



# The Methodist Church

In town and country in and around Felixstowe, Ipswich and Woodbridge

**At the heart of community**

## A pastoral letter from the Superintendent to the Methodist Communities of the Ipswich Circuit

28<sup>th</sup> January 2009

Dear Friends in Christ

On September 18<sup>th</sup> 2008 our Circuit Meeting adopted the new Circuit policy entitled, 'At the heart of Community.' It was the culmination of widespread consultations, meetings and prayerful deliberation. Since then much work has been done in implementing the proposals made. I feel that it is now an appropriate time to share with you what progress has been made.

One of the key proposals is to move away from the traditional pattern of 'sections' to four 'areas of mission': Woodbridge, Felixstowe, Ipswich Urban and Ipswich Rural. Each area is encouraged to build on the good work already taking place by engaging in creative partnerships focussed on mission.

A second key proposal is the formation of 'Central Services' aimed at resourcing the local Methodist Communities in their building of God's kingdom.

I need to point out and stress two important aspects of the policy. First, the policy document itself does not make or imply any reference to particular individuals. This allows for a continuity of the proposals regardless of any change in personnel. Second, the implementation of the policy proposals must necessarily take place over a period of two to three years according to how we set our priorities.

I would like to comment on each Mission Area in turn and then to comment on Central Services.

### Woodbridge Area

(Framlingham [Methodist URC], Orford and Woodbridge.)

There are no immediate changes planned for this area. Frank Aichele's three year extension will end in 2010. I am indebted to Frank and Gabi, Stephen and Pam for all they bring to the life and work of the Church.

Now is the time for each of the churches to be working both individually and together on what a future mission programme will look like. These proposals need to be well thought out before the stationing process begins.

Following my sabbatical (April – June) I hope to visit each church for an opportunity to share what progress has been made.

### **Ipswich Methodist Circuit**

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### Felixstowe Area

(Kirton, Trimley, Trinity, Seaton Road)

This area is the furthest forward in terms of implementing aspects of the Circuit policy. It is just over a year ago since Jill Morgan relinquished her role as a pastoral worker, having served the churches very well. It was decided at that time that any suggestions for a replacement of Jill's role would become part of the Circuit review. Consequently, detailed amendments for the Felixstowe area were adopted as part of the Circuit policy. I am very grateful that in this period Rob Anning has worked exceptionally hard to minister to the area along with the responsibilities of Port chaplain. He has been supported and ably assisted by many people, especially by Heather Bentley as pastoral coordinator at Seaton Road and by Rev'd Barry Middleton providing pastoral assistance.

It is clear that the Port values immensely the chaplaincy work Rob has provided, from the dock workers through to the chief executive. This will continue in the new connexional year when the Rev David Kemble takes over as minister. Rob and Pat have made a major contribution to the life of the Felixstowe area and the Circuit. I wish them every blessing in their new appointment.

In the meantime, Circuit Stewards and local church representatives are currently working on a job specification and advertisement for a replacement lay employee. This will be vetted by District and then advertisements placed. We are fortunate that the District advisor on this matter is our own Ray Sawyer. I feel strongly that the job description for the new employee should have a strong mission emphasis. I look forward to Heather and Barry continuing in their respective pastoral roles.

The main finance for the post will be in the form of a three year grant from Circuit funds. I am aware of the financial stringency facing both the churches and the Circuit but I would ask each of the four church councils to consider sponsoring some further time for this post. Further details will be available at the Church councils.

### Ipswich Urban Area

(Alan Road, Bramford, Bramford Road, Chantry, Landseer Road, Museum Street)

It is in this area that significant changes will take place from September onwards. Duncan and Joy Ibuuri and their family will be moving to a new post in September. I wish them well and express my appreciation to Duncan for the particular gifting he has blessed us with. In accordance with our Circuit policy, we are not seeking a replacement minister for this appointment.

Embracing the concept of partnership, we will be introducing a team ministry from September onwards. Initially the team will comprise of Peggy Heim, Sue Lambert, Ian Gardner and myself. Each of us will take on spiritual and practical leadership for specific churches but there will be many areas where we will work as a team and share out workload appropriately. The role of superintendent in this respect is as the team leader rather than the previous model of having a 'superintendent's church.'

For some considerable time I have worked alongside Duncan at Landseer Road and, to some extent, at Alan Road. I have decided that, for a period, I will provide the leadership for both these churches with the specific aim of defining our mission on the east side of the town. I will continue, with the support of the team, to be minister at Bramford. Ian will take the lead role at Bramford Road. Peggy and Sue will continue in their respective leadership roles at Museum Street and Chantry.

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This is a significant change in the way we deploy our ministers and it will take time for all of us to become accustomed to a new way of working. As the team ministry develops, we will continue to assess the best deployment of staff and make changes if considered appropriate. We will be urgently looking at the policy proposal of a grant funded, mission focussed lay employee to work primarily in the east of the town.

### Ipswich Rural Area

(Brantham, Capel St Mary, Chelmondiston, Elmsett, Holbrook, Stutton)

There is much to enthuse about in the life of our Methodist Communities in this area. Chelmondiston, Capel St Mary, Elmsett and Holbrook have made significant improvements to their property. I am much encouraged by the work with young people and also some very good ecumenical initiatives. I am concerned for the two small communities of Brantham and Stutton. Both have very good fellowships but face challenges for the future.

As a 'mission area' in terms of the Circuit policy it is not yet ready to be formed. For the time being, including beyond September, the current pastoral oversight will remain unchanged until such time as the proposals contained in the policy can be put into action.

Sue Lambert's initial five year appointment comes to an end in 2010. It makes sense that at such a late stage in her ministry we do not change her current pastoral oversight of churches. As to Sue's future ministry it is not permitted to enter in to any discussions until the stationing process begins later this year and so it is not appropriate for any further comment here other than to say how much I appreciate the work she is doing.

During the consultation process it became clear how great a desire there is for the Methodist Church to have a ministry in the form of an employee based on the Shotley peninsular. This is incorporated into the Circuit policy and we will be giving urgent attention to how such an appointment may be grant funded. Thus a minister based at Capel St Mary with assistance on the peninsular will make for a viable 'mission area'.

Clearly, there are a number of factors that make the setting up of this area, as per the policy, a fluid situation. I am confident that over the summer months all will become much clearer so that we should be able to make specific proposals by the September Circuit meeting.

In the interim both Ian Gardner and Peggy Heim will have increased responsibilities in the town area but I am confident that we have the staff who, with the support of the people, can work through this transition period to a successful conclusion.

### Central Services

We live in a time when there is increasing difficulty for many churches to fulfill all their responsibilities in terms of legal, constitutional and charitable requirements. The concept of a 'central service' is to provide resources to help churches fulfill their responsibilities and so focus on the important imperative of mission.

At the end of December, Welma Hattingh relinquished her post as circuit administrator. I am immensely grateful to Welma for her commitment to the Circuit and the support she has given to me over the last two years. Currently, the post is under review and in the meantime Sue Hockenhull, with various people helping, is doing a great job holding all the loose ends together.

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It is planned that the nature of the post will change and that the Circuit Office opening hours may be reduced.

The Circuit Stewards are currently working on proposals for a second part time post to provide some of the more detailed support, especially where churches do not have a treasurer or someone to pursue the initial stages of property projects. We have consulted widely and should soon be in a position to provide further information.

### Finally

I am aware that as I have detailed some aspects of what is happening around the Circuit in this time of transition, I have mentioned by necessity some of our situations and not others. Also I have mentioned some of our people and not others. With regard to the former, I will do my best to keep you aware of how the various projects are progressing. With regard to our people, I believe that our Circuit is blessed with staff, circuit stewards and other leaders who have a deep desire to see God's will fulfilled among our Methodist communities. I experience the same desire among the people in the local situations as I meet you in my travels around the Circuit.

As we seek to do God's will may we be a people who are truly 'at the heart of community.'

Blessings

Alan M Taylor

Superintendent

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