



# Methodist Church

The Lincolnshire Methodist District

Serving locally, connecting the county

## STATEMENT OF INTENT

Toward 2020 Vision

We are now at a stage in our District development where we can move from the consultative to the active. As a consequence, we can adjust the title accordingly from 'Toward a 2020 Vision' to 'Toward 2020 Vision'.

After almost two years of conversations, presentations and consultations we can look at how we implement the vision that has been thoroughly considered and now 'owned' by the District.

As Methodists in this part of God's world there are many challenges to face. But as I have travelled across the county these past two years I have been struck by the desire to do things that will meet those challenges. From urban centres to rural hamlets the joys and costs of discipleship have been very much in evidence; we are serious about our faith, we are resilient in times of trial and we are realistic in our aims.

It is time to grasp the nettle and look upon our shared futures with a common vision. How that common vision is worked out across the county will be determined by each circuit in relation to the context because we must not overlook the immense diversity of our communities. However we can now provide a framework upon which that common vision can be built in a variety of locations.

The previous aspects of 'Toward a 2020 Vision' can be encapsulated under three headings, more meaningful mission, more effective ministry and more responsible use of property.

THE REVD BRUCE THOMPSON  
Chair Lincolnshire Methodist District

## **Toward more meaningful mission**

'People and buildings are our shop window and each reflects the other. It must be evident from the outside that the Buildings are the House of God and that they are loved and cared for by the People of God, who in turn should present themselves in a welcoming and encouraging manner towards everyone they meet every hour of every day of every week.

Our people are an integral part of their community and through a wide range of activities are able to share fellowship which might ultimately bring some people to faith through persuasion, kindness and love.<sup>1</sup>

*Taken from the CLT Forum feedback, Louth October 2013*

- 1 Throughout this process we have considered that it would be a good idea to have coordinated signage. Even early on we produced two posters, one for the Olympics and the other for Easter 2013; these highlighted the fact that each Methodist building was part of a wider movement across the county.
  - Therefore the District is to help fund further signage not only for the seasons but also, and perhaps more importantly, a permanent sign for each building. By 2016 every Methodist Church and Chapel will be easily identifiable as being a part of the District.
  - District identity badges are to be introduced for ministers and officers.
  
- 2 The contacts we already have in our wider communities are immense and the influence we have is underestimated; from the workplace to the leisure centre, from a place of learning to a sphere of social activity there are Methodists who profess their faith in all sorts of ways.

The District will seek to encourage those who wish to take more seriously the impact we can have in the places we find ourselves. It is hoped that a year-long Chaplaincy Development Project will get underway in September 2014. This will be further enhanced, not only during those twelve months but into the future, by the new Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network and in full partnership with Lincolnshire Chaplaincy Services. Circuits will be taking the Chaplaincy initiative very seriously and through it the presence and influence of the Methodist people as partners in proclaiming the Gospel will be even more meaningful and appreciated.

By 2016 six of the circuits should have a chaplaincy project within them; by 2020 all of them.

**This is key to more meaningful mission.**

- 3 Some circuits have already joined with ecumenical partners in holding meetings with their local MPs and found them not only to be of interest but also a means by which issues can be raised and action occur. The District strongly encourages circuits to ensure that those involved in local and national politics are made aware of our social and ethical concerns.
  - By the election of 2015 every circuit should have had ample opportunity to have arranged a meeting with their local MP.
  - There should also be ongoing engagement with District and County Councils
  
- 4 We should not lose sight of the fact that denominations and faiths other than our own often share our concerns and wherever possible we should consider working in partnership to meet the needs of our communities.



## **Toward more effective ministry**

It has become clear that ordained ministry is too thinly spread in many areas of the District for it to be truly effective. It is equally clear that Lincolnshire has difficulty in attracting people from outside the county to cross the A1 and the Humber; it is not an issue unique to the Methodist District, health authorities, schools and other places of learning report the same phenomenon. We have to respond in such a way that will enable ministry to be more focussed.

- 1 We are truly blessed with many gifted and committed people across the District. We need to acknowledge and affirm their ministries. This can only be done locally ie within the circuits or even churches themselves.
  - Annual services of recognition and dedication, for stewards, pastoral visitors, local preachers etc, will serve to encourage, inspire and highlight the significance of the role. It may be that on occasions District officers could be a part of such services to express the appreciation of the wider Church.
  - We should also recognise the significant contribution by our District Officers
  
- 2 The District should liaise with the Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network in providing opportunities for initial and further training of those who are engaged in all aspects of lay and ordained ministry, stewarding, visiting, leading of groups etc.
  - These events could culminate in services as referred to in number 1 above.
  - An agreed programme of training needs to be coordinated and publicised
  
- 3 The District will work closely with the Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network and the Connexion in exploring the possibility of Lay Ministers in local churches (LM). The LMs would be responsible for pastoral care in local chapels or churches. They would be expected to undergo a selection process and a training course. Once licensed for a limited period, of say three years, each LM would attend and contribute to three gatherings each year with other LMs.

The candidates for such a role are likely to be the retired and/or able to offer one, two or three days unpaid per week. They may have a preaching and sacramental ministry by being Local Preachers and authorised to preside at the Lord's Supper.

- By 2020 we will have at least two LMs in each circuit.
- Annual training and a development programme needs to be initiated and implemented

**This is key to more effective ministry.**

- 4 Each circuit needs to take lay extended communion seriously.
  - The District through the Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network can facilitate this but home communion stewards would be appointed by the circuits.
  - Pastoral visiting needs to be consistent across the circuits
- 5 An increasing number of supernumeraries are able and willing to be of help. Through the supernumerary network, originally set up for pastoral care, it may be that it becomes possible to identify and harness the gifts of a number of presbyters still eager to be of help.
- 6 The District remains committed to annual retreats and the provision of quiet days for both ordained and lay.
  - The District will seek the necessary funding to ensure that what is already in place is secure and that we are able to develop spirituality through new ventures.
  - We need to carefully consider the possibility of appointing a District Chaplain

Many of the above have financial implications. Some of the costs will be met by the Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network or Connexion and some by the District through the District Advance Fund administered by the DRMG. The circuits may have to cover expenses for certain projects.

## **Toward more responsible use of property**

As inheritors of a rich legacy we are committed to a responsible use of property. We have over 160 sites across the county. In the past many sites have been lost and with them the Methodist presence in a community. The money accumulated through the sales of such sites has often been used elsewhere, not always productively.

Over the next five years we will explore creative and responsible use of our sites not only in letting but also in redevelopment with partners, especially Housing Associations. This could achieve at least two things: firstly provide accommodation for either the elderly or those who are unable to get on the housing ladder and secondly create worship space on the site that would otherwise be lost from that community altogether. It may also provide an opportunity for greater and more suitable community space.

The pressure on our congregations to maintain premises is great and evidence has shown time and again that freed from such a burden people and communities are able to grow.

We will need to identify and appoint someone to help facilitate more responsible use of properties. This person would liaise with housing associations and other potential partners.

*God of vision, insight and renewal,  
You set before us the path along which we are to tread;  
grant us a surer knowledge of your presence, purpose and power  
and a firmer grasp of the realities of our place and time  
so that our mission be more meaningful,  
our ministry more effective  
and our stewardship more responsible.*

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