will be followed later in the year by opportunities to engage in circuit-based conversations around how to support local growth of fresh expressions of church.

Professor John Drane is Chair of the **mission-shaped ministry** Board and a member of the Fresh Expressions Board. Olive Fleming Drane has written all the worship materials for the **mission-shaped ministry** course, and is a Fellow of St John's College, Durham and affiliate professor at Fuller Seminary. In 2011, John & Olive wrote a report for the Church of Scotland's General Assembly on fresh expressions of church, which was published as **Reformed, Reforming, Emerging and Experimenting**.

*A Fresh Expression of Church is a new gathering or network that engages mainly with people who have never been to church. There is no single model, but the emphasis is on starting something which is appropriate to its context rather than cloning something that

works elsewhere. Over 3000 of these new forms of church now exist in almost every denomination and tradition in the UK. Fresh Expressions of Church serve those outside church; listen to people and enter their culture; make discipleship a priority, and form church.

The event is free and all bookings go through Fiona Inglis at the District office, fiona@methodistchurch.plus.com or tel: 01786 820295

programme outline as follows:

- 10.30 Gather, coffee etc
- 11.00 Fresh Expressions of Church: what are they, and why do we need them?
- 13.00 Lunch
- 13.45 Group work
- 15.00 Short break (coffee etc?)
- 15.15 Plenary summing up
- 16.00 Depart

Saturday 20th June – Save the Date!

Are you employed by the Methodist Church? (By this we mean any lay person employed by a local church, circuit or the district - for example as a youth worker, an administrator or co-ordinator – either full time or part time.)

Then please save Saturday 20th June as a date to look forward to. Methodist Insurance are sponsoring local 'Connecting Disciples' gatherings around the connexion. In Scotland and Shetland this will be held as part of the Solas Festival. This festival based is held every summer at The Bield, Blackruthven, Perth. The day will offer opportunities to meet with other people who work for the Methodist Church as well as to enjoy the Festival. All expenses will be met including festival entrance, travel and accommodation. More information will follow in the early spring.

Sally Robertson
robertsons@methodistchurch.org.uk



District Dates 2015

January	5 - 6	Initial Stationing	
	12 -15	District Chairs & Connexional Forum/Stationing Group 3	(Northampton)
	20	Small Groups Meeting	(Edinburgh)
	21	Ecumenical Forum	(Edinburgh)
	22	EMU Meeting	(Glasgow)
	26 - 27	Methodist Council	
	31 - 1	District LP Conference	(Coatbridge)

February	4 – 6	Regional Probationer Retreat	(Cumbria)
	11	Church & Society Forum	
	11	Taking Care Group	(Dunblane)
	17	Superintendents Meeting	(Stirling)
	21	Unpacking Fresh Expressions*	(Strathclyde)
	26	DAF Meeting	(Dunblane)

March	3	Regional Learning & Development Forum	(Edinburgh)
	5	District Probationers Committee	(Dunblane)
	6	World Day of Prayer	
	11	Ecumenical Stakeholders Meeting	(London)
	14	District Policy Committee	(Dunblane)
	16 - 18	District Chairs & Connexional Leader's Forum	
	19	Regional Chairs Meeting	(Newcastle)
	9	Relief & Extension Trustees 2.15pm & General Committee Meeting 3.15pm	(Dunblane)
	26	DAF Meeting	(Dunblane)

April	14 – 15	Recoursing Mission Forum	(Northampton)
	18	Holiness & Risk Event	(TBC)
	18 - 20	Methodist Council	
	24	Ministerial Synod	(Edinburgh & Forth Venue TBC)
	25	Representative Synod	(Edinburgh & Forth Venue TBC)

May	5 - 7	Diaconal Convocation	
	13	Superintendents Meeting	(Stirling)

June	10	Regional Learning & Development Forum	(Glasgow)
	19 – 21	Solas Festival	(Perth)
	25 - 26	Conference - Presbyteral Session	(Southport)
	28	Conference - Ordination Services	(Southport)
	27 - 2 July	Conference - Representative Session	(Southport)

A Christmas Letter from the Chair of the Synod of the Methodist Church in Scotland

Dear Friends,

As I was wandering through the Thistle shopping centre in Stirling on a late afternoon in early November, I began to wonder what people of other faiths and none make of Christmas. If you had no knowledge of the biblical story of the birth of Christ, what would a stroll through the streets of Stirling, or any other town or city, tell you about why Britain celebrates this event every year? It would tell you plenty about *how* we celebrate it, but what about the *why*?

Stirling's early November *how* was evident in shop windows awash with fake snow and decorations of all sorts. What you might call 'motifs of Christmas' abounded – John Lewis' this year is a penguin. (Presumably a penguin was chosen for its association with snow and we all know that Jesus was born in a blizzard.) And, of course, no pre-Christmas shopping experience would be complete without piped music. As I was allowing renditions of songs such as 'I'm dreaming of a white Christmas' to roll over me, I was rather surprised to suddenly hear 'Once in royal David's city'. As the shops were already closing by that stage I wondered if the person responsible thought that at that time of day it couldn't do any harm.

And so, I tried to turn myself into a kind of religious tourist. I didn't have a camera or phone to capture the images to take back home to say to my curious family in a different religious country 'In Scotland they celebrate something called Christmas and this is what the festival looks like'.

Now, we know, or at least should, that this isn't what Christmas is really all about – although it's surprisingly easy to get sucked into all the glitz and glam; not many of us have the steely resolve of the late Tony Hancock who said in one of his shows that he liked Christmas to be like every other day of the year – 'dead miserable'. If we each took a camera, what image of Christmas would we capture? If we wanted to tell the person from that other religious country the real meaning of Christmas for us what image would we show?

You might argue that we wouldn't show anything because Christmas is all about God coming into the world and he is invisible. But surely that's the whole point, he isn't the invisible God: he is the God Incarnate; the God present; the God visible in Jesus – the image of God. And if we discover God in Jesus, then where may we discover Jesus? And where may the religious or spiritual tourist discover Jesus? If they get beyond the shopping arcade images and discover the stable, they may still feel at a loss. And here is our challenge and opportunity. If we are made in the image of God and if we are called, as Christians, to be more like Jesus – more Christ-like – then the religious tourists and spiritual pilgrims may discover him in us.

Here is a scary thought: This Christmas, we are called to be the image of Jesus. We are the ones through whom the Incarnate Christ chooses to make himself known.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year. If you are one of the many Methodists in Scotland who live a long way from one of our churches, or are no longer able to attend church, I send you especially warm greetings. You are not forgotten and are remembered in our prayers.

Every blessing,

Dave