

**St Mark's and Putnoe Heights
Partnership Council Meeting
11 February 2009**

Special meeting to discuss new issues connected to the stationing appointment for the Partnership and amendments to the Stationing Profile.

Attendance

Wendy Nash, Sam Ware, Delia Shephard, Mike Cooper, Linda Parry, Laura Farthing, Jean Kirk, Morag Stewart, Lawrence Wyatt, Jennie Emsley, Avril Williams, Ian Farthing, Ian Morse, Rev Charles Royden, Rev Dr Sam Cappleman

In addition to Partnership Council members, the following people attended:
Rev Martin Hounsfield Circuit Superintendant, Liz Little Senior Circuit Steward, Ruth Bottoms Ecumenical Officer BEC, Keith Brown LEP Link

Apologies Linda Hoar

The meeting opened with a reading and prayer.

Martin Hounsfield began by reminding members of the appointment process and the three rounds involved. The Partnership Council had been involved in round two, which had produced one possible candidate. Following a visit to the Partnership, however, both the candidate and Council members did not wish to pursue the appointment process further. No candidates had been put forward in round three.

Martin pointed out that last year 40 people came into the system late, and that all vacancies were filled last year in the period after the three rounds had closed. It was possible that stationing may provide a quality candidate before August. It was therefore considered very important to stay within the stationing process – we could not be re-instated if we withdrew. The Circuit was committed to three presbyters and a Methodist presence within the Partnership.

In parallel with the above, the opportunity has arisen to link a part time chaplaincy role at Anjulita Court to the presbyter position. A meeting had taken place with Keith Albon of MHA to confirm working arrangements connected with the chaplaincy, and it had been confirmed that the chaplaincy would involve two days per week.

The Stationing Profile can be amended at any time in the process, so would need to include the chaplaincy role. To this end a new profile had been brought to the Partnership Council. The chaplaincy role would replace the previous cross-circuit role, which was not considered attractive to ministers.

A question was asked in regard to the income from the chaplaincy at Anjulita Court. This would be paid to the Circuit and the presbyter would receive the normal stipend.

It was important to include the chaplaincy role into the profile quickly, in order to meet the required timing of MHA which was 3 April, when interviews would be held. It was planned to advertise the position in mid March.

A question was asked if the Partnership would be consulted in regard to the advert, which will not be restricted to Methodist Ministers. The Minister appointed might not necessarily be a Methodist, in which case the consideration of making the appointment would be based on merit. MHA had advised that they were prepared to be flexible and ensure all needs were met. It was confirmed that the Partnership would be involved in the appointment.

A question was raised in connection with expansion plans at Anjulita Court, now from 62

up to 100 beds, and any impact this might have. Council members were reassured that the appointed minister's role would not increase at Anjulita Court.

A question was raised concerning what would happen if the appointment attracted a minister from a different denomination, say a Baptist. The Minister appointed might not necessarily be a Methodist, in which case the consideration of making the appointment would be based on merit.

Liz Little then went through changes that had been made to the Stationing Profile. It was felt that boxes 1 and 2 did not require any amendment. Box 3 now included the chaplaincy role at Anjulita Court. Reference to the cross circuit role and preaching role, shown in the previous profile, had been changed.

It was requested that the phrase 'preaching once a month' be left out, since the Partnership might want to move forward on this aspect.

It was agreed to change the wording in the sixth sentence as follows:

"The present style of worship is largely liturgical, taken mostly from Methodist Worship with additional inputs from Common Worship and agreed ecumenical rites. The Circuit encourages all churches to constantly review styles of worship to respond to changing needs."

The wording in sentence 4 of B1 to be amended as follows:

"It is important for the minister to oversee and develop the Church Community Centre at Putnoe Heights Church and to continue to build up links with users of the Centre."

There were also small changes to the wording about the manse.

The following questions and comments were addressed:

In respect to the advert for the chaplaincy role, it was suggested that applicants could be sent a copy of the Stationing Profile.

Will the Partnership be represented at the chaplaincy interviews/ applicant reviews? Yes.

It was asked how it was known that the reference in the profile to cross circuit, centre manager and preaching roles had deterred applicants. Could it be that the Circuit changes were a factor?

It was agreed that whilst there had been some feedback from Chair of District Anne Brown concerning candidates, the assumptions made were speculative. It was, however, unlikely that the Circuit changes were an influence since all circuits are experiencing expansion and change.

It was affirmed that the Partnership did not want to change the patterns of worship or alter times of worship, or the presence of ministers at services. It was recognised that some in the Circuit believe that we have too many ministers on Sunday, when other churches may only have one. However, the ministerial pattern, involving the presence of Ministers at all services, was an important part of the continuity of ministry which was highly valued by our congregations and would be retained. The Anglican Ministers had offered to withdraw from Putnoe to allow a more Methodist ethos. Martin stated that this was not something which the Circuit wanted.

It was asked why we were continuing the process of appointing an additional minister if it was perceived that there was an abundance of ministers in the Partnership. The Superintendent advised that it was felt that there was some lack of Methodist expression within the Partnership which could not be suitably carried out by the existing ministers. The Superintendent was asked to clarify the difference between a Methodist Minister and a minister who was an Authorised Methodist Minister. The Superintendent stated that he received feedback from around 10% of people during the previous appointment, that services lacked Methodist expression. The Council accepted that there was a small

minority, but did not believe that this was an accurate reflection of the majority of the congregation. Consideration of worship was ongoing in the Partnership.

It was recognised that there would not be any more preaching opportunities in the Partnership since there was no desire to change the pattern of worship. However it was agreed that the Profile should be changed to remove the wording concerning preaching once a month in the Partnership Churches, on the understanding that the additional preaching opportunities would be made available by the Superintendent Minister scheduling the minister more widely around the Circuit.

The Partnership valued the liturgical style and services, which had been developed over many years. Liturgical worship was very important to both congregations and should be continued. Important for the Minister to be aware that whilst the Partnership was always moving forward, there was no intention of going backwards. It was recognised that currently the liturgy used was mostly taken from Methodist Worship with additional input from Common Worship and agreed ecumenical rites.

Ruth Bottoms welcomed the maturity of the Partnership Churches and that robust discussion was very encouraging. She drew attention to the problematic nature of ecumenical churches in feeling that denominations have become stuck in ecumenical progress. It was important for LEP's not to become another denomination. It was also important for LEP's to safeguard the heritage of their denominations and be accountable to their denominations. However the Anglican Methodist Covenant is about creating something new and here the Partnership had a role to play.

Ruth drew attention to the covenant document, and encouragement was given for the Partnership to work with BEC in development of liturgy. Whilst there was desire for Sunday services to follow established patterns there was also scope for other services, perhaps mid week to develop new formats. Whilst recognising the authority of the Vicar to determine worship at St Mark's, she expected that if a new minister wanted to experiment with new styles of worship during midweek services - with perhaps an Iona or café style service - this would be welcomed. The latest review, carried out in 2005, was read out which affirmed the Sunday worship and preaching, and highlighted satisfaction inside the Partnership with preaching and worship. The next review in 2012 would provide a further opportunity for review.

Putnoe Heights Church Community Centre. Council appreciated the value of lay involvement and recognised the need for this to be developed as fully as possible to release the minister from day to day management. However, the importance of the Minister was recognised in the need to oversee and develop Putnoe Heights Church Community Centre and managing staff. It was therefore important to retain in the profile the importance of the Minister overseeing the continuing development of the Church Community Centre. We should not attempt to try to cover too many minor options but still require the minister to be the focal head. Putnoe Heights Church Community was an extremely busy community with a high level of activity and many staff to supervise. Council members were asked that the sentence about managing 20 people be taken out, since it was felt a future presbyter would not see their role as directly managing people. The Superintendent offered to provide assistance from lay members of Priory Methodist Church who were currently involved in management of personnel. Through the appointment process, it was recognised that the Circuit is doing its best to offer help and support, and this was welcomed. However concern was expressed that in the process of trying to allocate the Minister there was an attempt to cause the partnership to go backwards in its ecumenical journey or not to give a fully clear representation of the appointment.

The Partnership would welcome the appointment of a new Methodist minister, but wanted the Minister to be aware of what the Partnership was like, and did not want the Minister to have unrealistic expectations about change. The Partnership did not feel valued by

Circuit and the continuing criticism of the style and pattern of ministry and worship in the Partnership was extremely damaging and hurtful.

There was a need for clarification of the hours to be worked and the expectations placed upon the new minister. The new minister would be made aware that the post would not attract an additional income and that they would be paid basic stipend.

The allocation of time was based upon 15th's, with the Circuit receiving 9/15th's and Anjulita Court receiving 6/15th's. It was felt that it might be helpful to the new minister if this could be expressed in terms of the expected number of hours.

Confirmation of matters resolved

1. The new profile should be issued with the inclusion of Anjulita Court
2. Wording should be changed to remove preaching only once a month, as additional opportunities would be found in the wider circuit.
3. Wording should stress the importance of the minister to oversee and develop Putnoe Heights Church Community Centre

All resolutions carried unanimously