

The Bristol District Synod invites the Methodist Conference of 2009 to discuss the issue of advertising vacancies for the appointment of superintendent ministers to any exceptionally large circuits being created in response to the 'Mapping a Way Forward' (MaWF) initiative.

MaWF is a process which the Conference has approved and to which circuits have been encouraged to respond. It invites creative thinking and bold action.

Part of the thinking behind this exercise in regrouping for the sake of mission is a recognition that we currently have a similar number of circuits compared to a time when British Methodism possessed a membership some two or even three times as large as is now the case. At the heart of the MaWF strategy is an encouragement to regroup and reduce the number of circuits. Fewer, larger circuits make possible more creative planning and strategically flexible responses at a time when, while living with the practical consequences of decline (e.g. fewer ministers available for stationing and fewer lay folk willing to take on leadership roles), Methodists want to do things differently and strive for growth (so, e.g. Fresh Expressions).

Exceptionally, MaWF has led leadership teams in some localities to catch a vision for larger reconfigurations than might have been anticipated when MaWF was launched. While such new circuits will not be appropriate everywhere, early evidence is indicating that they can work well and enable genuine creativity and effective strategic outcomes (e.g. the greater possibilities to use the particular gifts of individual ministers across a wider area; enabling a closer and more direct

relationship between a smaller number of circuits and the district; making possible a co-ordinated and therefore potentially more effective Methodist link with regional and local government bodies). The appointment of appropriately skilled superintendents to lead such circuits is at the heart of this District Resolution, along with a conviction that their success or failure will be greatly influenced by whoever serves in the lead role of superintendent minister.

By decision of the Conference last year, the possibility of advertising certain appointments was deemed appropriate. In seeking to interpret this decision, Stationing Committee has approved the advertising of a limited number of appointments during the course of this connexional year. However, it has declined to permit the advertising of a vacancy for a superintendent in a circuit with an establishment figure of 21 ministers. The Bristol District Synod believes such appointments are exceptional and require the seeking of appropriately gifted candidates from across the whole of our presbyteral cohorts.

In endorsing the Resolution set out below, the Bristol Synod believes the Conference has an opportunity:

- ∞ to encourage those leadership teams across the country who want to make a bold response to the Mapping a Way Forward process, but fear they will be disadvantaged by doing so; and
- ∞ to reaffirm that the creative, radical thinking and action envisaged in MaWF is still the Conference policy.

## 62. Bristol District Resolution

### \*\*\*RESOLUTION

#### **62/1.** The Conference

- a) affirms its commitment to the creative, radical thinking and action asked of those engaged in the 'Mapping a Way Forward' process;
- b) notes that this has led in a small number of cases to the creation of significantly larger circuits than have previously existed on our stations;
- c) recognises the special demands of leadership required in such larger circuits;
- d) and therefore seeks to ensure the fullest opportunity is given to find an appropriate person when a change of superintendent is required through permitting those circuits with itinerant staffing levels of 12 or more ministers to follow a process of advertising and interviewing for the post; and
- e) confirms this permission to have immediate effect in relation to the 2010 stationing process.

The Conference referred the Resolution to the Stationing Committee.