

CROYDON CIRCUIT REVIEW

Introduction

The Circuit Review was launched at the September Circuit Meeting. Following the London District recommendations, a team from the Circuit was joined by the Training and Development Officer from the London District who was appointed as District Adviser for the Review Team.

Review Team Members:

Adrian Pickett: Review Team Co-ordinator

Revd. Nigel Cowgill

Mrs. Linnett Desporte, Circuit Steward

Mrs. Lorna Johnson, Circuit Steward

Mrs. Lindsey Macfarlane, Circuit Youth Development Officer

Miss Gillian Hibbs

Dr. Paul Kybird, Training and Development Officer

The role of the Review Team was to visit the Circuit churches for worship, receive presentations from each of the churches followed by the opportunity to ask questions, and to meet with individuals from the Circuit who wished to share individual concerns. Paul Kybird, as District Adviser met individually with the ministers, the Youth Development Officer and Circuit Stewards for extended conversations.

The Circuit has proved to be outstanding in its willingness to engage in the review process in a very short time, with enthusiasm, candour and good humour. The work of the Review Team is both much easier and more complicated as a result. There was a tremendous amount of relevant information to work through, and of course it is never easy to challenge those with whom you have shared a demanding task and who are clearly working hard in their churches. This report is offered as our 'conversational response' in that spirit.

The Presentation Day on 4th November was felt to be a very worthwhile occasion. It built on the 'Listening Exercise' previously conducted in the Circuit, and provided a wealth of information and insight for the Review Team. It was of great value that all the Circuit churches were involved on the one day so that the presentations could be shared across the Circuit. The serious work that had been put into the preparation of the presentations, the honesty with which the task was approached, and the variety of gifts and perspectives made clear many of the strengths of the Circuit.

Context

The Croydon Circuit for all its strengths cannot escape issues of context that face the Connexion and all traditional mainstream denominations in the UK today. At the start of this report it is worth recalling some of them.

Secularism, pluralism and the climate of unbelief – the Church is having to face complex questions about faith and lifestyle from our wider society. It is increasingly marginal to the lives of many people, especially younger generations. The battle for the mind is as urgent as the battle for the heart. There is evidence that there are many members of our churches who may not believe with confidence, nor feel able to explore doubts and questions about Christian doctrine and tradition.

Lifestyle – people appear busier than ever. Families are dispersed, populations more mobile, work and the commuting it involves may well be more demanding than ever before. The range of interests and commitments in people's lives is increasing. This can result in the church becoming just one of a range of important commitments in a Christian life rather than the central focus that may have been characteristic of previous generations. The impact of this is that the sense of ownership of the church becomes diminished. There is also a widespread problem of church members feeling that they are to be served by the church rather than to serve. There were signs of such an attitude occasionally in the background of what was discussed during the Review.

Changing patterns of church-going and membership – are for many an obvious consequence of lifestyle changes. People appear more reluctant to become members of organizations – not just the churches. As far as church-going on a Sunday is concerned, 'regular' may well mean once every three to six weeks. This is a real problem when many of our Sunday systems have been developed in a context of weekly attendance.

Diversity – there has been a marvelous enrichment of church life, particularly in the London District, as a result of the increasing cultural diversity of its membership over the last generation or two. Diversity in church life creates wonderful new opportunities. However to make the most of them is not a simple process, even for people of goodwill. The cultural confusion that can arise in church life from such issues, for example, as different understandings of membership, the nature of pastoral care or the role of lay people in leadership, may be debilitating. The London District faces the challenge of building in new ways on the diversity of our churches to make the most of the resources God has provided for mission.

The declining number of ministers – it is clear that numbers of Methodist ministers will continue to decline over the next decade. There are already problems recruiting Superintendents, and from 2010 onwards there will be a surge in ministerial retirements with which recruitment will not be able to keep pace. (Further detailed information on these issues is available from the Formation in Ministry Office at Methodist Church House). This means that churches everywhere need to explore issues about the nature of ministry, what they need and expect from ministers, how to get the very best out of the ministers available and how to cope as the shortage inevitably makes its impact.

The complexity of running churches – one of the most exhausting challenges facing all denominations today is the increasing complexity of running the church. This includes such tasks as dealing with the impact of charity law and accounting procedures, risk assessment, safeguarding, administration and buildings maintenance.

The quality of worship – with people's expectations ever higher in terms of the level of quality communications, the challenge to the churches' worship concerns not only its content, noted above, but also areas such as music, visual and auditory presentations. Demands are ever greater, and often in the face of diminishing response, the rewards are ever less.

Pastoral care – in the midst of such a challenging scene it is not surprising to hear from the churches a concern for levels of pastoral care. Given the pressures on time for many lay people, this increasingly focuses on the ministers in ways that are unrealistic. Again, the issue of pastoral care is one that the London District has to respond to, not least because the search for friendship, community and pastoral support is such a feature of contemporary life. Given that 'belonging' has always been such a powerful feature of Methodism, any sense of decline of fellowship of church life can create serious problems. Pastoral care is often focused on older people. Their needs must not be neglected, but over-emphasizing those needs can mean that the church spends the best of its energies meeting them and as a result neglect other areas. Each church community needs to make a decision on whether such an emphasis is an appropriate use of resources.

The Potential of the Circuit System - In the face of such a range of challenges, Methodism ought to find itself well-placed through the Circuit system. The theory of Circuit life is that resources can be shared and strategically used to develop an effective response to the needs, opportunities and challenges of God's mission. What one church cannot cope with becomes the privilege of another to help out with. Other denominations are moving towards such models as evidenced by the promotion of the 'minster model' in the Church of England.¹ Unfortunately, the strength of many individual congregations has led to a neglect of the Circuit ethos and structures within Methodism. The Circuit is therefore perceived as a burden and its activities as unhelpfully routine. Individual churches, especially if they have been strong enough numerically to have a full-time minister, have been in danger of becoming 'congregational' and neglecting the challenges of the 'connexionalism' that is at the heart of Methodism. The understanding of Circuit has been reduced to the principle of 'the strong help the weak', without a responsible consideration of the nature and opportunities of God's mission and the resulting call to mutual responsibility and interdependence. When a period of decline is faced, the result can be grudging acquiescence and bad feeling rather than constructive engagement with the responsibilities and opportunities of Circuit life.

¹ The 'minster' model represents a move to explore the ancient mission model of British Christianity, whereby a strong community of Christians supported by their prayer, resources and personnel, the establishment of new churches in areas that were unevangelised. In contemporary terms strong churches support weaker ones and develop church plants in new contexts. There are many echoes in such a process of the founding vision upon which Circuits are based.

It is inevitable that aspects of such a context impact on the Croydon Circuit. A responsible approach to Review needs to take them into account. The **Key Issues** section that follows addresses many of those concerns in the context of the Croydon Circuit.

Key Issues

In this section the results of the Review Team's discussions are summarized. Recommendations emerge from each issue. In identifying and spelling them out it is encouraging that the churches of the Circuit were all seen as robust and viable enough to engage with them. The shared challenge is to build on such strength in order to face the challenges and take the opportunities to serve that are presented.

Children and Young People

The concern of the churches for work in this area was much in evidence. The Circuit has already demonstrated its concern, vision and commitment in the appointment of a Youth Development Officer to help the churches face this challenge. Lindsey brings a range of gifts, commitment and energy to the task. She is clearly much appreciated, widely used and highly effective. The effective work of the Brigades, Scouts, Guides, Brownies and other organizations in some of the churches also show that other members of the Circuit are doing highly effective work with young people. The question of the persistence of this concern needs therefore to be explored.

Of course in this area there is always more to be done but the danger for the Circuit is that Lindsey gets left to do more and more. It is essential that Lindsey's work with young people is supported and built on by the Circuit. It was not clear that this was always being done. It is recommended therefore that the Circuit ask Lindsey's management group to work with her in a brief review of her work and how this can be better integrated into the life of the Circuit and its priorities. This would ensure that her time is being used to its best purpose and that her work is receiving appropriate support and effectively advocated and understood by the churches.

The area of worship for young people is crucial. It is often hard for regular worshippers to value and encourage new ways of doing things, and to live with efforts that can often fail. However, encouraging young people is one thing that every member can do to promote God's mission, and that message needs to be promoted around the Circuit by other people as well as Lindsey. It is clear that there is the talent and commitment in the young people of the Croydon Circuit to renew church life and to respond to the District challenge – but only if Lindsey receives effective support and help from the churches in nurturing them.

Involving young people in the management structures of the church is important, but particularly difficult. The traditions of Methodist management, shaped by CPD, valuable as they are, can often be impenetrable to the newcomer of any age. A group that is used to particular ways of working together can on occasion be difficult for any but the most determined newcomer to feel they belong. Church Councils should spend some time looking at the involvement of young people and newcomers and devising fresh

ways to make decisions in the context of contemporary Methodism in the London District.

Work with children is particularly important and challenging in today's world and was an area of acute concern in the presentations. Children's work falls outside Lindsey's area of responsibility for the 13-30 year old age group. Although there was evidence that she is sometimes expected to encompass children's work, this is unrealistic. The District Commission for Congregational Development will shortly be publishing some recommendations for Sunday School work. The churches of the Circuit need to consider them and how they might respond to support and develop their Sunday Schools.

The nature of ministry

Some of the most complex issues emerged in this area. The work of the Pilot Group in developing a pattern of Team Ministry for the Circuit is to be commended. It recognizes the harsh reality of the growing complexity of the minister's role as well as the falling numbers of ministers that will inevitably impact on every London Circuit over the next decade. The Team also aims to make the best use of the individual gifts of each member.

However, it was not clear that the purpose or the method of such team working has been fully explored or communicated to the Circuit. More clarity is needed if the model is to be valued and supported in the churches. This is a task for every discussion group and for preachers as well.

There is also a wider question that emerged about the changing nature of Methodist ministry. Ministers are a major resource of our church. Expectations of them often conflict with personalities and gifts. Nothing does more to undermine effective ministry and waste the resources of the minister than unrealistic and unconsidered expectations from members and all at local church level. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that time needs to be taken to explore how to get the best out of the present team, to consider how ministry is likely to develop in the next decade and then to help members of the Circuit and others in contact with the life of the churches to appreciate and to support that. It needs to be sensitively done in a way that recognizes the pressures on lay people today and is not seen as special pleading by the ministers. While ministers bring their own gifts that need to be identified and encouraged by churches and Circuits it is not enough for them to shape (or appear to shape) their agenda without regard to the needs expectations or traditions of the churches. It also needs to take account of the increased complexity introduced by diverse cultural expectations. Such a process requires considerable patience and sensitivity and significant adjustments in mindset and practice.

It is recommended that the exploration of such issues takes place in the Circuit immediately. As policy is developed it will need to be considered and discussed widely in ways that involve the preachers, Church Councils and discussion groups of the Circuit. It is a task that cannot be delayed if an effective response to the pressure of church life and the shortage of ministers is to be properly handled.

The Circuit, in its concern to support and get the best out of its ministers, should consider making available mentoring or coaching support for each individual minister or paid employee of the Circuit.

Buildings

It was clear that a number of the buildings in the Circuit are taking up much of the time, resources and energy of members and in danger of detracting and diverting them from the mission to which they have been called. Not all churches are able to work with the same confidence in this area. It would be appropriate to bring together some of those with expertise and experience within the Circuit to offer a 'Buildings Task Group' that could be proactive in helping each church to review its current policies and proposals for its buildings, and look at them in the light of local resources and the Circuit context. It could also be helpful in providing a pool of advice, experience and guidance in dealing with grant applications and planning procedures. It could help with monitoring risk assessment and provide contacts over such matters as trades people, builders and other aspects of practical help for the care of buildings.

Buildings and Community

There was a good use of many of the church buildings through the Circuit. The provision of building space to the wider community is a vital part of Methodism's contribution to God's mission. There are a number of well-ordered and well-cared for buildings in the Circuit.

The challenge however is to build on the links with the community that building users represent. In ways that are sensitive and appropriate, churches with many users should explore how they can draw such people into the wider community of life of which the worshipping community of faith is the heart. Each Church Council should be asked to address this question. Help can be found from the London District through the Commission for Congregational Development. It may be appropriate to set up a Circuit group to look at ways forward and offer suggestions to guide the church community. It is however a separate issue from the 'Buildings Task Group' suggested above and should not be confused.

The use of buildings by other Christian groups appears widespread. All but one church appeared to have at least one additional congregation. It would be wise to explore this issue and its impact. Some ostensibly Christian users of Methodist premises have created problems for the church itself and this has on some occasions led to the deprecation of the perception of Methodism in the wider community. The Review was not in a position to investigate this area in any detail but given experiences elsewhere in the London District, it is important for the Circuit to keep this issue under constant review.

Diversity

The rich and increasing diversity of the Circuit is common to other London Circuits. It is reason for celebration and offers unique opportunities. However, particular challenges come with such privilege. Misunderstandings can easily arise. Enthusiasm can be undermined and confidence dented by lack of awareness over, for instance, language,

expectations or other areas of uncertainty. The loss of motivation and involvement that can result can be disastrous. It is strongly recommended that work be done by the Circuit in this area. A day for Church Councils to meet and explore the question would be an effective starting point. The resources of the Southwark Diocese have been used for this purpose by others in the London District and are highly recommended.

Renewal of Circuit Identity

Throughout the reflections above it is clear that there is an enormous amount to be gained in facing the challenges, and building on opportunities by establishing a stronger sense of what it means to be a Circuit. Effective care of the rich resources so evident in the Circuit, and at the same time so vulnerable in today's world, be they children and young people, ministers, the diversity of cultures or the buildings and their users, all could be better served by a stronger sense of Circuit life. The vital thing is of course that establishing such a pattern does not mean more meetings!

There may also be the need to explore how decision making processes can be facilitated to reduce the numbers of business meetings that often become sterile and leave members feeling their time is not well-spent. Current Methodist systems are often perceived to be particularly inflexible, but many churches have found creative ways of reducing the numbers of meetings and this should be explored.

The other key issue is effective communications. There is a responsibility here with both the communicator and those who are on the receiving end. However good the quality, communication is wasted if 'the receiver is not turned on and tuned in'.

Effective use of the Circuit Administrator in this area would be helpful and could lead to a more effective use of current resources such as notices and magazines. The website could become a great asset. The major communication opportunity in church life today is on a Sunday through the pulpit. Some exploration of how best to enable preachers to use that opportunity has implications for the Circuit Local Preachers meeting, Plan making, theme preaching and team leadership of worship. If the ideas suggested in this Review reach and get discussed only with a small group, many of whom themselves have other pressing issues on their minds and in their lives, the work will have been wasted. Communication needs to be well-planned and consistent as well as inspirational.

An important aspect of Circuit life is likely to be helping churches to prioritize their activities. There are so many good causes and important projects, both from within Methodism (e.g. EDEV, Fresh Expressions) and in the wider community (e.g. London Citizens, ecumenical links), that the individual church finds its resources dissipated and its members exhausted and disillusioned in trying to respond adequately to them all. A Circuit policy that could identify priorities and encourage churches to do the same would be helpful.

Building Faith – a challenge for worship

It was noted that many of the presentations struggled to articulate much in the area of faith concerns. There were signs of despair over the relevance of faith in younger

people's lives today, but relatively little was expressed on this area in any other way. While many members of generations younger than those at the Presentation Day were felt to have rejected faith, or at least its practice through church-going, contemporary society exhibits growing trends that suggest spiritual interests and faith concerns can still be central to young people. Faith can remain when church-going and membership of a church fades. There was little mention of Bible study and discussion groups and prayer initiatives. The unique resource of the church is its living tradition of faith expressed in its community needs to be renewed and developed for today's questions.

Opportunities to grow in faith and to explore some of the key faith and lifestyle issues that Christians face today represents a further challenge in the area of communication for preachers, group leaders and worshippers alike. Sunday mornings tends to be the time that most members can meet most easily. The London District Chairs are promoting a new pattern for Sunday morning during their Lent walk. As they are not coming to the Circuit it would be worth some members visiting one of the churches where they will be operating during Lent, to explore the model they are offering.

In addition to matters of Christian faith, Methodist identity, and especially the relevance of a vision of church life that is 'connexional', is a vital theological theme to be discussed, argued and taught. It is foundational for the Connexional and Circuit patterns. This is especially the case within a context of diversity with different formative experiences of church life.

The need to develop new opportunities of worship both in style and timing is an important aspect of this issue. Present opportunities for new forms of worship should be supported and new ones explored.

Parchmore and the Circuit

The life and witness of the Parchmore project is very striking. It is clearly an important and exciting piece of work. Support from the Circuit is in evidence there, and it is highly valued. However, there is still room for further support for this pioneering and inspirational project. More work and more resources are needed. The workers, both those employed and the volunteers appear to be fully stretched. As the responsibilities of leading the work become more complex it may well be the case that a future appointment to leadership of the team might not be presbyteral and the consequences of that need to be considered early.

The Circuit should consider identifying Parchmore as a 'Circuit Mission Project' in order to find new ways of encouraging its work and ensuring that it is further celebrated and supported while the distinctive lessons it has to offer Methodism are advocated in all of the Circuit churches. Already it is clear that there is significant support from other Circuit churches for the work there, and by making it a 'Circuit Mission Project' all other Circuit churches would be further encouraged to understand the nature of the work there, to include its concerns in their prayers and reflection on their mission, to offer support in any practicable way, and to make time to learn from Parchmore's ministry how their

witness to Christ and their service of those in need in their wider community might be developed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In making the Recommendations this report has aimed to be as specific as possible in its suggestions and timings. It is recognised that the Circuit will need to consider their implementation in the light of its other business.

An important concern has been to avoid unnecessarily increasing the number of meetings. The aim has been to make recommendations that can as far as possible be considered in the routine of Circuit business.

A final concern is the best place for the policy formation that is needed at certain points to be carried out. As it has been understood, the weekly Staff Team Meetings are concerned with mutual support and routine management. They can certainly generate and comment on policy, not least because those gathered there have a unique overall perspective on the Circuit - so long as there is a planned way of taking such a perspective into account. Even so, the Team is probably not representative enough and policy formation is not its priority. The Pilot Group might well be a place, but we were not clear that every church was represented there. It's most useful role as an ongoing group would be to monitor the progress of such of the Recommendations as are accepted by the Circuit Meeting. The Circuit Meeting is too large a gathering for detailed policy formation, although of course it is the right place for policy to be considered and accepted. For the key recommendation about the nature of ministry, it is suggested that the Superintendent and Circuit Stewards meet with the Senior Steward of any church not otherwise represented and other appropriate Circuit Officers. This 'Ministry Policy Task Group' should aim to meet perhaps three or four times over the coming year to complete its work (see below).

1. Children and Young People:

- 1) Each Church Council should review its work with children and especially its provision for Sunday School and prepare an action plan to present to the Pilot Group. The 'Sunday School Charter' produced by the District should be used as a starting point. It will be available from the Commission for Congregational Development after its next meeting on 24th January 2008.
Action and Time: The Church Council following that date
- 2) Young People: The work being done by Lindsey should be reviewed before Easter by the Management Group (at special additional meetings if necessary) in order to enable Lindsey and the Circuit to achieve maximum benefit from her appointment. Recommendations should be presented through the Pilot Group to the Circuit Meeting and Church Councils for effective support for young people in the churches and their involvement in the leadership of worship and church organization.

- 3) The examples of excellent work being done in the Brigades, Scouts, Guides and other organizations should be considered and ways of learning from such 'good practice' considered by Church Councils.

Action and Time for (2) & (3): YDO Management Group before Easter 2008

2. The Nature of Ministry

1. A 'Ministry Policy Task Group' should be set up by the Circuit Meeting to establish a policy in the light of:
 - a) The future shortage of presbyters and its consequences
 - b) An understanding on the developing and changing nature and role of the presbyterate and its impact on the expectations of presbyters and congregations.
 - c) A consideration of the consequences for lay leadership in the churches and Circuit.

Action and Time: Starting immediately. The Task Group should aim to complete its work in 18 months.

2. In the light of emerging policy, the Pilot Group should consider how well the concept of Team Ministry is developed and understood in the Circuit and the issues of advocacy and communication that arise.

Action and Time: Ongoing

3. A teaching and preaching plan to explore and enable informed understanding and discussion of the emerging nature of ministry across the Circuit be agreed with the Local Preachers' Meeting and carried out in the Circuit churches and groups.

Action and Time: Pilot group and Staff Team to provide necessary action at the latest beginning September 2008

4. Provision for appropriate mentoring or coaching support be offered to ministers and employees of the Circuit.

Action and Time: The Pilot Group to take responsibility as an ongoing task.

3. Buildings

- As described above, the Circuit Meeting set up an ongoing 'Buildings Task Group' to give support and advice over building maintenance and development.

Action and Time: At the next Circuit Meeting following appropriate discussion

4. Buildings and Community

- Each Church Council to review the relationship of the congregation to the building users in the light of the comments under 'Key Issues' above. On the basis of that review to hold a meeting in the Circuit with representatives from churches to share ways of developing links to offer a greater sense of

community to building users. This same group might also explore the issue of other churches and Christian groups using Methodist buildings and report to the Circuit Meeting.

Action and Time: The Church Council following the completion of the work on Sunday Schools and Young People

5. Diversity

- A day to be arranged for Church Councils and others to explore diversity issues in church life. Delbert Sandiford, Officer for Minority Ethnic Concerns, Southwark Diocese would be an appropriate person to lead such a day.

Action and Time: Pilot Group to arrange within the next twelve months

6. Circuit Identity

- This is an area of ongoing concern that should be regularly monitored by the Pilot Group and the Circuit Meeting. The work on the nature of ministry, diversity and building faith will inevitably raise this issue in ways that can then be developed.
- As time allows there should be consideration by Circuit and Church Councils of more efficient ways of conducting business and reducing the numbers and length of meetings.
- Consideration needs to be given to maximising the role of the Circuit Administrator in achieving better communications.
- There should be an ongoing consideration of the priorities for church and Circuit life, and that thinking should be communicated to the churches.

Action and Time: Staff and Pilot Group, ongoing

7. Building Faith

- The Staff Team and Pilot Group consider the implications of the comments in the section in 'Key Issues' above, and explore ways of co-ordinating a response with the teaching/preaching/learning programme around the nature of ministry. This should be done in ways that maximise the gifts of staff and people in the Circuit.

Action and Time: Staff and Pilot Group, ongoing

8. Parchmore

- The comments under 'Key Issues' about non-presbyteral leadership and the Circuit Mission Project to be considered as soon as possible by the Circuit Meeting or other appropriate group, together with a visit to Parchmore and a presentation of its work for the members of the Circuit Meeting. Other Circuit churches and groups should also visit over the next six months.
- An action plan can then be formed, initially by the staff team and/or Pilot Group and the Parchmore management Committee, to report to the September 2008 Circuit Meeting.

Action and Time: A Circuit Meeting in 2008 as its agenda allows.

NOTES FROM THE CHURCHES

(In the order of presentation on November 4th 2007)

These notes merely identify issues and dominating themes that that members of the Review Team picked up from the presentations. They are a response to what was heard and a token of the Review Team's gratitude to the presenters and the listening that made possible. They do not go so far as to offer recommendations. They might form the basis of further thought in the Church Councils.

Shirley

- A wealth of experience that used sensitively and appropriately might well offer to support other churches.
- Ministry to user groups – a major opportunity – how well developed?
- The sense of members 'belonging' to the church was strong – are there issues about 'believing'?
- Concern over the effectiveness and motivation of their ministry to children and young people.

Addington

- A warm and caring community was in evidence.
- A concern for change and growth that the presenters seemed open to, but perhaps help is needed to discover the right ways forward and to handle areas of resistance to change in the church.
- Willing to work with children and young people – training needed?

Christ Church

- Understandably weary after the Vision Day, but much work had been put into research for the presentation.
- Some evidence of possible lack of clarity about and creative engagement with the Circuit in discussions about current and future development.
- Need for work on leadership issues, ordained and lay.

South Norwood

- A lively and enthusiastic community.
- Building a cause for concern.
- How far does preoccupation with building problems divert attention away from other challenges and opportunities?

Parchmore

- Need to strengthen the links between church and community centre?
- Need for community centre to develop its outreach?
- Working more closely with Downsvew to be encouraged.

Downsview

- Impact of the young people in the presentation – very strong endorsement of the important work of the Brigades.
- How far does such work connect with the church? Integration of young people with the church – are there issues here?
- Strong hopes that Pilgrims Way process will help to develop leadership and direction.

West Croydon

- Lots of young people and plenty of energy.
- Creative approach to reaching out to neighbourhood – how much of a problem is the building and its location?
- Very much a place that illustrates the ongoing changes in church life in UK and London as mentioned in ‘Context’ section above. Therefore Sunday activities carry special weight.

Worship Reports – brief reflections

Members of the Review Team worshipped in all seven churches during the Review. The experimental form provided by the District Review Handbook was given a trial – and will be refined in the light of experience!

Some brief general comments may be of help:

- Worship experiences were generally positive and some were excellent. There is a great deal being done very well in the Circuit. The following comments are picked out in this context of appreciation.
- In common with many churches and Circuits in the Connexion there is a continuing concern about the area of children’s/family/all-age worship and the confusion that can exist between them.
- Diversity was not always reflected in style and leadership of worship.
- Ministry of welcome was on the whole good, but in some places it appears to need attention. This is a particularly difficult area, since once you have got used enough to a church to be invited to offer welcome, you tend to have forgotten the impression the building creates on the newcomer or occasional visitor.
- A sense of not really knowing what was happening was reflected in a number of comments. It emphasizes the importance of reflection on the ministry of welcome. It may also indicate a lack of fellowship and contact across the Circuit. There are clear consequences for new worshippers with less background than the Review Team members.
- The churches all seem to be well-equipped, and PowerPoint presentations were noted and appreciated!
- The importance of using the variety of musical resources as fully and creatively as possible was also noted.

On behalf of the Review Team

Paul Kybird

Adrian Pickett

Glossary of Terms

Buildings Task Group - a proposed group, of those with relevant property expertise and experience within the Circuit, to advise individual churches

Church Steward – elected church members serving the needs of each church

Circuit – the seven Methodist churches in the north of the Borough of Croydon [Downsview, Parchmore, South Norwood, West Croydon, Christ Church, Shirley, Addington]

Circuit Administrator – a lay worker employed part-time to assist with administration working from the Circuit Office at Shirley Methodist Church [Juliet Smith]

Circuit Meeting – a regular gathering of staff, stewards and elected church representatives

Circuit Review – a process to enable Circuits to reflect and act, recommended every five years

Circuit Steward – elected members from across the Circuit serving its needs

Connexion – national groupings of Methodist churches, in this case England, Scotland & Wales

CPD – Constitution & Practices of the Methodist Church: a book outlining Methodist church procedures

District – groupings of Methodist Circuits, in this case the London District

EDEV – Extending Discipleship & Exploring Vocation: a new procedure for those exploring their ‘call’ to vocation in the Methodist Church

Fresh Expressions – a Methodist and Church of England initiative exploring alternative forms of church and contemporary church planting ideas www.freshexpressions.org.uk

London Citizens – a diverse alliance of active citizens campaigning for London www.londoncitizens.org.uk

Ministry Policy Task Group – a proposed group to implement Circuit policy formation comprised the Superintendent and Circuit Stewards, plus the Senior Steward of any church not otherwise represented, and other appropriate Circuit Officers

Pilot Group – Staff, Stewards and Circuit Treasurer

Presbyter – same as Church Minister

Senior Steward – elected steward acting as co-ordinator for each church [see Circuit Directory] or for the Circuit [Veronica Hickox]

Staff – Ministers, Youth Development Officer and Circuit Administrator [Harvey Richardson, Anne Rusbridge, Rachel Deigh, Nigel Cowgill, Lindsey Macfarlane, Juliet Smith]

Superintendent – the ‘senior’ Minister [Harvey Richardson]

Team Ministry – a collaborative approach to leading churches

Training & Development Officer - an employee of the District [Paul Kybird]

Youth Development Officer (YDO) – a lay worker employed full-time to encourage those 13-30 into the life of the church [Lindsey Macfarlane]

YDO Management Group – the YDO oversight group [Harvey Richardson, Penny Fuller, David Tayler]