

Working Regionally



An introduction

Four Districts in the East Midlands stationing region are currently working together in collaborative ways. These Districts are East Anglia, Lincolnshire, Northampton and Nottingham and Derby. The Beds, Essex and Herts District (BEH) has agreed to send an observer to future meetings because the 5 Districts already work together on Learning and Development and Safeguarding. Senior District leaders have a good working relationship, and are experienced in working regionally in a number of areas, particularly stationing. We are seeking to increase the collaboration in a number of other areas. Some of these developments will happen gradually and incrementally, other changes may be necessary as the Church takes action regarding the number of Districts and how senior leadership should be exercised. We are writing to you now to update you about this piece of work and seek your prayerful support for it.

The Regional Working Group

A working group comprising District Chairs, Deputy Chairs, Synod Secretaries, District Mission Enablers with others from the Circuits have been meeting regularly for some time. The group includes lay and ordained leaders. There are at least 3 or 4 people from each District. The group has already identified a number of areas where we are stronger in drawing our resources together. A number of work streams have been created, and a number of other meetings called which have encouraged officers across Districts to get to know each other and at least to work consultatively. The Group has met on Zoom and that has allowed regular well attended meetings.

Chair of the Regional Working Group

My name is Steve Acklam and I am based in the Cambridge Circuit. I am a life-long Methodist from the days when Harvest Festivals were characterised by tiered rows of freshly scrubbed Sunday School children and literally heaps of fresh produce. So, I feel very privileged and somewhat humbled to have been appointed as Lay Chair of the Regional Working Group. Just as God did when I prevaricated about helping to lead a Disciple course; and when I hesitated to step up to become Senior Circuit Steward; I am clear that God guided me to this new challenge. I will now be doing my best to add value to the discussions that have already begun in the Eastern Region, and to help steer our

combined efforts to beneficial conclusions. In my working life I have been subject to change and instigated change, and am under no illusions as to how carefully the intent to work more closely together and to maximise inter-District cooperation needs to be managed. A genuine cooperative effort will be needed.

What we are already doing

Our first efforts were focussed on how senior leadership is expressed across the region. When the Revd. Loraine Mellor approached the end of her appointment as Chair of the Nottingham & Derby District it was decided that her successor would be a Deputy Chair at 80%, and another Chair within the region would oversee their ministry and service. It was decided that the Chair of the Northampton District would serve as Chair of both of these Districts for 2022-24.

As the number of probationer ministers fell across the region it was decided to create a Shared Districts Probationer's Committee and this is now in place overseeing 4 probationers who are in 3 separate Districts. There is now a Shared probationer Learning Group.

Work is currently underway reflecting on a more regional approach to Safeguarding and how to best resource the areas of finance, property, and employment matters.

Future hopes and needs

Working together in partnership across distinct areas of mission and ministry has real value when we can streamline the number of people involved in some tasks and avoid unnecessary repetition. The shortage of volunteers across every part of the Church reflects the older profile and smaller nature of our Church, so it makes sense to work together in areas where it is helpful to do so. We must also be as prepared as possible for any changes asked of us by Conference. If the Eastern Region, for example became a District with four distinct Mission Areas (East Anglia, Lincolnshire, Northampton, and Nottingham & Derby) all with senior leadership in place, we would hope to be well placed to move forward confidently and without disruption.

The period 2022-24 is a period of transition and change and we hope that our work so far in co-operation and partnership will enable us to respond well to any other changes required of us.

We ask for your prayers

- For all involved in this work – for vision and hope
- For those who are anxious and fearful of change
- That we will all be open to the prompting of the Spirit and find ways of working which bring about the flourishing of God's people and a faithful response to the call of the Kingdom of God.

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