

The **Methodist** Church in Scotland



In Touch

Issue 8 Spring 2017

Edinburgh &
Forth

Strathclyde

Ayrshire &
Renfrewshire

Central

North of
Scotland

Angus
Dundee &
Perthshire

Inverness

Dear Friends,

This rather long article serves my letter for this edition of *In Touch*.

In the last issue of *In Touch* an article headed 'Collaborating and Connecting' outlined some of the conversations that have been taking place across the District arising from the challenges facing us here in Scotland; challenges also faced by others across the Connexion. You will remember that these conversations took place in Synod, among the Circuit Stewards, the Ministers and the District Policy Committee (DPC). It was agreed to set aside a day in January for the DPC to meet to pray and draw up a development plan. This was led by Ruth and David Pickles when they helped us to reflect upon some of the issues facing us. This was followed by a joint meeting of the District Executive and Superintendents which sought to put flesh on the bones of our conversations with Ruth and David.

The discussion at this second meeting looked at matters under five headings:

- **Resources – financial and of personnel**
- **Stationing in 2018**
- **Lay Leadership**
- **Finance and Property**
- **Some Priorities and Opportunities**

Under **Resources** it was emphasised that 'personnel' included lay people as well as ministers (see below). It was accepted that fewer ministers will be available across Scotland. This will be for two reasons: circuits are increasingly unable to find the money to sustain previous levels of ministry; there is an acute shortage of Ministers across the Connexion – for ministers due to move in 2017, there were approximately 150 circuits looking for presbyters and only about 100 available.

This situation is not likely to improve soon. We also have to recognise that we have, generally, aging congregations. The faithfulness of many of our members over many years is inspirational but we are not good at getting new people to engage with what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. (On this point, it is encouraging that the Prayer Net which the Chair is taking around the Churches has attracted hundreds of pieces of wool representing people who are being prayed for by our members; prayed for in the hope that they will begin to engage with what it means to be a disciple.)

While we do have some larger congregations many others are quite small and spread across wide distances – even within the Circuits, let alone the District. Even if it was felt right to merge some of our smaller congregations, the distances involved would not make this easy. It was also acknowledged that, during even the most well-handled amalgamations and/or closures, members were lost which has a knock-on effect on our presence on the ground and in matters such as finance and assessments. As ever in Scottish Methodism, the distances and geography of this wonderful and beautiful country present very real challenges for us.

As far as financial resources are concerned, we were reminded that every circuit, apart from one, is using up reserves – some at quite alarming rates – to sustain their life, witness and ministry. At a Synod level, we are one of poorest Districts in the Connexion. Last year our total income was less than £48,000. Out of this we had to run our Office and pay our Administrator, as well as our District Safeguarding Officer. We also need to meet the travelling expenses, etc of our Chair, although David's stipend and expenses to travel to

Connexional meetings is paid for by the Connexion. All this doesn't leave us much for mission and other matters. It was agreed that our new Treasurer, Peter Mills, would help us review our financial issues.

This year we were fortunate in **Stationing**, partly because we only needed to fill one appointment for an ordained Presbyterian and also because we put forward a good profile for the District/Angus, Dundee & Perthshire Circuit appointment to be taken up by Nik Wooller later this summer. (Laurent Vernet will also begin a part-time ministry as a Probationer Presbyterian in Edinburgh.) It was noted that in 2018 five, and possibly six, ministers are moving or retiring. Since we met, Andrew Letby, one of the five/six has been asked by the Stationing Action Group to take on a 'must-fill' superintendency in Croydon this summer. This means that both he and Belinda will move now in 2017 and their appointments here covered for twelve months in other ways. Their present Circuit, Edinburgh and Forth is in conversations with Central Scotland about a possible merger. It may be that this merged circuit may not replace all the ministers who are moving, as may not Strathclyde. This will reduce the number of Deacons and Presbyters needed but will, obviously put a further strain on the Circuits and, especially, the Ministers, although it was pointed out that the ratio of members to minister is more favourable in this District than in many, if not most others in the Connexion. We wondered if we should apply for three or four ministers, recognising the national shortage. But if we did, the way stationing works, we might only get one or two, but if we asked for five (or six) we might get three! Please continue to pray for the Circuits and the Connexion as they wrestle with these pressing issues of financial and ministerial shortage.

In the Methodist Church we have always celebrated and affirmed the role of **Lay Leadership**. Perhaps this is most obviously demonstrated in the role of Local Preachers and, now, Worship Leaders. But lay people exercise leadership in all sorts of other ways too. It was recognised that people, empowered by the Spirit, are our greatest resource. At the same time we all know how hard it is sometimes to find people to take on a role/job in a local church or circuit.

We asked if Local Preachers could be used more effectively and their talents used in different ways. Should we explore the possibility of having a lay 'Pastor in Every Church' – an idea promoted several years ago by a former Secretary of Conference, Nigel Collinson. People in the churches and circuits need to be engaged with all of this and to be helped to be aware of the very real challenges facing us and which means that it simply isn't possible to carry on as we've always done – even if this were desirable.

As well as the **Financial** factors mentioned above, there are also issues with our **Property**. We have a lot of it for the membership we now have across Scotland – now less than 2,000 people. Is it fit for purpose? How can property best be used as part of our District priorities and development hopes? The District has to approve applications for Connexional grants. Allan Loudon has agreed to become our District Grants Officer – a role that has been held pro tem by the Chair for the past year or so. Allan is going to help us draw up a best-practice approach to approving grant applications.

Priorities and Opportunities.

Our District 'Mission Statement' is as follows:

The Methodist Church in Scotland cherishes its place within both the British Methodist Connexion and the nation of Scotland.

Within these two overlapping contexts, it seeks to live out its life of worship, learning, care, service and evangelism in ways that are appropriate for its membership but also in its engagement with those beyond the formal boundaries of church and circuit. In particular, it is committed to exploring ways and means by which those disconnected or uninspired by the institutional Church may explore what it means to be disciples of Jesus.

Across the District and Circuits some of these aspirations are already being addressed. For example, the appointment of Nik Wooller is in direct response to the last part of the Mission Statement. The meeting agreed that a group of people would work with Nik to help develop internet/on-line ways of engaging with people outwith the formal 'boundaries' of Church. Although many of our members would not naturally do this, the fact is that huge numbers of people, especially, but not exclusively, of a younger generation lead their lives 'on lone' and through social networking. More locally, some churches and circuits are doing some very good work with and among the wider local community. It was felt that we should find ways in which these 'good news stories' can be more widely shared. – what works in one place may not work in another, but it might! Can we learn from one another?

The Learning Network, under Gary Williams leadership was asked to help circuits and churches to focus on what 'A Pastor in Every Church' might mean for them.

We are faced with choices:

We can decide that Methodism will inevitably continue to decline and decide how best we can manage that.

OR

We can focus our efforts on growth and try to get people to engage with what it means to be disciples of Jesus. Perhaps this will mean developing centres of strength across Scotland with fewer, but larger, congregations. Perhaps it will mean retaining churches, but with stronger churches acting as hubs to be centres for other congregations with 'Pastors in Every Church'. All the evidence of research shows that congregations, whether small or large flourish best when they have focused leadership and a clear sense of direction. Are there ways we can do that in Scotland with a combination of local lay leadership alongside more traditional forms of ministry?

Thank you for your interest and commitment to all of this and for your continued prayers.

Every blessing,

David



An Inter-faith Statement

Following the terrorist attack on Westminster bridge and the UK Parliament, faith leaders in Scotland issued the following statement

'As representatives and leaders of our various faith communities, we are united in our condemnation of Wednesday's terrorist attack in London.

Love of God and love of neighbour are the guiding principles of our faith traditions and we deplore all acts of violence.

Trusting in God's healing presence and power, our thoughts and prayers are with everyone who has been bereaved, injured or left traumatised by this terrible incident.

We urge everyone of whatever faith tradition or none to live peaceably with their neighbours and to actively uphold the values of compassion, love and respect.'



Send For The Padre!

One of the great things about being a Methodist Minister (Presbyter or Deacon) is the work is so varied. As well as Circuit duties, many ministers will offer time to various chaplaincies such as higher education, hospitals and shopping centres (to name but a few). Chaplaincy offers wonderful opportunities to minister beyond the walls of the church to people who have had little or no contact with Christianity. With my ex-forces background and affinity to The Army, it has been a particular privilege to be a part-time chaplain over the years and now to serve in 51 Brigade Scotland.

As it stands I act as a part-time Chaplain (OCM) at The Army Personnel Centre in Glasgow for 3 hours a week (and emergency call outs) and A Chaplain to The Black Watch Battalion ACF giving two weeks for annual camps and the occasional Saturday throughout the year.

My duties in both of these chaplaincy roles included being part of the welfare team, being an independent listener as well as providing spiritual and moral guidance and teaching. The work is varied and never dull! One minute you could be dealing with a safe guarding issue the next scrambling over an obstacle course or sat in a canoe. At The Army Personnel Centre I can be praying with a two star General at A Carol Service or in the heat of summer sat with a home sick 14year old Cadet trying to cheer them up!

The military has a long standing tradition of 'The Padre' and most folks welcome the presence of a Christian minister in uniform among their ranks to laugh with, cry with and share their experiences with and more often than you might expect to pray with!



I'm often asked, 'where do you find the time Rev?' Good question! Most ministers find themselves really stretched keeping on top of Circuit activities, but using holidays, quarter days and a little Circuit time a valuable contribution can be made. One way of looking at Chaplaincy is being the Churches 'gift' of time to the world. Some of you may have met Padre Stuart Young who is a Methodist Minister serving as a full-time Chaplain to The Rifles Battalion in Edinburgh or Royal Naval Chaplain Richard Rowe who serves in Faslane. Methodism, and Scottish Methodism in particular, can be rightly proud of supporting military chaplaincy. I am minded of the text: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations!' Matt 28:1 Army Chaplaincy is all about going!

Rev Terry Wright

Book Notes

I was recently asked by Gareth Powell, the Secretary of Conference, to be part of a group looking at Christian Apologetics – what Alister McGrath (see below) calls “the field of Christian thought that focuses on the justification of the core themes of Christian faith and its effective communication to the non-Christian world”.

Mere Apologetics by Alister McGrath, published by SPCK, 2016, £9.99 offers a very accessible introduction to the subject as well as suggesting lots of possible avenues for churches and individual Christians to explore.

The book is not a long list of doctrines that we are supposed to 'get across' to an unconvinced world, but rather an exploration of the possibilities of sharing the centralities of faith in a meaningful way. Throughout he sees apologetics as a partner in the call to evangelism and commitment. The book is the fruit of many years of engaging with audiences in this country and abroad, chiefly through the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics. Some of you will have come across McGrath through his book *The Dawkins Delusion*. Written in response to work by the secularist Richard Dawkins.

In *Mere Apologetics* he defines looks at the main themes of apologetics and then in following chapters moves on to place it in the context of post-modernity and its theological basis. He looks at the possibilities and issues arising from the 'audience' for apologetics and the puts forward what he regards to be the 'reasonableness of the Christian faith'.

He then looks at eight 'pointers' or 'approaches to apologetic engagement':

creation; fine-tuning; order; morality; desire; beauty; relationality; eternity. A following chapter highlights 'gateways for apologetics: opening the door to faith'; the next takes two case studies of frequently asked questions: 'Why does God allow suffering?' and 'isn't belief in God just a crutch?'.

I found this book really quite exciting, challenging and full of possibility.

It is written in a very accessible way and if you are looking for ways in which you can give an account of your faith to others – especially to those who don't share it – this would be an excellent place to start.

Holy Habits, by Andrew Roberts (a member of the Methodist Connexional Team), Malcolm Down Publishing, 2016.

As its title suggests, this book looks at ways in which Christians and churches can develop a pattern of a life of holy discipleship. The book is in two parts with the first looking at the 'Nature of Discipleship' and the second 'Nurturing Discipleship'. The second part looks at practical ways in which we can encourage:

Fellowship; 'breaking bread'; prayer; sharing resources and giving; service; eating together; gladness and generosity; worship in church and elsewhere; making more disciples.

In the autumn of this year the Methodist and United Reformed Church will be launching a joint programme based on this book to encourage their churches to take these two aspects of discipleship – its nature and nurture – seriously.

David Easton

(PS: I must stop calling the second book 'Holy Hobbits')



For us in Scotland this year's Conference will be a very special time. Jill Baker from the Strathclyde Circuit will be inducted as the Vice President of the Methodist Conference for the coming year and, along with the Rev. Lorraine Mellor, the President, will serve as the joint Presidency. It will be a year of much travel and new opportunities and experiences. Already she has been asked to represent our Church at a number of events, including at the Norwegian Methodist Conference. We wish Jill well as she has the privilege of serving our Church in this way. She goes with our prayers and those of Methodists across Britain and beyond.

As well as Jill's induction, which will take place on the Saturday of Conference (24th), two of our Probationer Presbyters, Hilda Warwick and Stephanie Njeru will be ordained. The process of being received into Full Connexion as a Methodist Minister takes place in two parts. During the

Conference Service on the Sunday morning, the ordinands are welcomed into 'Full Connexion' which is our Methodist way of saying that we recognise them as worthy to be fully accepted and ordained as Ministers within our Church. Later that day, in services in the region of Conference, they will be ordained. Stephanie and Hilda's will be ordained together in Coventry Cathedral and Scottish Representatives at Conference, as well as others will be there to support them. The Conference service on the Sunday morning is 'live-streamed' and sometimes congregations unable to attend in person arrange for that service to be shown locally as their act of worship.

Because we ordain all our ministers centrally at Conference, local 'Testimony Services' are held in the ordinand's circuit or district. The date of Hilda and Stephanie's services is the evening of Sunday June 4th. It would be great to see folk from across the District come along to support them at one or both of these services.



As you know, Nik Wooller is beginning her new appointment as a half-time minister working with the District to try to engage with those who have some sort of faith but don't find it easy to relate to the traditional church, as well as with those many Methodists scattered across Scotland who still feel themselves part of our Methodist family.

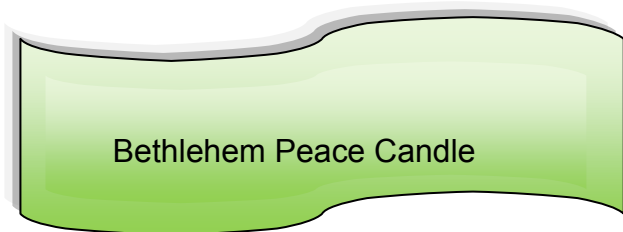
In setting up this new appointment – the first of its kind in the Connexion – we have undertaken as a District to support Nik in her work. As this is a pioneering sort of work there will be a lot of 'learning on the job' but some of the needs are already obvious:

One of the ways in which we will need to contact and keep in touch with people will be through the internet and social media. We have set up a group to work with Nik to see how social networking can best be used. This group could also have spinoffs for the circuits as they look at new ways of being and connecting as Church. This group is being headed up by Mark Jason. If you would like to be part of such a group please contact him or David Easton.

It is hoped that we might work towards setting up a network of small groups across Scotland –

some of 'Churchless Christians' and others of 'Missing' Methodists; some, perhaps of both – that would meet from time to time. It would be good if we could have people, perhaps Local Preachers, retired Ministers and others who would like to be involved in supporting such groups.

Please pray for Nik and the team that will emerge around her as she begins this new work in encouraging people to engage with Christian discipleship.



Stirling Methodist Church received a 'Peace Candle' at their service on the 18th of December. The origin of this 'Peace Candle' began 30 years ago as the 'Peace Light from Bethlehem Campaign'. It is organised by the Austrian State Broadcasting Company as a part of a mission to children in need in Austria and abroad. Each year, a child from Upper Austria, fetches a light from the grotto in Bethlehem. These Scouts and Guides take the light out across the world.

The Peace Child 2016 was Elanie Watterer from Kalm. Twelve year old Melanie is a student at the Obersaxon New Music School. She was chosen as a model charity worker who is involved in a number of projects in Austria.

The light was collected on Sunday 20th November before being flown to Vienna on the 23rd. The Vienna Service of Dedication was held in the Syriac Orthodox Church on the 10th of December and began to spread out across the world.

On the 11th of December the 'Peace Candle' was collected by the UK contingent at a service in the Sacre Coeur, in Paris and arrived in Dover that evening carried by the Deep Sea Scout Fellowship. The following evening the 'Peace Candle' reception service was held in Dover. At the service the candle was collected by a Sea Scout, who is a member of the Royal Navy, and brought to Glasgow, where a service took place on the Thursday. The candle then travelled to St. Patrick's RC Church, Kilsyth. There it was collected by the Hambly family on Saturday, who took it to their house where it burnt overnight. On the Sunday morning they brought it to Stirling

Methodist Church and after a brief prayer, "We gladly receive this light as a sign of our willingness to be channels of peace, by our words and actions." was lit. The message of the candle is '**Boldly creating peace**'. The candle was taken, on the following day, to St. Modan's school, for their school mass.

At the Stirling Church this 'Peace Candle', from Bethlehem, was then used to light the churches, which has burnt in the church at every service since August 1989.

The local church's peace candle began as a simple gift by an elderly Russian woman to some American tourist in one of Moscow's great cathedrals. She asked the tourists to take it to their church, light it, and pray for peace. It arrived in Stirling, after crossing the Atlantic for a second time, as a gift from Leith Methodist Church.



In 2014 the Stirling Church sent a candle to the 'Tent of Nations', run by a small Christian family working for peace and reconciliation on their small farm just outside Bethlehem. Ruth Cape, who carried the candle for us in her panniers on a six month cycle journey to and from Bethlehem also, by coincidence, provided photographs of Bethlehem and its surroundings to help illustrate the Christmas Nativity on the same day as we received the candle from Bethlehem. A circle seemed to be complete and reminded us yet again of our great international Family of Faith striving for the same end, the establishment of God's Kingdom of Peace and Justice upon Earth.

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To Russia with love

At the end of January I had the great thrill of spending two weeks in Russia, visiting the Methodist community there. It was an action-packed and fascinating fortnight and has given me lots to think about, many stories and hundreds of photos.



Children's club on the outskirts of Moscow
(Making snowmen!)

I took greetings from the Methodist folk of Britain, of course, and particularly of Scotland and was struck, as someone who is still learning about life north of the border, that there seemed to be a number of similarities between Russia and Scotland, which I share here!

- It is a big country (I think vast would be a better word in Russia's case) which is relatively thinly populated and has a lot of trees and a lot of snow.
- People eat a lot of porridge! (I took a spurtle to use as a visual aid, which caused a lot of interest).
- Sadly, there is a huge problem with alcoholism, particularly among men, with vodka (rather than whisky) being drunk very freely. (The hotel rooms I stayed in all had shot glasses, alongside the kettle and mugs).
- The country's economy is very dependent on the oil price.
- Culture, music, art are all prolific and highly regarded.

- Turning to the church, the Methodist Church in Russia is a very small denomination, not widely known about and sometimes regarded as a sect or a cult, which restricts its mission to some extent.
- Russia has a very strong, dominant, national church (the Russian Orthodox Church) which is, perhaps a little perplexed about the presence of other denominations in the land.



Pskov Methodist Church near the
Estonian border

So, just a few thoughts – I may be wrong about some of them! If you want to know more about my visit, we hope to host a "Russia evening" in the Strathclyde circuit before too long – a notice will be circulated. The full report of my visit is on the Methodist Church website at:

http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/2548123/wcr_i_sitreport_Russia.pdf



The Methodist church "Holiness and Justice"
wristbands went down well with the young people

Everywhere I went I found that people were very interested in the fact that I live in Scotland, and the Methodist Bishop of the Eurasia Area, Eduard Khegay, was delighted with the Methodist Tartan scarf I took as a gift. Boxes of Scottish shortbread also went down extremely well in several congregations and other groups I attended and the participants of the Youth Forum were very taken with Scottish Tablet!

Jill Baker

District Dates 2017

Month	Date	Event
April	1 - 3	Methodist Council
	21	Ministerial Synod (Stirling MC)
	22	Representative Synod (Grahamston United Church, Falkirk)
	21 - 23	President & Vice-President Visit to Scotland
May	2 - 4	Diaconal Convocation
	20 - 21	Netherton's 40 th Anniversary Weekend
	20 - 27	Church of Scotland General Assembly (Methodist Rep: Doug Swanney)
June	4	Ordinands' Testimony Service for Hilda Warwick & Stephanie Njeru
	7	District Executive Meeting (Conference Call)
	8 - 10	Scottish Episcopal Church (Methodist Rep: David Easton)
	14	ACTS Members Meeting
	22 - 23	Conference - Presbyteral Session (Birmingham)
	23 - 25	Solas Festival (Perth)
	25	Conference - Ordination Services (Birmingham)
	24 - 29	Conference - Representative Session (Birmingham)
July	4 - 7	MWiB "Area 3" Region Event hosted by Cumbria at Rydal Hall Theme: To be a Pilgrim
	17 - 28	District Office Closed
August	23	District Executive Meeting
	27	Rev Nik Wooller's Welcome Service 3pm (Perth)
	29	Service to Inaugurate the new Forth Valley Circuit and to Welcome the Rev Laurent Vernet
	30	District Safeguarding Group 10.30am
September	9	Synod (North of Scotland Mission Circuit)

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this issue of "In Touch"
If you would like to submit an article to the Summer/Autumn issue, please send to Fiona Inglis at
fiona@methodistchurch.plus.com by Friday 7th August 2017

Please use Word format when emailing

Please continue to check our website for updates www.methodistchurchinScotland.net/

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