

REPORTS TO SYNOD

Introduction from the Synod Secretary

Please read the reports that follow. They give a good flavour of the activities and challenges within our District. We are grateful for all the work carried out by our District Officers and Committees and by those who support them.

Susan Eldridge

District Policy Committee (DPC) Report

Since the last Synod, the District Policy Committee met in October 2023 and February 2024, carrying out the business of the East Anglia District, reviewing the finances and approving sundry grants and receiving feedback from the recipients of grants and from District Groups where appropriate. This enables us to share the good things happening and being planned in the District. A DPC Away Day was held in November when possible ways of working differently within the District were discussed.

Regional Working - It was reported that representatives from East Anglia District and Beds Essex & Herts District had met on two further occasions and are looking at additional ways that we can work together, sharing ideas and resources.

Property Issues across the District were discussed. DPC agreed to closures of three Churches across the District and the sale of one manse and the purchase of a replacement manse. We were pleased to hear that the District Property Secretary, Mr Roy Hollands, has been liaising with several circuits around the District and offering guidance and advice on property issues to local churches.

Safeguarding - Our District Safeguarding Officer, Neil van Holland, has spent a considerable amount of time meeting ministers & safeguarding officers around the District and has arranged a number of safeguarding courses. A new Safeguarding Administrator, Sarah Young, has been appointed. Safeguarding Forums restarted again in January and the two held so far have been well attended.

Lay Employment - Our District Lay Employment Secretary, Kate Dalton, continues to work with several churches and circuits around the District on various employment issues and this work has been greatly appreciated by the churches and circuits involved.

Our District Mission Enabler, Yasmin Finch, reported on the many positives that came out of the *Pray 2-3* initiative. Many churches had made use of the *Pray 2-3* Christmas resources and much positive feedback was received. The development of New Places for New People continues to move forward albeit at a slightly slower pace than originally anticipated but there is still a lot of work related to this going on.

EDI - Most Circuits have made progress on ensuring that people holding specific roles have completed the required EDI training, although several circuits still have further work to do on this. The EDI group have met again recently in order to move forward further on the different aspects of this work.

The Autumn Synod 2024 will be held on Saturday 21st September, venue tbc.

Chris Finbow, Assistant Synod Secretary and Secretary to DPC

Sabbaticals report

Question: For a District Sabbaticals Officer, why are sabbaticals like buses?

Answer: Because at times there seem to be hardly any then several come along at once.

This Connexional year seems to be one of those where not many people are due for sabbaticals. Out of those who are taking them, some are doing so out of their usual time slot because a deferral has been necessary. As a District we should be grateful to both ministers and to circuits who are prepared to be flexible in this matter. I should add that if anyone feels that they are due for a sabbatical and has not been contacted, could they please get in touch? My system is pretty robust but not infallible!

When I was at Wesley House I remember the then principal talking about how in agricultural terms a field that has been allowed to lie fallow is then frequently more productive. Sabbaticals are often filled with activity, but the whole District sabbatical team are always concerned that rest and recuperation should be a part of a sabbatical. Times of rest are written into the fabric of the universe, (Genesis 2:2-3) and we all, ministers and laity alike, neglect this need at our peril. Happy sabbaticals to all those who are taking them, and may your fallow time nourish and restore you.

Rev Ann Bossingham
Sabbaticals Officer

Report to Synod from Sign the Cross, Deaf Ministry

The importance of this ministry has been reaffirmed to me in recent months in three ways.

At our monthly service at Norwich Deaf Church, we have recently welcomed hearing visitors. Their response, as they see with fresh eyes what I've become accustomed to, reminds me of the importance of the opportunity to worship in BSL, and in an appropriate Deaf-cultural way. The fellowship around the tea table is as important as the worship, where we discuss local Deaf issues and how we respond to them as Christians. We are working with Deaf Christians across East Anglia to plan a summer get together in Lowestoft and a Harvest Festival in Diss in September. Worship is at the heart of the gathering, as we celebrate a God who communicates in so many varied ways.

I have been involved with several funeral services too. I led the funeral for a Deaf man who has been hugely influential, particularly with access to sports throughout his life. Approximately 100 of the 150 who gathered were also Deaf BSL users. For this occasion, the family decided that I would lead with voice, and a BSL interpreter would sign the service. I was able to visit his widow, also profoundly Deaf, to plan the service and offer pastoral support. Their daughter was relieved not to have to act as interpreter for her mum, but also that I understood the Deaf perspective without her having to explain.

On two other occasions, I went with the Funeral Celebrant to the family homes to plan the funeral, to ensure that the Deaf family members had full access to the discussion. I then acted as interpreter for the funeral services. It doesn't matter to me whether I lead the service or serve as interpreter, as what is important is the choice for the Deaf person, enabling them to access the service for their loved one, as they wish.

Access and choice are in limited supply for the Deaf community. Facing everyday barriers and always having to fight for the right to have an interpreter is exhausting and has a huge effect on mental health. I feel that it is the right time to develop a new work for well-being, offering supportive groups and opportunities to come together to reduce social isolation. I see many older Deaf people who would appreciate the opportunity to go to a regular lunch club where everyone can sign, so they can relax and enjoy themselves without barriers. I see younger people struggling without mental health support in their own language, from people who understand the Deaf experience. There are existing Deaf clubs and a BSL cafe, managed through other providers, but these are not meeting these specific needs. Although this new project would not be explicitly religious, we come at this from the Christian perspective, embodying Christian service.

To get this moving ahead, I am seeking a small team with expertise in setting up similar groups, and in getting funding, to lend their time and support in making this happen during the next twelve months. Please contact me if you would be able to help in any way.

Rev Anne Richardson (signthecross@gmail.com - or text/ WhatsApp 07811888019)

Methodist Women in Britain (MWiB) Report

Our Spring District Day takes place on Thursday 16th May at Diss Methodist Church and men are welcome as well as women. Our speaker is Madeleine Reed who is the current Helen Kim Memorial Scholar. We hope the more central location will increase the attendance.

Our Autumn District Day takes place on Saturday 5th October and will be led by Revd Jenny Pathmarajah at Histon Methodist Church. We are hoping to attract some who would normally be at work on a weekday.

We are delighted that Sue Groome has agreed to extend her term as our President for a further year while we seek a successor. Applications of interest would be very welcome!

By the time Synod takes place 11 ladies will hopefully have had a great time at the National MWiB Conference which takes place at Swanwick from 19th - 21st April. One of the leaders of this is Revd Jenny Pathmarajah so MWiB is keeping her very busy! Last year at the National Conference there were only three from East Anglia so the increase is great news.

We are aware that MWiB is struggling in some of our Circuits, often due to age and incapacity, but we are still alive and well and would love to encourage more people to engage with us. Our District is now linked with the Lincolnshire District which offers some challenges regarding travel but also some opportunities. The link will probably be helped when Revd Debbie Caulk leaves our District and moves to Lincolnshire.

Susan Eldridge
MWiB Executive Committee member

ADMINISTRATION GROUP REPORT

Finance & Property

1. The budget for 2024/25 has been sent to the Circuits. All District Accounts are provided in the District Treasurer's Report.
2. District accounts for Connexional year 2022/23 will all be presented to Synod for approval.
3. The District Property Consents Panel members are Roy Hollands (District Property Secretary) Rev Julian Pursehouse / Helen Hollands, Shaun Cushion, Paul Hornsby, Angus Campbell and Aileen Fox; need to be appointed

APPROVE: Accounts for 2022/23.

ADOPT: the Budget for 2024/25 & receive rest of the report.

4. A written report has been provided separately by Mr Roy Hollands the District Property Secretary.

Personnel & Grants

1. A reminder to all circuits receiving a Ministry & Mission Grant that a report is **now required annually** by the Grants & Personnel Committee to review the work & progress of the project. For the continuation of a District grant the District requires a monitoring and evaluation report in line with the above.
2. The District offers training on how to approach making Grant applications, and also with **Monitoring & Evaluation** reporting. Please speak to Rev Dr Mike Wilson about either of these issues.
3. Since my last report these schemes are receiving District grant funding, **Circuit Mission Worker (St Neots & Huntingdon 14/25) of £30,000.**

The District has a **Small Grants Fund of £10,000** and enquiries to be made via Dr Yasmin Finch (District Mission Enabler). At time of writing uncommitted capital in the DAF is £464,150. All District grants awarded by the Grants & Personnel Committee are subject to ratification by the District Policy Committee. Also this year, **£150,000 is committed towards the District budget from the DAF.**

4. Proposed Administration Group Representative to Synod for 2024/25: Mr Paul Hornsby
5. The District Grants Policy: Agreed September 2022.

The East Anglia District of the Methodist Church will consider making grants for work/projects that meet all of the following criteria:

That the work/project

1. relates directly to 'Our Calling' in at least one of the four constituent parts
2. relates to at least one aspect of the 'God for All' Strategy
3. relates directly to at least one aspect of the District Vision Policy
4. meets the objectives of the Circuit Mission Policy
5. is innovative and/or involves risk-taking
6. will also be supported by Circuit monies

In addition, grant applications will be viewed positively if every effort is made to obtain grant money from sources outside Methodism and/or if they are for projects which are environmentally friendly. District Officers are available to advise and support grant applications at each stage of the process, if the conditions below have been met. District grants are not normally more than the amount also granted from Circuit resources. Unless exceptional circumstance, grants will not be given retrospectively for property schemes or ministry and mission projects.

Please be aware of the following conditions:

- District grants will only be awarded when the District Policy Committee is satisfied that the Circuit concerned has sufficient Safeguarding policies in place and that Circuit employees or volunteers have completed appropriate training.
- District grants for the employment of lay personnel will only be awarded when the District Lay Employment Committee has been consulted and approved the arrangements for the relevant post(s).
- A Circuit, and any local church in that Circuit, will only receive grant money for new projects (of any kind) when satisfactory Monitoring and Evaluation reports have been received from existing projects.

Adopt the Report. **ANDREW KING – Group Coordinator Administration**

Eastern Region Learning Network – Synod Report

Greetings East Anglia Synod!

Thank you for continuing to make space for the Learning Network (LN) to share our updates with you!

In this season of Eastertide, as we reflect on rebirth; on mourning, hope, and new beginnings; we share with you our gratitude for the ongoing invitations we receive from your churches, circuits and District to mourn, hope, and recreate with you. It is our great privilege to journey with you in mission, ministry and discipleship; to be welcomed and trusted by you; to help you make your contexts safer, more efficient and more effective, so you can respond to the Great Commission that we are called to.

The LN continues to shift and change in response to the needs across the Connexion, wider society and creation; we are working mindfully towards our [Net Zero target](#), evolving our [inclusive](#) and [justice-seeking](#) practice, and deepening collaboration. Our online provisions are increasing, with most meetings, training and events now accessible online, yet our team remains flexibly available to you; offline and in person where and when appropriate. We hope you might now be encountering more of the LN team since we have moved to a 'one team' way of working!

Thank you for your engagement with our [Facebook group](#) and the newer [Methodist Resources Facebook Group](#) – we greatly appreciate these Connexional-facing opportunities for conversation, questions and sharing, and thank you again for moving with us, so swiftly, to this centralised model of communicating.

Please be encouraged to stay in contact, or get in touch with us – we are a relatively small team yet with big dreams to develop our relationships with you, to deepen our learning from and with you, and to thereby serve you as best we can. If you would like to know more about our LN team and our work, please visit our new [webpage area](#).

Here are some of the forthcoming LN opportunities available to the Connexion:

- [Positive Working Together](#), Online opportunities in April, June and July for training centering on transforming conflict and managing change and transition.
- [Explore](#): Beginning again this spring, Explore is a nine session course for any member of the Methodist Church in Britain to take a breath, step back, and consider how they are called to respond to God's call through worship, learning & caring, evangelism or service.
- [Circuit Stewards' Communities of Practice sessions](#) continue on the last Wednesday of every month, where Circuit Stewards from across the Connexion are invited to gather online to learn together with members of the Connexional Team, share good practice, ask questions and build relationships.

For more, and to keep up-to-date with how the LN can support and resource you, [please sign-up to our newsletter](#), join our [Facebook group](#), and or contact your aligned officers, Ann Howlett-Foster (howlett-fostera@methodistchurch.org.uk) and Jenna Thorne (thornej@methodistchurch.org.uk).

Within the East Anglia District aligned officer work has recently included:

- District Safeguarding Group development day facilitation
- DPC Away Day co-facilitation
- Involvement in plans for a joint EDI event with BEH
- Involvement with the NPNP Guiding team
- Training new trainers for both Creating Safe Spaces foundation, advanced modules
- Delivering Advanced Module in the District
- Running a prayer course for Pray-2-3
- Assisting with videos for synod
- Creative Prayer workshops offered across the District
- We continue to represent at various District groups and meetings

Agricultural Chaplain's Comments

At last I am writing my 'swan-song' after serving the District since May 6th (Synod 2000 at Sheringham Methodist Church) as Agricultural Chaplain for the District.

In October 1999 I was invited for interview at the Chair of District's house, with Rev'd Malcolm Braddy and Rev'd Ralph Webb, thinking I was one of many for the appointment. Not so, it was just me.

With such a large area it was certainly a huge challenge, and looking back I don't think I have covered the District as I had hoped at the beginning. The appointment has certainly opened doors for me to spread the word, from small church weeknight meetings to the larger involvement of leading the time of reflection at the civic service when I was a District Councillor and the prayers at Bury Cathedral Harvest thanksgiving services.

Yes God has been good, and with health problems with my wife Muriel, who has been so very important supporting my ministry, and my own fracture of the spine which now restricts driving, we can look back with some fond memories of meeting some wonderful people, who I have been aware have been praying for us for the last two years especially.

Farming is struggling, as most of you are aware, with so much water falling since October last year. With pictures of tractors stuck even on lighter land, it is certainly a difficult time. I have always tried to convince myself that things will come good again and they usually do, but with so many areas of land under water for so long I doubt the sown crop will survive. Already I have heard of some re-drilling.

Keep praying that the wars will end and some sort of normality will return.

Thank you to everyone for your support since 2000.

I am hoping a person can be found to replace me, because there is a real need to listen to the farming personnel. The hymn at my commissioning service was 'Will you come and follow me if I but call your name' - will you??

George W Frost, District Agricultural Chaplain

District Property Secretary's Report

I am very grateful for the warm welcome I've received, and I have been enjoying my first months as the new DPS, working with our stewards, ministers and staff as we play our part in the life and ministry of the District.

There are several property projects of various kinds and sizes underway around the District, showing how much effort and commitment people are putting into looking after the buildings in our care, and finding creative ways for them to continue to serve our missional purposes.

As many of us have found, for some churches, the only available way ahead is to sell the chapel, whether or not the Society continues to meet for worship and ministry. I have begun helping some Circuits to develop a Circuit-wide missional property strategy, where the proceeds of a sale can be put into refurbishment of other chapels where there are continuing opportunities for mission. There is provision for the Connexional Levy to be refunded to help with this kind of strategy. Some Circuits are just beginning to look into this, and some have already made great progress.

In October I attended a day meeting in Sheffield for DPSs from around the Connexion. We heard that Benefact Trust are very keen to make grants. They have staff to help with applications, to advise on wording and information to make a successful application to the Trust. Grants are available for capital work for missional, community or conservation use, and for wider projects to improve community life. More details are on their website.

Methodist Insurance warn that fire risk assessments should be taken seriously. If in a complex building hired out for public events they should probably be done by a professional. The largest causes of fires in Methodist buildings are electrical faults and arson, at about 40% of fires each. Please also therefore take care to be up to date with five-yearly professional electrical checks in all buildings.

If you don't already, I would recommend subscribing to the monthly property news email, where you can read inspiring stories and useful news from around the Connexion:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/property-matters/>

I will be happy to hear from you if you have any queries or questions about buildings and land and their use and maintenance. Please do get in touch for advice before arranging anything other than the usual Methodist Church use of any property or premises, including: use by other groups and churches; renting; leasing; buying; selling; ceasing or changing use; repairs; replacement; alterations; electrical, water, gas or heating work.

Roy Hollands

DPS@eangliamethodist.org.uk

Safeguarding Report

After a whole year in post now, I would like to start by saying how blessed I feel to have received such great support from across the District. There truly are a huge number of people who advocate for Safeguarding across 3 Counties and play a huge part in making our Churches Safe Spaces. I would like to pay tribute to one of those people; Min Kennison who we sadly lost just before Christmas. Min was a huge champion of many things, but for me her support of Safeguarding in my first 9 months was invaluable. She was a great colleague, a valued critical friend, and someone I was always able to rely on.

Training

The pool of District Trainers continues to grow both for Foundation Training but also now for Advanced Module Training. Since the turn of the year we; at the point of Synod, will have delivered 10 Foundation Module courses (5 online and 5 Face to Face), and 4 Advanced Module courses (1 Face to Face and 3 Online).

Current Safeguarding case load

There are currently 10 active contracts across the District to manage.

Connexionally we have adopted a new Case Recording system called MyConcern since November 2023, and this has been a very efficient tool to assist in managing and collating cases and associated actions.

Safeguarding Forums

In January 2024 the previously popular Safeguarding Forums recommenced. The format of them thus far has been that we have worked through the God Welcomes All study guide for the first hour and then move into a second half of the forum where it is more open floor discussion. These will continue every 2 to 3 months going forward, and I hope will provide a platform to share experiences and gain support from one another.

Methodist Safeguarding Conference

Methodist Safeguarding Conference took place at The Hayes Christian Conference Centre between 19th and 21st March.

The topic was “Exploring the Complex Boundaries of Safeguarding” and we looked specifically at those grey areas of Safeguarding and how we can work more efficiently, signpost correctly, and work in tandem with other areas such as EDI, Complaints and Discipline, and Training.

It was an invaluable 3 days in which much was taken and will look to be passed on and cascaded out in the following months.

Neil van Holland

District Safeguarding Officer

District Training Fund Report

1. The District Training fund exists to support Ministers' professional development.
2. All Ministers are entitled to £200 per annum from the District for explicitly training and development needs, with the Minister's Circuit encouraged to provide an additional £100. Each presbyter or deacon will normally make one application each connexional year unless there are exceptional circumstances or alternatively make a fresh application if the annual sum of £300 has not been exceeded on the first occasion.
3. For applications that exceed the sum of £300 the presbyter / deacon is encouraged to make an application to the District Grants & Personnel Committee and contact the Revd. Dr. Mike Wilson.
4. In order to seek support from this fund the applicant will be expected to provide receipts or documentary evidence of booking and payment for the event concerned, included with the application.
5. In the year under review, 3 Ministers applied for this funding. Encouragement is made for ministers to use this facility. Please feel free to consult me if you have any questions.

Rev Richman Ncube, District Training Fund Officer

District Lay Employment Report

This has been a busy period predominantly for Children and Families vacancies in the District with new positions in Wymondham, North Norfolk Circuit, Costessey, Downham Market and Bowthorpe Road. District Safeguarding Administrator Sarah Young started in December 2023. Other vacancies have included an assistant cook in Downham Market, a café manager and cleaner in North Lynn and a bookkeeper in Dereham. Remember to come to me at the beginning of any recruitment process so I can assist with support and necessary approval.

The deadline for implementation of the new living wage foundation rate of £12 an hour is 1st May 2024, please ensure that all employees are being paid at least this basic rate.

As lay employment issues arise in the District it is evident how complex it can be to comply with employment legislation when line managing employees, especially when dealing with problems such as poor performance. If you are line managing any employees you need to download the new line managers' handbook which can be found here:

[Line Managers \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://methodist.org.uk)

You will also find a link there for the line management training course – **ALL** line managers should enrol on this course if they have not done so already. These resources will help to equip you with the skills and knowledge you need to deal confidently with any problems that may arise. If you need help with any lay employment issue, please remember I am here to advise and support you. Contact me on DLES@eangliamethodist.org.uk.

Kate Dalton, District Lay Employment Secretary

EDI Report

Our EDI Committee has continued to meet regularly in conjunction with the Beds, Essex and Herts (BEH) EDI Committee and it has been great to share ideas. We are in the process of formalising the East Anglia EDI Committee and it will be listed in the next District Directory.

We had hoped to put on an in person EDI event this May in conjunction with BEH but several key people became unavailable on the proposed date and others of us were struggling to find time to organise it. We have therefore decided to postpone it for a year. We should have a new date for you by September Synod. In the meantime we are hoping to put on some one hour Zoom events covering various EDI related topics. The Learning Network will help with facilitating these.

Progress continues to be made with the EDI and Unconscious Bias training. Several Circuits have now completed the mandatory training that should have been done by 31 December 2023. Well done to those and to the other Circuits that are nearly there. I would like to say a big thank you to Revd Debbie Caulk who has delivered a number of in person EDI training sessions across a few Circuits. A small number of Circuits still have a way to go so please keep trying to get people to do the training. If you have completed the training, you may like to start thinking about what practical changes may be needed at your church or in your Circuit to aid inclusivity and what areas of Justice-seeking Church you would like to learn about or focus on next. It is intended to be a continuous learning process as we seek to change the culture of the Methodist Church.

The Connexional EDI team are putting on awareness sessions for EDI Officers (e.g. on complaints handling, language fellowships and Solidarity Circles) and there will also be induction training for EDI Officers (including those like me that have been in post for a while) this summer. I will be considering the best way of sharing my learnings from these in due course.

If you have any thoughts or concerns around EDI or the JDS Strategy please get in touch. If I can't answer your questions I will be able to put you in touch with people who can. I hope to have a bit more time for this once I cease to be Synod Secretary at the end of August.

Susan Eldridge
District EDI Officer