

Editorial

The Methodist Church report ‘What is a Presbyterian’ presents an almost embarrassingly ecclesial and narrow view of modern Methodist ministry. In all fairness to the report, it was trying to provide a general overview of Presbyterian ministry – but the forms of ministry that are being celebrated in this special edition of *Epworth Review* are some of the oldest that we know. Whilst once, many of them would have been reserved for the ordained Presbyterian, most are now open to the priesthood of all believers.

In this edition, the Revd Robert Jones, Coordinator of Chaplaincies and Secretary of the Methodist Forces Board, introduces us to Chaplaincy in Methodism. He is supported in the claims that he makes for its efficacy in mission and discipleship by no less than nine other chaplains, each engaged in a different form of chaplaincy. Together they provide an impressive overview of the work of the Church in healthcare, prison, education, the armed forces and workplace chaplaincies.

Conference this year was proud to celebrate 150 years of chaplaincy to the armed forces. This work began, as with so much of Methodist mission and outreach, as an unpaid, unofficial and unauthorized form of ministry. It happened because Methodists believed in the need of all people to receive the good news of Jesus Christ. In many ways, these young men were the real Venture FX pioneers and leaders.

As well as celebrating the work of the chaplains, this edition is a deliberate invitation for people to consider chaplaincy – either as a lay person, or as an ordained minister. It is a calling to innovate and reach out, to work at the interface of faith and secular living. It is hoped that the stories and experiences that are shared in this edition will also motivate churches to consider adopting chaplaincy as part of their circuit mission strategy. This will not only help to provide the support that all chaplains need, it will also help circuits to engage with the reality of life and faith as an everyday encounter.

There are real choices for churches and circuits to make in the coming years as to what sort of Church we are, and how we will practise ministry. This edition is a timely reminder that we don’t necessarily need to throw away the traditions of the Church in order to innovate or pioneer fresh ways of being church. We do, however, need to learn to value some of them much more.

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