

SUPER'S SOAP BOX

Dear Friends,

“Keep moving forward...”

I am writing to you as the New Connexional Year (2018/2019) arrives to reflect on and to look ahead to 2019. We are privileged to be in a position where we can see reasonably clearly what is happening in the Romford Circuit and there has been much to be thankful for in the last twelve months.

At the Circuit meeting held on 26th January 2017 at Harold Wood Methodist Church, a Study Group was appointed to look at the Circuit's Ministry needs and to examine the options and to look at the aspects of a cluster-based 'Team Ministry' shaped for mission. The Group met on six occasions between March 2017 and June 2018 and comprised the representatives from the Circuit churches and the Leadership Team. In addition, various pieces of research were carried out and shared with the Group members.

The Study Group looked at the attendance, membership, trends in preaching, financial trends, cost trends, current activities, and the mission and needs of all the churches. It also considered the broader context of mission, ministry and membership within Methodism in the UK, of which Romford Circuit is a part.

The Study Group recommended that the future shape of ministry in the Romford Circuit should be a mixed, cluster-based ministry, with lay and ordained Team Ministry Staff, comprising four stipendiary Methodist Ministers, together with four part-time lay workers, to support the mission and ministry of the cluster-based Circuit Team Ministry. In addition, the Circuit should seek dispensation to authorise one or two of our Local Preachers (or other suitable persons) to preside at the Lord's Supper.

The Circuit meeting met on 26th June 2018 at Aveyley Methodist Church considered and approved the recommendations to move into a two cluster-based team ministry from September 2018. I thank the members of the Study Group sincerely for their hard work and support. We trust and pray that New Team Ministry will make the best use of the gifts and talents of Ministers and Lay Workers by allowing them to focus on using those gifts and talents across the whole Circuit Clusters, rather than just on the churches in their own sections and make the best use of the financial resources that the circuit has available. It will allow the circuit to employ lay people with specific skills and experience to pursue mission projects in a way that is sustainable over the longer term.

We will be working as a team with both ordained and lay employees. The purpose of the cluster is to work together pastorally and in mission and outreach work. The cluster purpose is to support each other. Team Ministry is about working together as a team, not dependent on one person.

The New Testament model of ministry is very encouraging for us and how Spiritual gifts are important to release Spirit driven ministry. So, by 2020 we hope to see growth in Spiritual experience and to enable the release of Spiritual gifts in our congregations.

The Study Group met last time suggested that in the next two years we should be aiming to:

- See our church congregations growing in grace and relationship with the Lord and maturity of faith and in spiritual growth.
- Styles of worship need to change to meet the needs of changing generations in relation to church including young people.
- We need to think through how we meet the needs of diverse congregations.
- Churches must work together rather than in isolation.

- Sharing initiatives and mission in our areas whilst acknowledging that our individual churches also work within their own unique contexts. What works for one church may not work for another in their context.
- We hope to engage with the groups that use our premises and be more relevant to our communities.
- We need consistency and continuity in our worship.
- We need to have a prayer focused ministry which need to be developed right throughout the cluster churches.

Our two clusters Team Ministry will also enable us to work out God's purposes both in our local church areas and across the Clusters, particularly in the areas of mission, ministry and spiritual & numerical growth.

Team – based ministry is the most effective model for leading and organising Christian ministry for the twenty- first century. There has been a more important time for the Church of Jesus Christ to be led by sincere, dedicated teams of disciples who labour together in God's fellowship to live the Gospel on a turbulent world.

A Team Ministry model also fits well with new trends emerging in today's world, the postmodern world. I argue that certain aspects of postmodern culture actually encourage the church to make needed reforms; reforms that are foundational to biblical Christianity.

No doubt that an exciting and challenging time is ahead of us, but we need to put our trust in God and take one step at a time to move forward. As Martin Luther King (Jr) said. "If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl. But whatever you do you have to **keep moving forward.**"

HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW METHODIST CONNEXIONAL YEAR 2018/2019.

Yours as ever.

David Jebb
Superintendent minister