**Group Reports for Autumn Synod 2017**

**District Policy Committee (DPC) Report**

The DPC has met once since the last Synod to consider the business of the District and its committees. The latter have reported separately.

Aileen Fox gave her report as our Methodist Council representative and Richard Armiger gave his last DMLN update, before he moves to his new role. Dr Yasmin Finch gave her District Mission Enabler’s update in photographic form. We also considered the workload of the District Chair, given the new supervisory framework that was going to Conference for approval and a small group is considering this further.

The DPC held an Away Day in May which we are grateful to Richard Armiger and Ann Howlett-Foster facilitating for us. We considered our six priorities for going forward, discussed children’s and youth work aspirations and looked at positive things in the life of the District from the past year. We agreed our District Vision and will review this at each DPC meeting.

At the June DPC meeting we decided the priorities for the next few months should be to creatively address rural dynamics, to form a strategy for children’s, youth and families’ work and to maximise large gatherings for worship and celebration, perhaps using the Cathedrals with which our District is blessed. ***Susan Eldridge - Secretary to District Policy Committee***

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**District Mission**

The East Anglia District aims to enable, encourage and enthuse the people of God to create and sustain hospitable and inclusive Christian communities in which people can:

* come to faith
* grow in faith
* own their faith
* share their faith
* celebrate faith

Our vision is to achieve this through:

* inspirational leadership in churches, Circuits and the District
* passionate worship and prayer
* the imaginative use of resources and buildings that prioritises innovation
* the development of District intergenerational programmes that nurture discipleship, learning, mission and an understanding of our heritage working with the Discipleship & Ministries Learning Network
* the District Officers and District Staff Team providing good and relevant services
* effective networking and communicating across the District
* shared knowledge and experience across the District
* shared responsibility in meeting the requirements of the Methodist Church and statutory authorities

All of the above is intended to develop confidence in God that, in turn, leads to

* the transformation of people and communities through the presence of the Holy Spirit
* imaginative risk-taking, with a commitment to learn from failure
* ongoing prayer support *May 2017*

**Administration Group report**

Can I please draw your attention to the updated ‘**Guide on whom to approach for a grant’** at the back of the new Directory.

**District Disability Policy**

1. We believe that all people are loved and accepted by God. We will therefore work towards people with disabilities being enabled to share and develop their gifts and abilities within the church and community.

2. We will endeavour to ensure that all disabled people shall have an equal opportunity to experience that love of God and to grow spiritually and raise awareness about the welfare, hopes and aspirations of all disabled people.

3. We shall seek to become aware of the special needs of disabled persons and their carers through consultation with them and through contact with the various disability groups in the community.

4. We will ensure that Church premises are fully accessible to all persons who have a disability. This includes physical access, lighting, and special provision for those with visual or hearing impairments, adequate signage in an appropriate welcome.

6. We will continue to develop and seek means to extend schemes which help to advance the integration of the disabled people into church. *Agreed 2017*

Since the Spring Synod 2017, the **District Training Fund for Deacons and Presbyters** in the active work has received and approved 4 applications.  All ministers are entitled to £200 per annum from the District for explicitly training and development needs, with the minister’s Circuit strongly encouraged to provide an additional £100.  A straight forward application form is available from Rev. Alison Walker  **alison.walker@methodist.org.uk**

***Andrew King***

**Property Report**

It has been suggested that August is usually a quiet month in the Connexional year, but I can assure this is not the case in the Property Office of the East Anglia District and I am as busy as ever.  
  
Over the past months I have received several "moans" regarding the efficiency and response times of TMCP Legal and I am aware that a national survey is being carried out currently by the Connexion regarding Legal Services.  Of course only a small minority of users of this service will be included in the survey, so if any of you have experienced problems, please contact me, preferably by email, so that I as a District Officer can prepare a comprehensive reply.  
  
Well done to all Circuits who have completed the annual online Property Returns, best year yet.  There are only 3 Circuits who have not fully completed their returns.  
  
And finally may I again remind you that ALL property matters should come to me as your District Property Secretary, either by direct contact or through the Consents system.  
  
Blessings to you all. ***Roger Pauley, District Property Secretary***

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**Evangelism Group Report July 2017**

There is a lot of good news to bring before you at this Synod.

Once again we find that lunches are very popular, and fulfill a basic Christian requirement to look after those in need, either of company or financial help. Examples of this can be seen at Cromer and Sheringham, North Norfolk circuit, and Wesley, Cambridge, where demand is growing. The hard workers who provide this service deserve our congratulations.

House-to-house visiting continues at Wesley, with a planned 1,000 invitations to go out before Harvest.

Work with young people is active at both Wesley and Castle Street, Cambridge. Also worth noting is the wonderful youth work taking place at the tinyMorley Chapel, in the Norwich circuit. Improvements to the premises are planned to make this even more effective.

Other community activities include a Dementia cafe at Lessingham, North Norfolk circuit.

The value of being involved with the community can be seen at Stibbard, Central Norfolk circuit, where the tiny congregation has more than doubled over the past year. This chapel plays a major part in the village and the results are for all to see. This is Christian witness at its best.

These are just a few of the remarkable things that are going on in our District. By involving ourselves with the wider community we do God’s work as Jesus asked us to. Both large and small churches are doing this.

If you are already involved in outreach, or would like to be, please consider attending the

Re-Imagine conference at St Ives Methodist church on October 7th. This has a number of excellent speakers and workshops, and is already filling up fast. Look at the ReImagine website for details (reimaginemethodism.wordpress.com) and contact Yasmin Finch to book. It’s an opportunity not to be missed. ***John Hull***

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**Learning and Caring Group**

I am always impressed by the work of our District World Church Action Team (WCAT), bringing us the bigger picture of Methodism and how we, as a District, are contributing to and involved in that work. I hope members of Synod will take back to their churches the news from WCAT and commend their work. Specifically the link with Latvia remains but we are looking to form a new one. It is also hoped to give support for work in Jamaica, possibly via the work of MWIB who do such a wonderful job in our District. A member of WCAT will be attending the One Mission Forum in London on October 7. Many of you may have been unaware of the “Buddy Scheme” by which Conference links World Church representatives with Districts; our District is linked to the Denmark representative.

Of the other groups or teams who come under the Learning and Caring “umbrella”, most are reported on separately. However I am happy to tell you that our Probationers’ Oversight committee continues to provide good care, nurture and guidance in our District. A group will be looking at how best to nurture and encourage the work among children and young people and the invaluable work of Safeguarding continues to be in safe hands.

On this last point may I add a personal note. We have all, I am sure, been grateful to Linda Morgan for her sterling work in recent years; now that she is stepping down from her Safeguarding role I would like to give my own thanks and wish her well for the future; also my good wishes to Jane Gay as she begins to take over the role.

While I am including personal items, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Richard Armiger for all his efforts, he has contributed much in support, advice and guidance in ways which have impinged on work which Learning and Caring is responsible for. I wish him well in his new post and thank him again for his contributions.

I finish with my usual plea: if your group wants to bring a matter regarding its work to Synod’s attention, please let me know, if I do not hear from you I cannot report it.

Richard Dean - Learning and Caring Group Coordinator

**World Church Action Team Report**

We bring the following to your attention.

* **Mission Partner Link** – Deacon Angleena Keizer served in Sri Lanka from 2015 to July 2017 ministering and working alongside the English speaking congregation at the Kollupitiya Methodist Church. She is now looking to visit Israel/Palestine in October/November with it possibly being her next placement. We continue to pray for Angleena in this 'interim' period. *(See her news and video on the Methodist Church website,* [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk/) )
* **National in Mission Appointment** - Our link with Upper Myanmar is drawing to its conclusion and so we will be linking up with the Church of South India for the next few years. As before, this link will help to raise awareness and provide pointers for prayerful support.
* **Request for financial support from Upper Myanmar** -Ironically, we have received a request for financial assistance for a celebration to mark 125 years of the Leprosy Mission in November. We have consulted World Church Relationships and, whilst we would normally encourage churches to raise money directly for the World Mission Fund, on this occasion we feel we need to respond to the request. The amount required is approx £1150 and it has been agreed that a collection be made at Synod and that Circuits/churches be asked if they could hold a fund raising event or make a donation. Please do what you can. (for more information contact Deacon Donna Ely [donna.ely@mybroadbandmail.com](mailto:donna.ely@mybroadbandmail.com) Tel: 01379 642791 or Sarah Friswell [sarah.friswell@btinternet.com](mailto:sarah.friswell@btinternet.com) )
* **Membership of World Church Action Team** – We are looking to expand the membership of the team and ideally need a representative from each Circuit. This will help to keep world church matters on the agenda locally and also provide inspiration and encouragement for our own worship and mission.

On behalf of the District World Church Action Team D Ely 8/2017

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**Service Group**

**Social Issues**

Autumn is a time of Remembrance - and also one which, above all others, brings to our attention the problems which continue beset our sadly divided and war-torn world.

**October 15th to 22nd**is the**Week of Prayer for World Peace** and this runs directly into**One World Week (22nd to 29th October) –**a reminder, should we need one, that prayer alone is not enough. If it is to be effective it must involve a willingness on our part to let God use us in providing His answers to oot prayers. This year **t**he theme of **One World Week**is ***Good Neighbours* –**and we all have neighbours, increasingly neighbours from many parts of the globe - often of cultures and creeds very different to our own. International**Interfaith Week**(**12 – 19thNovember)**focuses particularlyon the needto build bridges of understanding and friendship with those of other beliefs.

These three special autumnal weeks encourage us to work ecumenically other Christians in our areas to “Love oor neighbours as we love ourselves” - both in prayer and in practice. Remember that people of many nationalities now mingle in our country while still maintaining their contacts with, and visits to, their families and friends in their homelands. It is not impossible that by God’s grace a seed of Christian love prayerfully sown in East Anglia may sprout in Syria and bear fruit in Afghanistan!

Suggestions and worship materials for all three of the weeks mentioned above are freely available on the internet. ***David Yarham***

**MHA**

I know it is early but..... dare I say Christmas Cards?

As you may know, MHA can provide printed cards to which you simply add your name, and then post them back to HQ to be distributed to our residents. However in East Anglia we try to go one more step, and I hope as many of you as possible will find time to respond in a different way. It is so lovely to see the pleasure on the face of a resident who receives one of our hand made or specially bought cards, with a written message from someone in one of our churches.

Could you find the time to do this- or to get some of your congregation to do so too?

Children’s hand made cards are especially welcome- so if you know of a Brownie group or school class who would like to take part then do pass the word along.

The cards need to be with me by the **end of November at the latest.** One resident commented “so I am not forgotten then” as she read the card. MHA are currently focussing on dementia care and the terrific impact that music therapy has on sufferers.

Any money we can raise helps towards this. Our support is so important.

Hoping you can help

***Pam Bayliss,Lowestoft Circuit,East Anglia Rep for MHA. Email***[***revbayliss@btinternet.com***](mailto:revbayliss@btinternet.com)

During the summer **Keith Albans** left his role as Director of Chaplaincy & Spirituality after 16 years in post. Keith was given an uplifting farewell from MHA with a strong expression of gratitude for all his work at the charity. During his time with MHA Keith led the development of chaplaincy as a funded service for older people and worked with many other individuals and organisations to increase understanding about the value of spirituality in later life.

Keith was succeeded by **Chris Swift**. Chris has spent the last twenty years as a chaplain and chaplaincy manager in the NHS. An ordained Anglican minister, Chris has led ecumenical and multi-faith chaplaincy teams in Barnet, Dewsbury and Leeds.

This year’s Methodist Homes Sunday, now called ‘**Best Sunday for Ages**’, took the theme of **‘Befriending Age’**. Chris Swift, joined the congregation of Mirfield Methodist Church in West Yorkshire for their service and spoke about the work of MHA. In his remarks Chris emphasised the importance of MHA’s foundations and its continuing connection to the Methodist Church. Funds raised by churches throughout the year support work with older people in a range of ways, including chaplaincy, music therapy and ‘live at home’ schemes.

**Thank you** to all the ministers, local preachers and worship leaders who used our worship resources and held services, raising awareness and funds. If your church didn’t, it’s not too late. Please ring 01332 296200 and ask for Lesley France or email [lesley.france@mha.org.uk](mailto:lesley.france@mha.org.uk)

For other fundraising ideas and resources to support the work of MHA visit our new microsite [www.bestforages.com](http://www.bestforages.com)

***Next year will be MHA’s 75th anniversary year and we celebrate***

***‘Best Sunday for Ages’ on Sunday 10th June 2018***.

*On Saturday 13 October 2018 there will be a 75th anniversary Service of Thanksgiving for MHA*

*at 3 pm in Derby Cathedral – further details to follow.*

**Changes at MHA**

In June we said farewell to Adrian Bagg, CEO. Adrian had led MHA for over three years during which he oversaw a period of significant growth for the charity. Work is already underway to identify his successor. In August Graham Smith came to the end of his term of office as Chair of the Trustees. He is succeeded by John Robinson. John is a Methodist by upbringing and currently worships in his local Anglican village church.

**With your help we aim to eliminate loneliness among older people by connecting them in communities that care.**

**ACTION FOR CHILDREN**

Many churches in the District were involved on Action for Children Sunday on 9th July. Envelopes were distributed and money collected.

Action for Children have in the last year opened a home for disabled children at Harston, near Cambridge and the manager spoke of the work that they are doing at a recent morning service at Wesley Church, Cambridge. She welcomes anyone who would like to see what they are doing to visit the home.

The Cambridge Federation of Townswomen's Guilds who hold an annual Carol Service in Wesley Church have decided that the collection this year will be for the home at Harston.

The Cambridge Building Society has chosen Action for Children as one of the Charities that it is supporting this year so all readers of the Cambridge News are busy cutting out tokens which are published daily in the paper!

I am hoping to be able to attend the meeting for District Advocates in London in October. ***Sheila Turner***

**Action for Children Sunday** - We would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who held an Action for Children Sunday service for our 148th birthday celebrations. There were many services being held throughout the month of July in Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. In the region, this resulted in the Methodist community raising £3851 throughout the month of July 2017. Your support inspires us as we pursue our ambition to ensure that any child that needs help gets help.

On behalf of the children, young people, families and staff, we would like to say a heartfelt Thank You to the entire Methodist community for your outstanding support and commitment. With your help, we are reaching more children & young people than ever before, giving them support and helping them to overcome the difficulties in their lives. We look forward to working with you throughout the rest of 2017 and continue to build our relationship together.

**Holly Canham,** Community Fundraiser for Cambridgeshire, Norfolk & Suffolk

***It would be good to have some reports from elsewhere is the district.***

***If you know of any news please let the Synod Secretary know.***

**SABBATICALS REPORT**

It is a great privilege to serve as Sabbaticals Officer in the District. I very much enjoy following the planning and preparation processes alongside circuits and ministers and hearing about what sabbaticals have meant to those who are returning to circuit life afterwards. I feel it would be encouraging to hear from ministers and/or support groups by way of a short piece for the Grapevine either about the process or the sabbatical time itself.

There has been an increase in numbers of ministers seeking to split their sabbaticals eg: taking two months at once and then the further month after a return to work for a period. Whilst this pattern may be essential for a very few ministers, I would urge ministers, support groups and circuits to avoid this pattern if at all possible as I do not believe it offers the best sabbatical option for the majority. The gift of a full three months/13 weeks away from circuit life gives the opportunity to have a real break and include winding down and winding up time too. One benefit of the longer single break should be to enable ministers to include some reflection/ writing/ readjustment time in the last week or so, so that the transition back to circuit life is not too dramatic.

May I urge those of you who are supporting ministers preparing for their sabbaticals to begin planning well in advance to ensure that your plans have been approved by the District Advisory Group and that all cover is in place in good time. That way we can ensure that everyone is clear about how responsibilities are to be allocated well before the sabbatical begins. Although the Prospectus Form does not ask for that information specifically, I will be seeking assurance in future that those plans are being made before approval is given. Of the six ministers due to take their sabbaticals in the current connexional year, only two have had their prospectus approved as I write. Please note that it is essential that all this paperwork is completed by 1 December 2017.

Finally, please note that I am ‘on sabbatical’ myself from 1 January to 31 March 2018. I will endeavour to process all paperwork for 2017-18 before I go, but if there are any general queries whilst I am away, please refer to the Methodist Church website page: <http://www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/leadership-and-ministry/sabbaticals> or the District Office for information.  ***Heather M Walker - District Sabbaticals Officer***

**Agricultural Chaplain Report**

A warmer winter without the frosts to kill off the bugs. The countryside was looking very good, but after a normal start, springtime turned out to be a very dry period, with sugar beet seed and spring barley lying dormant for up to a month waiting for rain to germinate the seed. Strange situation with a varied growth but in the end, as has always been the case, everything levelled and the barley seemed to catch up. The sugar beet are yet to be harvested.

The harvest of cereals started slightly early in this region, everything was going smoothly, and then it was a 'stop go' harvest. Quality was very good at the beginning but the rain spoiled things later on. Yields are reported to be around the average for this area. Prices have increased slightly mainly due to the value of the pound being so low.

The autumn cultivations are already underway preparing for another cycle in the farming calendar.

From my involvement with F C N (Farming Community Network) come reports of an increase in calls to the helpline (7am - 11pm) nationally. There are a variety of reasons, finance, mental illness, loneliness, problems with the Rural payment entitlements and relationships. Sadly these problems are due mainly to isolation.

It will be interesting to know the outcome of 'Brexit'. The majority of farmers voted to leave, so I'm informed, but will the government support the agricultural sector, or will Mr. Gove inflict his own agenda and upset the pattern as he did for the education system? Early signs are not good. Farmers who rely on migrant workers are concerned that they will have to rethink what to grow, especially with vegetable growers who need a flexible labour force.

In June I arranged a farm visit for the Lay workers in the District. A very enjoyable sunny day visiting 5 farms, 4 of which had diversified from conventional farming to increase income and one which has installed an automatic milking system, where the cows visit the station when they wish and everything is recorded on computer, such as time milked, quantities given. And of course they receive their food!

By the time you read this we should be able to sing 'All is safely gathered in, 'ere the winter storms begin' and thank God for another harvest, which He promised in Genesis.

*Thank you for your prayers and support****. George Frost.***

**MWiB report**

As always we have had a busy year. Our District days continue to be a huge success with around 200 people attending. We had an excellent Spring session in April with Rev Julian Pursehouse as our speaker at Downham Market Methodist Church We looked at passages from scripture where people felt God’s presence and were amazed by the experiences. Julian chose to help us to recognise God at work around us continually bringing us experiences of awe and wonder.

We held our day conference at Belsey Bridge Conference centre in May and our speaker then was Rev Nicola Vidamor who introduced us to some of her collections of Icons. The Icons were displayed in various rooms and we moved around in small groups learning about them. It was a quieter day than some but a very helpful learning experience.

A good group represented our District at the Swanwick conference later in April when our speaker and leader was Bishop Rosemary Wenner from Germany. She spoke about the work that the churches have undertaken with refugees who have arrived in huge numbers. The whole weekend was based on the theme of ‘Welcome’. People from East Anglia were helped at the welcome area as everyone arrived. Rev Jenny Pathmarajah was in charge of the music for the weekend. Sarah Braisedel who was the researcher for the Epworth exhibition, Transforming the world from the Kitchen, telling the history of Women’s role in the Methodist Church, now lives in our district and she led one of the many workshops. Rev Charity Nzegwu was one of the chaplains on duty.

Plans are underway for a Creative Arts day in 2018 funded by money donated at the thanksgiving service for the life of Lynn White who died in 2016. Publicity will be sent out in good time as places will be limited.

Fund Raising for EACH continues until October. The latest figure which I have been given is just under £11,000, raised since October 2015.

In October the role of President for East Anglia MWIB will be taken by Ruth Arnold from Ely. Rev Heather Sorrell will become Past President, active for one year after which we will appoint a new vice president. Ruth’s induction will be held at Ely Methodist Church at our Autumn District Day on Oct 11th, 10.30 -3.30pm. The speaker will be Bishop Everald Galbraith from Jamaica. During her presidency Ruth’s project will be supporting some work undertaken there.

***Heather Sorrell***