

## District News

### DISTRICT EXECUTIVE

The district executive met on 30 August to make an early start to the new Connexional year which began, as usual, on 1 September.

We welcomed Roberta Lunt from the High Wycombe Circuit and Deacon Phil Osborne from the Hinckley Circuit as Synod-elected representatives to their first meeting of the executive.

Our normal full agenda was particularly enlivened by hearing from the Revd Tim Woolley on his return from sabbatical and his comments appear in this issue of *District News*.

### STATESIDE SABBATICAL STUDIES By Tim Woolley, district director of mission

*God, my shepherd! I don't need a thing. You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from. True to your word, you let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction. (Psalm 23:1-3, The Message)*

A sabbatical is a precious gift from the church, for which those of us in ordained ministry are eternally grateful. It is a time, in the words of the Psalmist, for breath catching and direction finding. For me this year, my sabbatical was an opportunity to pause to reflect on the progress of my PhD research, and to find direction for the next stage of it.

Thanks to a superbly appointed library, some great fellow-visiting Wesley Scholars, who are now friends, glorious sunshine and delicious (if not entirely low-fat) cuisine, my visit to Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky USA for the month of June for the Wesleyan Studies Summer Seminary was the highlight of this process.

I did a great deal of research both on my chapter on American evangelist Lorenzo Dow, and some other aspects of my thesis on early Primitive Methodism.

All I have to do now is write it all up into a submission by March next year (gulp!). If you have half an hour to spare and really want to know more about Primitive Methodism than is probably healthy for you, stop me if and when you see me and I'll tell you all about it!

*cont...*

### ANNUAL PROPERTY DAY

The annual property day for circuit property secretaries and treasurers will take place at Roade Methodist Church on Saturday 24 November. Tom Lee, Connexional co-ordinator of the Consents process, will make a presentation which will include further background to the changes that have been made to the system.

Those with an interest in the operation of the online Consents process are welcome to join the appropriate part of the meeting. Fuller details can be obtained from Roy Littlecott, district property secretary, [rj\\_littlecott@hotmail.com](mailto:rj_littlecott@hotmail.com).

### OUR CALLING TRAINING

The training day to help people address the four aspects of "Our Calling" is set for Saturday 13 October.

Four sessions addressing each of the aspects will run throughout the day.

Ed McKenzie, from the Connexional Discipleship and Evangelism team, will give a keynote address.

... *Stateside Sabbatical cont.*

My sabbatical was also the opportunity to catch up on reading, not least a number of back issues of the Wesleyan Theological Journal! My eclectic choices also ranged from 19th century women evangelists through *Middlemarch* to the Marx Brothers! (And no, there are absolutely no links I have found so far between these. If you know otherwise, answers on a postcard please...)

The lush meadows in which I found myself bedded down included the home of the Lexington Legends baseball team, Trent Bridge, Nottingham for a Test match, and best of all Edgbaston, home of Warwickshire, County Cricket Champions 2012!

All in all, I have had a time of great blessing and refreshment for which I am very grateful to the church. I look forward to the next one!

### **NEW ROLE FOR ALISON TOMLIN**

The Revd Gareth Jones stood down in July as the Methodist representative to St Philip's Interfaith Centre in Leicester in view of his impending departure from the district.

The district executive have now endorsed the appointment of the Revd Alison Tomlin, former chair of the Northampton District and a past president of conference, as the Methodist representative to the trustees of the St Philip's Centre.

The executive also recommended to synod a new grant of £8,000 each year for three years to support the work of the centre, noted its increased interaction with Methodism, and also reminds churches and circuits that the St Philip's Centre exists as a resource to support interfaith work both in Leicester and elsewhere.

### **RESTRUCTURING FOR MISSION**

District chairman the Revd Peter Hancock briefed the district executive at its last meeting about the work undertaken to date across the district by circuits taking part in the "healthy circuits" exercise, and regrouping as a way forward for mission.

Whilst this is a continuing work, the executive recognised that this is an appropriate time to take stock of the work that has been done in examining the current position in circuits and looking to the future.

It is acknowledged that circuits have responded in varying ways to the challenges posed by diminishing resources and mission opportunities.

Already, the governance documents under which we all operate allow significant flexibility in the way in which circuits may structure themselves either singly or in varying forms of informal co-operation with their neighbours.

Whilst we are carrying out this exercise so too are our ecumenical partners. In many cases, this does not lead to easy changes in structures but that does not mean we should ignore the ecumenical dimension.

The district executive as a whole is clear that a wholesale agenda of amalgamations is not appropriate. However, inter-circuit co-operation is to be encouraged as far as possible where this is in the interests of mission.

Structural changes are taking place within individual circuits, and the district is seeking to support and enable these where possible. The district also maintains a watching brief for where conditions may change, and needs to be ready to support circuits involved to respond appropriately.

Throughout all of this, we must remember that the guiding principle that should govern all of our activities is the primacy of our mission.