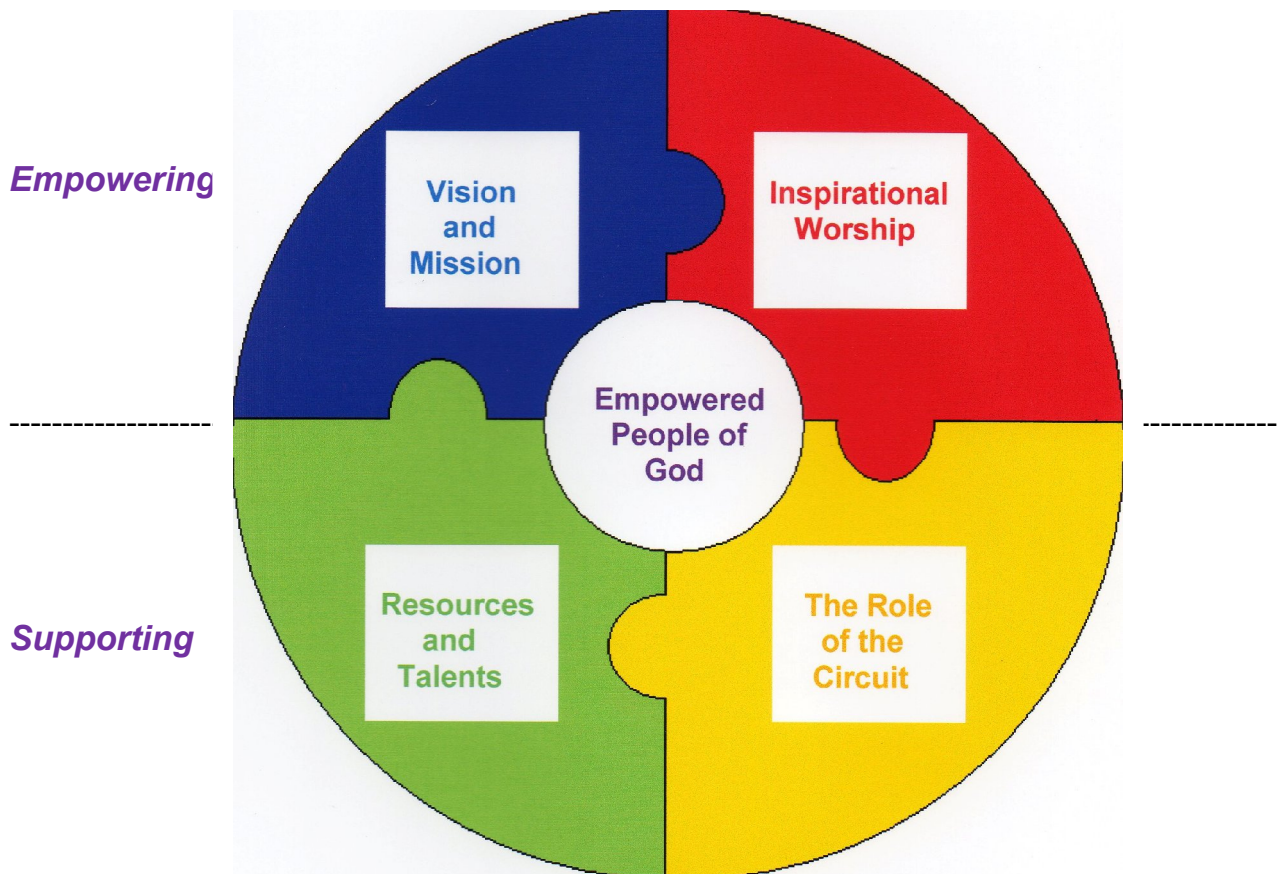


**Cardiff Circuit Review Group Proposals for open discussion on**  
**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at Cyncoed Methodist Church - 7.30pm**

**“Building an Empowered People of God”**



**Preface**

This paper sets out the proposals of the Circuit Review Group following a process which has involved, so far:

- numerous meetings of the Vision Group since Autumn 2009;
- an information document and questionnaire which was circulated throughout the Circuit in Spring 2010;
- written responses based on local discussions from almost every congregation in the Circuit as well as many individuals and small groups;
- a series of Circuit Roadshows in June attended by over 140 people at which the emerging ideas were discussed; and
- meetings with the Circuit staff and Stewards.

The task of the Review Group is now almost at an end and it will be for your representatives at the Circuit Meeting on **Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2010** to decide how best to take the process forward.

It has been a chief consideration of the Review Group from the very beginning that we should try to avoid the fate of the last Circuit Review in 2001 which, despite a great deal of work and worthwhile proposals, did not result in very much significant change. We have, therefore, tried to offer a number of suggestions which, we believe, have the prospect of gaining support and being put into action. In some cases we have discarded ideas which we felt worthwhile because it seemed clear at the Roadshows that they would face too much resistance. What remains are ideas which we hope and believe will encourage and stimulate the spiritual growth of individuals, congregations and the Circuit as a whole.

The Roadshows, in particular, gave the clear message that this review process should not simply result in a “rearranging of the deckchairs on the Titanic” but that there should be serious consideration of doing some things differently, a willingness to be led to new experiences and challenges and a need for more opportunities to deepen personal faith.

Our Proposals are listed under the 4 sections identified in the Review Process. However, as shown in the diagram, they interlock and overlap to form a whole – with the sole purpose of **“Building an Empowered People of God”**.

We are clear, though, that none of what we are proposing will be easy to achieve and that there will be some people who will – in good conscience - dislike some of the changes that are proposed. This is inevitable - and perhaps healthy - but few would disagree that some change is needed to refresh and renew the Methodist Church across the Cardiff Circuit. Certainly, there are some serious challenges facing us - not least a troubling financial situation which cannot be ignored.

All of the proposals in this discussion document are based on a conviction that the Methodist Church across the Cardiff Circuit must strive for growth and new life rather than just managing decline. Immediate problems cannot be ignored - nor should they be - but if we are unable, together, to find and pursue a positive vision for the future, then short-term solutions to financial or other problems will inevitably also prove to be short-lived and the same problems will recur sooner rather than later. Therefore, no apology is made that most of what follows looks beyond the immediate need to “balance the books”.

Strong leadership will, therefore, be needed if there is to be progress. This must be founded both on prayer and on the established and proper governance arrangements of Methodism.

**In order to deliver the proposals outlined in this paper the Circuit meeting is requested to agree the following two matters:**

1. The Circuit Staff and Stewards be empowered to establish a **Leadership Team** to take charge of the implementation process and to assist them in overseeing the developments.
2. The Leadership Team be empowered to appoint a number of **sub-groups** for the delivery of the various aspects of the plan.

#### Composition of the Groups

The composition of all groups should contain **both** Ministerial and Lay members who have the necessary expertise and enthusiasm deemed necessary for the delivery of the plan.

**NB.**

In order to avoid confusion by use of the term 'Church', throughout this document we have tried to differentiate between the **Worshipping Congregation**, the **Premises** and the **Outreach Activities** which take place.

### **Section 1. Vision, Mission and Readiness for Change**

It is clear that vibrant and purposeful local congregations are essential if the Methodist Church as a whole is to grow and flourish. There are more than 20 Worshipping Congregations in the Cardiff Methodist Circuit but not all are equally clear about their aims and mission. Some, however, do have a strong sense of how they serve and witness to their local communities and these may provide a constructive model for us all.

There is a wide consensus that there are too many Worshipping Congregations and that we cannot continue to support them all as at present. Indeed, many are struggling to meet their financial commitments as it is. But it is also equally clear that any proposals to close one or more sets of Premises would meet with strong resistance and would probably not be accepted. As a result of falling numbers and rising maintenance costs, it is likely that some Premises will need to close in the next few years - but this need not be inevitable if the right balance of activity can be developed to give them a sustainable future.

Much of what we do as individuals and as Worshipping Congregations needs to be affirmed and applauded but we must be realistic about sustainable practice and our use of finite resources. The Review Group sees no reason why any particular set of Premises should be closed down but if a set of Premises is to have a sustainable future then each Worshipping Congregation must be clear about its purpose and about how it plans to grow and develop in the years ahead. Increased outreach and impact on the local community must be combined with strong support within the fellowship to build up faith and understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is, therefore, only one proposal under this heading, but it is one which would require each Worshipping Congregation to do considerable further work to test its own readiness to be part of a wider process of change. It should be clearly understood that the thinking behind this proposal is that Worshipping Congregations that are unable to provide what is requested are unlikely to be viable in the longer term.

#### **Proposal**

***Each Church Council is requested to prepare and submit to the Leadership Team a report which clearly outlines the following:***

- a) *The Worshipping Congregation's Vision and Mission Statement.*
- b) *The nature and purpose of all activities currently undertaken on the Premises and explain how these fit in with the vision and mission of the Worshipping Congregation.*
- c) *Identification of the particular ways in which the Worshipping Congregation feels it is serving its local community (living out its faith in Christ authentically through a*

*ministry of service) and with whom it partners, or plans to partner, in order to undertake this work in the future.*

- d) The regular events that may encourage those in the community and on the fringes of church activity to be drawn closer to Christ and thus deepen both their personal spirituality and relationship with the Worshipping Community.*
- e) The nurture activities that are planned for the next 12 months. (In order to build up the spiritual strength of the Worshipping Congregation there is an expectation / strong encouragement that all members will be involved in some kind of nurturing group – a modern version of Wesley’s Class system. This might be in the form of house, cell, Alpha groups, etc.)*
- f) The difference the Worshipping Congregation hopes to have made to the spiritual health of its membership and the local community by the end of the next 12 months and in, say, three years time, including clear indications of how this difference could be shown.*

## **Section 2. Inspirational Worship**

‘Worship’ is a vital aspect to the life of a Christian. So, too, our public acts of worship are a vital aspect of our church life and a significant way in which people can encounter the Methodist Church. Although it is difficult – probably impossible - to determine what constitutes a “good” service - and personal preferences vary widely - there is a very clear consensus that too many of the acts of worship experienced in our Methodist Churches at present are not of a sufficiently high standard and often work against our intention to attract and welcome newcomers.

It is the responsibility of the whole People of God to ensure that our worship is the best that it can be – we should all play a part in making every service we attend rich and deep. Ministers, Local Preachers and Worship Leaders do, however, have an especially important role. It is essential that everyone appointed to lead worship remains open to constructive criticism and be prepared to change where necessary, for as long as they continue to remain in such a position. The review Group recognises that this is a highly sensitive and complex area but one which cannot be avoided if the Methodist Church in Cardiff is to grow.

Several of the proposals in this section are intended to encourage continuous improvement in the quality of worship leadership. There are also proposals here designed to reduce the number of Sunday acts of worship which are organised and led by Ministers and Local Preachers. The Vision Group acknowledges the great commitment and faithful service given over the years by Ministers, Local Preachers and Worship Leaders. However, the number of services currently provided on Sundays at present is simply too great for the number of preachers available and this fact tends to lead to less time being available for preparation and fewer opportunities for collaboration between leaders of worship. Reducing the number of services on a Sunday represents a substantial saving of resources and leaves open the possibilities for holding services at other occasions at other times and on other days of the week. It recognises that Sunday is now a busy family and shopping day and that people’s flexible work commitments require us to be more aware by providing a range of more convenient timings for public worship. It also gives greater

opportunities and flexibility for 'Local Arrangements' which do not necessarily require commitments from Leaders of Worship and for increased Circuit – wide opportunities for worship.

### **Proposals**

- a) **All** Leaders of Worship will be requested to meet regularly with the Superintendent Minister in order to share good practice and consider joint planning in leading worship across the circuit. Ongoing training and development opportunities will be offered – and this training is to be considered a high priority by all those involved in leading worship.
- b) The status of the Local Preachers Meeting will need to be enhanced to take account of the need for this greater involvement and flexibility in leading worship.
- c) All Leaders of Worship should expect to be formally monitored and to be provided with constructive and supportive feedback, as stated in CPD.
- d) From December 2010, only **one** regular Sunday Service will be planned for each Worshipping Congregation each week. The timing for each of these Sunday service will be by negotiation with the Superintendent Minister to allow increased flexibility.
- e) From December 2010, only **three** regular Sunday Evening Services will be planned for the Circuit each week. These services will be held at locations which have reasonable car parking facilities nearby.
- f) Each Worshipping Congregation will remain free to arrange public worship through Local Arrangements to suit its own particular needs and circumstances - subject, of course, to the approval of its minister or the Superintendent..
- g) Worshipping Congregations are requested to work closely with the Ministers and the Leaders of Worship **to actively seek to hold joint services** with the other Methodist Churches across the Circuit **and** with other denominations.
- h) The Superintendent Minister will plan a number of Circuit Sunday Services throughout the year with the specific intention of bringing the whole Church family together. These could include morning, afternoon and evening opportunities in a range of suitable venues and take a variety of forms.
- i) A creative, imaginative programme for the development of Local preachers and Worship Leaders be established.

### **Section 3. Resources and Talents**

The Methodist Church across the Cardiff Circuit is truly rich in resources – people, money, buildings, intellect, talents, etc. – but it often does not seem to be so because we are trying to do so much with what we have and with our even greater expectations of what we want to happen. Spreading resources too thinly does not support growth and tends to leave people feeling tired and despondent.

There is also consensus that too much of our effort is spent on activities which bring little satisfaction to anyone - such as maintaining dilapidated buildings or attending repetitive meetings - and too little on outreach to those with whom we have little or no contact, or activity which is exciting and inspirational or which truly serves people in need. These are old complaints, of course, but they remain true nonetheless.

Finding ways to address these problems and to realise the full value and potential of the resources we have is seriously hampered by the immediate financial situation - we are spending considerably more than our income and cannot continue to do so for very long at all. There are only very limited options to address this fact. Indeed, essentially there are two: increased income or reduced expenditure (or some combination of the two).

Increasing income in the short term can probably only be achieved by the sale of buildings. There is little support for this option, especially if it were to involve the sale of Church Premises. Reducing expenditure almost inevitably means reducing the number of staff in the Circuit. Again, there is very little enthusiasm for this, but it may well be forced on us anyway by the fact that there are reducing numbers of Ministers available for stationing in the Connexion.

In practice, a short term solution will be found and the first proposal in this section is less a recommendation than a recognition that there is likely to be little choice about this. It is offered only reluctantly and viable alternatives would be welcome. It is essential that this does not become the sole focus of our thinking. **If the Circuit cannot look beyond the immediate financial situation and work towards growth in the longer term, then it is inevitable that the problems will recur and get worse in future.**

We really do appreciate the work of our Ministers and Deacons. We want them to have opportunities to flourish and to lead. If it is felt necessary to reduce the size of the Ministerial team then it is also vital that those that remain are not expected to increase their already heavy workload or spread themselves even more thinly than at present. Instead, our proposals below seek ways to concentrate resources and encourage co-operation between our Ministers, Deacons and the Worshipping Congregations so that the whole Cardiff Circuit can benefit from their particular skills and vocations and develop a greater sense of genuine teamwork.

Our Premises are a substantial and valuable resource as well as often being greatly loved by those who worship in them. It is well understood that there is great reluctance to close or sell any of them, and accordingly this paper makes no such proposals even though a strong case might be made for doing so. But, if all these buildings are to be retained, it is crucial that the greatest possible benefit is obtained from them. This will include, in various combinations: financial benefit to the Worshipping Congregation; community benefit which may or may not serve Christian purposes; and the Mission aims and Outreach Activities of the Worshipping Congregation. **All of these have a place in our thinking, but ultimately it is the last which must take priority.**

We must also remember that we have inherited our current building stock from previous generations. Some of our Premises might actually be sited in the wrong place for today's needs or within just a short distance from another set of Premises. Should we be looking to sell some property and build new in other, more appropriate parts of the Circuit?

### **Proposals**

- a) *To address the current financial position the Leadership Team should reduce the Ministerial team by one from September 2011 and consider the sale of a Manse in order to assist with reducing the Circuit overheads. This position should be*

- reviewed during 2011/ 2012. Consideration of the impact and implications of such a decision and its ongoing management will need to be undertaken urgently.*
- b) The Circuit Ministers are requested to enter into a dialogue with the Superintendent Minister during the Autumn 2010 regarding an area of Circuit-wide Mission for which they feel a calling or would be prepared to lead the Circuit on for approximately 20% (one day) of their working week. After 2011, the Circuit Profile for new Ministers would clearly indicate an area of focus which might be required.*
  - c) The current arrangement of dividing the Circuit into 4 Sections be discontinued. Instead, Worshipping Congregations are requested to explore with the Ministers during the autumn and winter period the establishing of 'families' of churches across the Circuit. These might be, for example, geographical families in close proximity, larger churches joining with smaller churches, a group of churches which have a particular interest in a joint mission activity, etc. There will be no one pattern for this grouping.*
  - d) Circuit Ministers are requested to enter into a dialogue with the Superintendent Minister with respect to working with each other in a more collegiate way from September 2011. It is envisaged that the Ministers should team up into groups of at least 3 members. We suggest we could move to 3 groupings of Ministers. They will be encouraged to explore joint leading of Worship, nurture groups, etc. and actively seek new ways of 'Doing Church' with their associated families of churches. The UK Methodist Church is committed to a 'Fresh Expressions' approach as one possible way forward.*
  - e) The Local Preachers and Worship Leaders are requested to enter into a dialogue with the Superintendent Minister with regard to them joining a particular team of Ministers in order to complement these teams and to facilitate, co-ordinate and lead worship together.*
  - f) Over time, as trust and relationships develop, Church Councils should seek to work closer together with the intention that, ultimately - say by 2013 - they combine into one Church Council per 'family' and thus release talent and skills to be usefully used in other ways. Similarly, other church meetings should also seek to work and, if appropriate, collaborate together.*
  - g) Worshipping Congregations will need to look seriously at new ways of reducing the 'routine' workload of the Ministers in order to release them to undertake the additional outreach or Circuit wide role required of them.*
  - h) Maintenance of Church Premises should not result in a major drain on the Worshipping Congregation's endeavour to focus on outreach and mission both across Circuit and in the local community. The activities held within the Church Premises should provide the necessary finances required for maintenance and running costs for the Premises. Serious attention needs to be paid to the future maintenance programme of the Premises to be assured of their future viability.*

#### **Section 4. The Role of the Circuit**

One of the clearest messages from the consultation which has taken place so far is that very few people in any of our Worshipping Congregations have any real understanding of, or sense of identity with, the Cardiff Circuit as such. This is no surprise, but the gulf which

exists between the structures which have responsibility for oversight of our affairs (i.e. The Circuit and The Connexion) and almost everyone it serves, is a serious weakness.

After careful consideration, the main proposal in this section is that a fundamental change is needed in the way we think and speak about the Circuit, and in the way Worshipping Congregations and their members are asked to relate to it. But the change being suggested goes well beyond “advertising”. In future, the aims of the Methodist Church in the Cardiff Circuit should be shared much more widely and consistently with Worshipping Congregations. At present, the Worshipping Congregation largely understands itself as the primary unit and the Circuit as the administrative body. If the Cardiff Methodist Circuit becomes the primary unit then a small but significant change will have occurred. In such a model, each Worshipping Congregation will be encouraged and supported to show how their local work contributes to, and grows from, the wider Circuit perspective.

This model is not new and has been successful in other places. The Cardiff Circuit is unique, so the experience here would rightly be different to other places, but there is good reason to believe that this approach would be both exciting and highly effective.

### **Proposals**

- a) *From September 2010 the Circuit should be identified as ‘**The Cardiff Methodist Church**’ with the individual churches known as local churches of the Cardiff Methodist Church.*
- b) *The Leadership Team should make a concerted effort to develop and promote a co-ordinated vision of what the Cardiff Methodist Church is and what it is trying to achieve, with each Worshipping Community feeling confident that it is contributing to this wider vision. This means that each Worshipping Community can identify its own particular niche within the whole, rather than feeling that it must be involved in trying to do everything. It will also give individuals greater knowledge and opportunities to be involved in projects across the Circuit.*
- c) *The Leadership Team should use a variety of media formats to provide regular bulletins, updates and information about activities and developments across the Circuit.*
- d) *The Leadership Team should seek to both lead and support individual Worshipping Congregations with their identified Vision and Mission activities by providing regular training opportunities.*

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**August 2010**

### **Membership of the Circuit Review Group:**

**June Bennett**

**Paul Dear**

**Catherine Hewett**

**Alun Hughes**

**David Jordan**

**Liz Rowe**

**With special thanks to David Tilley for his guidance and support.**