

Reports for Synod.

Introduction from the Synod Secretary

Below are reports from several of the District groups and committees which give a flavour of the many and various areas of work that is carried out. Hopefully you will find time before Synod to read through them all. We are grateful for all the work carried out by our District Officers and Committees and all those who support them.

Chris Finbow

District Policy Committee (DPC) Report

Since the last Synod, the District Policy Committee met in June, carrying out the business of the East Anglia District, receiving reports from District Groups, reviewing the finances of the District and approving sundry grants and receiving feedback from the recipients of grants. This enables us to share the good things happening and being planned in the District.

Regional Working. It was reported that representatives from East Anglia District and Beds Essex & Herts District continue to meet every few months and we are looking at additional ways that we can work together, sharing ideas and resources. A joint meeting of the Superintendents from both Districts with the two District Chairs is planned for November.

Property. Issues across the District were discussed. Our District Property Secretary, Mr Roy Hollands has been working with several churches and circuits around the District, offering guidance and advice on a range of property issues. The need for churches and circuits to follow the correct procedures when carrying out building works was emphasised. DPC agreed to closures of two Churches across the District .

Stationing. It was reported that we still have vacancies in Ipswich and West Norfolk.

Safeguarding. Our District Safeguarding Officer, Neil van Holland reported that over recent months there had been a lack of take up of training but he felt that this is probably because we are four years on from the Covid lockdown and that next year there will probably be a high demand again. DPC was informed that there will be a Memorial to Conference looking at DSOs becoming regional employees. Meaning that the funding would then be Connexional. If Conference agrees the proposals there will be a consultation period and so changes will probably not be implemented before 2026.

Lay Employment. It was reported that in the light of recent changes in legislation there could in certain situations be issues around pay to lay employees that have been in post a long time. It was agreed that our DLES should attend the Superintendents' meeting in September and discuss the situation with them.

Appointments. DPC considered the appointment of several people to roles within the District although there are still some vacancies to fill. The committee agreed to the appointment of a paid District Fundraising Officer (part time). This would be advertised during the Summer.

Our District Mission Enabler Yasmin Finch reported that work on NPNP continues to move forward and various projects are being considered for further development.

An update was given on the new Connexional Council that will be replacing the Methodist Council from September. Some concern was expressed regarding how we will get updates from Connexional Council given that we will not have a District representative on it as we did with Methodist Council.

EDI. The EDI group have met again in order to move forward further on the different aspects of this work. A draft Job Description for a Circuit EDI Officer was presented to the meeting and approved. This will be forwarded to Circuits in due course.

District Farewell & Welcome Services. It was reported that plans for both of these are in hand and the group who are organising these have further meetings planned over the Summer.

The committee received an update on the provisional plans for Revd Helen Cameron's Presidential visit to the East Anglia District from 17th – 19th January 2025.

The Spring Synod 2025 will be held on Saturday 26th April at Chapel Field Road, Norwich.

Chris Finbow, Synod Secretary.

District Lay Employment Report.

It has been another busy period for lay employment, with a variety of vacancies across the district. There has, however, been continuing difficulty with filling children and youth worker roles which seems to reflect a general downward trend in applications nationally, including for secular positions.

Hopefully all line managers have downloaded the **Line Manager Handbook** by now. If not, you can find it on the connexion website or contact me on the email below for the link. In addition to those guidelines, I am starting to create a number of East Anglia District policies to assist with the day-to-day management of lay employees. This should help clarity in decision making as a line manager. We now have a menopause/menstrual policy and I am currently finalising a Carer's policy to reflect the new legislation for carer's leave entitlement and a related Time Off for Dependents policy. If you have questions or need advice in any area of lay employment I am always happy to help.

In addition, I have recently taken on the role of **Data Protection Champion**, some of you may already have received some rather persistent emails from me! If you receive an email asking you to complete a data protection task please DO NOT IGNORE this as it will not go away. If you have any difficulty completing anything relating to data protection please contact me. Legislation in both employment law and data protection can be very exacting and we have no choice but to comply, so please remember that I am here as a resource to help make these unavoidable tasks more manageable.

Kate Dalton. District Lay Employment Secretary.

District Training Fund Report

1. The District Training fund exists to support minister's professional development.
2. All ministers are entitled to £200 per annum from the district for explicitly training and development needs, with the minister's Circuit encouraged to provide an additional £100. Each presbyter or deacon will normally make one application each connexional year unless there are exceptional circumstances or alternatively make a fresh application if the annual sum of £300 has not been exceeded on the first occasion.
3. For applications that exceed the sum of £300 the presbyter / deacon is encouraged to make an application to the District Grants & Personnel Committee through the Revd. Dr. Mike Wilson.
4. In order to seek support from this fund the applicant will be expected to provide receipts or documentary evidence of booking and payment for the event concerned, included with the application.
5. In the year under review, 3 Ministers applied for this funding. Encouragement is made for ministers to use this facility. Please feel free to consult me if you have any question.

Rev Dr Richman Ncube

Report from Sign the Cross

The work in the Deaf Church continues to flourish.

We have maintained regular connections with Downham Market and Sprowston Methodist churches where there are opportunities for Deaf people to join the hearing congregation with an interpreter. The Deaf Church were glad to be part of the Farewell service for the Revd Julian Pursehouse and the Welcome service for the Revd Helen Hollands.

Apart from these few opportunities, mostly we worship as separate communities due to the language differences. We were therefore very pleased to take part in a seminar under the District's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work in May.. If you missed it, you can watch a recording on the District Website: <https://eangliamethodist.org.uk/we-care/deaf-community>. In this webinar, a young Deaf man described his experience as a Deaf person who uses British Sign Language, growing up in the hearing world and being part of the Hearing and Deaf Church. Despite a few technical difficulties on the night, I hope this gives everyone a good insight into the Deaf experience.

We look forward to getting together with Deaf Christians across East Anglia when we celebrate Harvest Festival together in Diss at the end of September. We always welcome hearing visitors, so please get in touch if you'd like to join us, or come to any of our regular services in Norwich.

Rev Anne Richardson (signthecross@gmail.com - or text/ WhatsApp 07811888019)

Sabbatical report

A very warm welcome to all those newly arrived in the district, including our new chair! I shall shortly be getting my information together about when sabbaticals should be taken, and may be in touch. Needless to say, sabbaticals cannot be taken in the first year of a new appointment. If you think you're due for a sabbatical soon and haven't heard from me in the near future, please get in touch.

Ann Bossingham

Safeguarding Report for Synod

This summer has seen us 4 years on from the first Covid lockdown. The most noticeable thing from a District Safeguarding perspective has been the real lull that has been seen in training demand this summer as a result. The knock on of this I am certain will be and explosion of demand in 2025 so this is something I am currently preparing for.

This training will be taking place however without the regional support of Ann Howlett Foster from the Learning Network who is retiring. Ann has been a wonderful colleague and mentor to me in the first 18 months, and will be missed, and I would like to use this report to thank her for her support to the District.

Training

Foundation Module 2024 has been rolled out from September 1st 2024. During the course of August I have delivered the new materials input out to our valued pool of 15 District Foundation Trainers who are invaluable to this process.

As mentioned above Ann has now retired, and Advanced module will now be delivered with me by Jenna Thorne from the Learning Network and also Rev Colin Watkins and Aileen Fox.

There help will be invaluable going forward as I work on the basis of delivering 5 Face to Face Advanced Module Courses in 2025, alongside 6-8 Online courses once demand becomes clear. Regionally I have been working closely with my other District Safeguarding Officer colleagues to signpost people to relevant online courses they need that may be delivered by another district.

Current Safeguarding case load

There are currently 11 active Safeguarding contracts within the District

The MyConcern system continues to work well with regard to record keeping of new concerns.

Our DBS compliance continues to be commended.

Connexional Safeguarding news

I recently attended the District Safeguarding Officer Connexional Day in Westminster. A key topic on the agenda that day was the restructuring of Safeguarding work across the Connexion that will bring about a more regional structure from September 2025. This was in response to a memorial to Conference for District Safeguarding Officer's to be employed by Connexion but with regional responsibilities. This is a work in progress but I feel optimistic that as a District we are one of the positive models for working well, and as such change will be minimal. My aim will be to continue to maintain those relationships District wide that aid positive working, and positive outcomes.

Next years Methodist Safeguarding Conference will take place at The Hayes Christian Conference Centre between 11th and 13th February 2025, with the theme being Embedding a Positive Safeguarding Culture'.

Neil van Holland (District Safeguarding Officer)

District Property Secretary Report

The saying goes that “time flies when you’re having fun”, and I’m surprised to realise that I’ve been DPS now for just over a year. While care for our property isn’t always fun of course, I do continue to enjoy working with our stewards, ministers and staff as we play our part in the life and ministry of the District.

There are several property projects of various kinds and sizes underway around the District, showing how much effort and commitment people are putting into looking after the buildings in our care, and finding creative ways for them to continue to serve our missional purposes.

Please get in touch with me straight away if urgent repairs of any kind are needed on a listed building or urgent external repairs are needed on one in a Conservation Area. The Connexional Conservation Officer, Joanne Balmforth, has said that only temporary repairs should be done, however urgent the situation, while contacting her for advice. Joanne will respond as quickly as possible, and give authorisation as soon as possible too. I would say the same for consulting me about urgent repairs on buildings without Conservation requirements, when the work needs Final Consent. These procedures are in place to help us all to fulfil our responsibilities correctly and in line with requirements of law and of Methodist policy.

My experience so far is that urgent repairs usually arise because of putting off work raised in quinquennials and hoping for the best. Another saying that comes to mind then is “a stitch in time saves nine”. I would be glad to hear from you if a quinquennial brings up difficult issues and costly repairs, and hope that we can work together to avoid any emergencies.

If you don’t already, I would recommend subscribing to the monthly property news email, where you can read inspiring stories and useful news from around the Connexion: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/property-matters/>

I will be happy to hear from you if you have any queries or questions about buildings and land and their use and maintenance. Please do get in touch for advice before arranging anything other than the usual Methodist Church use of any property or premises.

Roy Hollands

EDI Report – August 2024

Our EDI Committee has continued to meet in conjunction with the Beds, Essex and Herts (BEH) EDI Committee and it has been great to share ideas. We have now formalised the East Anglia EDI Committee and it is listed in the District Directory. We would welcome new members.

Progress continues to be made with the EDI and Unconscious Bias training but some Circuits still have a way to go. We need to keep encouraging people to do the training and also remember those new to a role (for which there is a mandatory EDI training requirement) will also need it. Several people who have still to do the training would like it to be face to face training so if your Circuit is putting a session on please consider opening it up to others in nearby Circuits.

We have now held a couple of EDI Zoom awareness sessions in conjunction with the BEH District. The first was Revd Andrew Brazier (BEH EDI Officer) in conversation with a member of the Norwich Deaf Church and the recording can be found on the District Website under "We Care - Deaf Community". The second was the neurodiversity awareness session with Revd Jonny Bell. The recording from this (or a link) will be going on the District Website EDI page in due course. The EDI Committee meets again in mid-October and will consider what further Zooms we can plan.

If people have completed the training, they may like to start thinking about what practical changes may be needed at their church or in their Circuit to aid inclusivity and what areas of Justice-seeking Church they would like to learn about or focus on next. It is intended to be a continuous learning process as we seek to change the culture of the Methodist Church. There is a requirement for annual learning and the Methodist Church website says "Individuals can set their own goals for further learning, which can be done by themselves or collectively with others. This can involve self-learning, using the Personal Responsibility Commitment, through reading, internet research, attending a course or learning in conversation with others". The Zooms we are arranging can be part of this.

I attended one of the "Equipping for Equality" training days run by the Connexional EDI team in June. This included the following:

- Transformative Change
- Cultural Intelligence
- A choice of workshops on Communications, Social Media & Zoom, Equality Impact Assessments and Inclusive Language Guide (the one I attended)
- Mandatory EDI training – continued personal learning

When I have time I will consider how I can share learnings/resources from this.

Revd Jonny Bell and I have had a preliminary discussion around what EDI resources to have on the District website and how these should be organised. Similar thoughts are also taking place at Connexional level regarding the Methodist Church website.

If you have any thoughts or concerns around EDI or the JDS Strategy, please get in touch. If I can't answer your questions I will be able to put you in touch with people who can.

Susan Eldridge. District EDI Officer

Methodist Women in Britain Report.

It has been an awesome few months since our last report.

We quadrupled our delegates for the MWiB Annual conference in Swanwick in April from last year and really developed friendships, networks and insight into the different regions of the connexion. Ask any of our delegates and they will tell you what a wonderful weekend it was. The Hayes had maintained prices but we were aware that the cost of living crisis is hitting people very hard so we offered a small bursary to help off set expenses for anyone going for the first time if any of our delegates felt that would be helpful.

We also poached the Helen Kim scholar who had been so impressive at MWiB Conference in 2023 when she talked about travelling to South America as part of her role representing the UK. The Helen Kim Memorial Scholarship is given to young women who show real leadership potential and there are fewer than 20 of them worldwide. So when Madeleine Reed came to lead our Spring District day in Diss we had high expectations.

We were not disappointed – indeed we were blown away by this young woman who explored faith with us on the theme of welcome. Her style of leadership intermingling personal anecdote with small group discussion really worked for the 40+ who had come to hear her and to explore evangelism and active faith reaching out to the next generations.

We also began making closer ties with Rita Rowe joining us from the Lincolnshire District.

We would like to thank the church family at Diss who manned the IT desk, kept us fed and watered and extended hospitality to us and to Madeleine. We especially thank Sandra who gave Madeleine a place to stay.

Looking forward Revd. Jenny from Histon in the Cambridge Circuit we will be focusing on gospel music. This will be our Autumn District day on Saturday 26th October. We are hoping a Saturday event will appeal to some of the working population who can't make a midweek event. More details to follow.

In line with our vision to be eco friendly there are new scarves made of silk and with a lovely butterfly pattern, as well as wooden pens, crosses and Jute bags available from MWiB.

We have also raised over £1400 for our President's charity and will be handing over a cheque to 3 million steps brain injury support charity.

On the downside my presidency should be up this year but there is no vice president to replace me which is such a shame because it is an amazing experience. We are also losing a stalwart member of the committee Elizabeth who has done a lot for the district and Judy and Olga are standing down as our outstanding newsletter editors- it will be impossible to keep going in our current format without people coming forward.

There are so many positive things happening at the moment - a real vision for Methodist women in this District - please pray for the current committee and also ask God whether He sees a role for you in this marvellous organisation. Can circuits please let us know the names of their circuit MWiB reps.

Sue Groome (District MWiB President)