

Whitehaven Circuit Meeting Minutes on Wednesday 21 June 2017 at 7.30pm at Seascale

Present: Grace Adamson, Philip Adamson, David Andrews, Alistair Bell, Katie Bell, Alec Bounds, Ian Coates, Alan Coyles, Barbara Coyles, David Davies, Jackie Davies, Margaret Hargreaves, Wendy Kilworth-Mason (chair), Lorrie Larkham, Doug McDevitte, Linda McDevitte, Katrina MacEwan, Jean Millie, Alan Moore, Mavis Moore, Mary Snape

Apologies: Neil Bingham, Gillian Bounds, Gwynneth Everett, Allison Hanshaw, Gill Mitchell, John Pryde, Nan Pryde, Maureen Pyke, Mandy Taylor

In attendance: Pauline Corkhill, Janet Hardy, Jill Hudson, Keith Hudson, Dorothy Nevinson, Ian Parker

Opening devotions included the dedication of the Easter offering.

Constitution of the meeting: the list circulated with the attendance sheet was confirmed.

Future of the circuits in West Cumbria

An initial discussion took place which was open to all members in the circuit about possible changes to circuit boundaries in Cumbria.

Wendy Kilworth-Mason introduced the discussion by saying that over the next three years we expect to see the superintendents of the west Cumbrian circuits leaving, that there is a severe shortage of presbyters and it was possible that none of these positions might be filled. Keswick and Cockermouth are also pessimistic about being able to afford a minister. There is a connexional presumption that we move away from single minister circuits.

The paper for the circuit stewards and superintendents' meeting on 25 March was used as a basis which listed options of

- staying as we are
- pairing single stations
- three geographic areas linking to archdeaconry boundaries
- a single Cumbrian circuit or
- linking to mission communities.

Groups discussed the options and gave their initial reactions.

On the options

- no group felt we could stay the same
- there was little support for pairing circuits, suggesting that it would only delay the inevitable
- similarly a single circuit was felt to be a move too far although there was the suggestion that it would enable paid appointments for areas such as finance and property
- however there was support for three circuits (in west Cumbria Whitehaven, Solway, Cockermouth and Keswick and possibly Wigton) with the strong suggestion that this be linked to developing mission communities.

More general comments looked at

- the gradual decline in numbers and ministers over the years and the feeling that this was likely to continue
- the need for presbyters not to become engulfed in administration and looking after buildings but to grow the church
- reducing the number of meetings
- concern about filling lay vacancies
- the development of lay ministries (eg local preachers) to wider roles
- a possible need to reduce the number of places of worship
- the need for more information about how larger rural circuits are working (there is a fairly positive Methodist council report to this year's Conference <http://methodist.org.uk/media/2625791/conf-2017-27-Methodist-Council-part-2.pdf> section O)
- the need to work ecumenically recognising that some mission communities are developing well and others have yet to start – this could also help with resources for finance, property etc
- reconfiguring around mission and growth.

Members were encouraged to share with congregations. It was agreed that there will be more discussion at a further open circuit meeting in September which will include a YouTube video of Richard Teal explaining the position. We can then consult autumn church councils and consider talking to neighbouring circuits with an aim of reconfiguring in 2019. (The circuit will need to make a decision about a presbyter from 2019 between May and September 2018.)

Business meeting

1. **Minutes** of the meeting of 15 March were approved. There were no matters arising.
2. **Resources**
 - i. **Finance**
 - a. **Ron Pond bequest** It was noted that the relevant wording from the will is:
 ‘...After the death of my said sister to stand possessed of the capital and income of the Trust Fund in trust for the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes...absolutely for the creation by them of a trust to pay the income therefrom in perpetuity to Lowther Street Methodist Church, Whitehaven (or to such other Church as it shall become by merger or amalgamation) for general purposes...’
 So it was agreed that the circuit will receive the income from this fund.
 - b. **Circuit fundraising** afternoon tea on 20 May had raised £821.21 and was a good social occasion with a large attendance. Nan Pryde and her team were thanked for organising it.
 - c. **Loan to Keswick and Cockermouth circuit** A bridging loan of £90,000 whilst the circuit sell and buy manses was agreed.
 - ii. **Property**

- a. **Moresby Parks**
 - 1. There has been a further delay to the sale of land as planning permission has expired and the buyer does not wish to proceed until that is in place. It was agreed to give a short period for this to happen but we would consider withdrawing from the sale if there was no progress by the next meeting.
 - 2. The meeting agreed in principle to sell St Mark's to Moresby parish and for us to make a donation for the continuing work at Moresby Parks. It was acknowledged that the land behind the church could be of use to the parish if it was not sold.
- b. **Manse** Ian Coates reported that the roof has been replaced, the loose and broken flags repaired and replaced, gutters cleaned and pointing carried out.

iii. People

- a. **Property steward** vacancy
- b. **Circuit steward** vacancy (including financial steward) from September – this is now critical to the functioning of the circuit and members were asked to consider if they could take on a role or suggest others.
- c. **Synod representatives:** the current two circuit stewards (Gillian Bounds and Mandy Taylor) and two representatives (Jackie Davies and Gwynneth Everett) were reappointed.
- d. **Lamplugh with Ennerdale church council** Methodist representatives: Dorothy Nevinson was appointed (in place of Jim Watson who has resigned after many years' service) together with Wendy Kilworth-Mason and David Andrews
- iv. **Administration** Members agreed to let Bob Mitchell have any amendments to the circuit directory and Andy Lennox any website changes before the end of July.
- v. **Worship** Leaders of worship and preachers' meeting 7 June: David Andrews reported and it was agreed that churches which are not yet involved in *Moving mountains* should consider what to do, preferably ecumenically. Church councils would also be asked if they would like to continue having love feasts from time to time.

3. Mission

- i. **Circuit charity 2017-18** Calderwood House was agreed. We would ask for a speaker at the December meeting. Churches would let Alistair Bell have outstanding money for Water Aid by the end of July.
- ii. **Mission in Britain and world mission** Maureen Pyke needs all money by the end of July.
- iii. **Circuit mission priorities** it was felt that requests for circuit support had been met apart from that from Egremont for a person/people able to

stimulate dynamic thinking and develop new and innovative outreach ideas. The Reach team and the Moving mountains material godforall.org.uk/moving-mountains-resources (also distributed in booklets at the meeting) was suggested together with learning from ideas which had worked well in one church (eg Cleator Moor's outreach programme) in others.

- iv. **Safeguarding** Jackie Davies reported that people trained in 2012 need to attend refresher training either on 5 July at Workington United Church or 11 October at the Meeting Place, both 630-900pm. A daytime session could be arranged if necessary.

- 4. **Dates of meetings** 20 September at the Meeting Place, 6 December at Gosforth and 21 March at St Bees all at 7.30pm

The meeting closed with the grace at 9.27pm.

Please send items and reports for the September meeting to David Andrews by 31 August
The September meeting is also the copy date for the autumn *Link*