

## **Report to Synod**

### **BISHOP STREET METHODIST CHURCH, LEICESTER Five Yearly Synod Review**

#### **Background**

Bishop Street is the only church in the Northampton District designated as a City Centre Network church and this classification has recently been renewed by the District Executive as a part of a Connexional review of the Network list.

Standing Order 440(5) requires Synod to carry out a review of the mission and ministry of the church.

The last five yearly review was carried out in November 2011 and thus this visit was overdue.

#### **Visit Team**

Revd Andy Fyall (Superintendent Stamford Circuit and one of the district ecumenical officers), Revd Novette Headley (Superintendent Leicester West circuit and district representative to the Methodist Council, Adam Sanders from the LN and Roy Slocombe (Secretary to District Executive).

#### **Bishop Street Team**

Revd Fran Rhys (Minister with pastoral charge), Tony Moore (chair of Finance and Property Committee), Mary Gill (Church Steward and Heritage Officer), Robin Stevenson (Centre Coordinator)

Joined part of the time by :-

Leon Dundas (Church Council member and member of District EDI team), Margaret Byron (Steward)

#### **Location**

Bishop Street Methodist Church is located on Bishop Street in Leicester. Bishop Street forms one side of the Town Hall Square which is one of the major public open spaces in Leicester City centre.

The church building is flanked on either side by ancillary buildings which are let to outside bodies. It is the rental income from these buildings, which were renovated in 2012, that has a significant positive effect on the income of the church and enables it to undertake much of its charitable and outreach work.

## **Methodology**

The visit team used the MCCN page on the Methodist Church website which includes a list of the key features that will in full or in part represent the work of a City Centre Church. These are :-

- a) Requires a focussed, vision led mission strategy
- b) Depends on the worship offered being distinctive in style
- c) Is focussed around a building or location
- d) Requires intense resourcing
- e) Requires specialist professional support
- f) Connects with business and civic life
- g) Is reliant on an income stream from lettings
- h) Is open to a wide variety of people due to transport links and location
- i) Is an open-door/24-7 ministry
- j) Offers potential for reflective space and prayer
- k) Offers potential for mid-week worship
- l) Has links to Methodist heritage
- m) Is full of variety and challenge
- n) Is serviced by a variety of staff – lay and ordained, paid and volunteer
- o) Connects with a disproportionate number of homeless and vulnerable people
- p) Requires the church to be abreast of changes in legislation : especially Safeguarding, Health & Safety and Food Hygiene.

A wide ranging and open discussion was held covering all of the above areas.

## **Summary**

The visit team were both impressed and inspired by what they learnt about the work being undertaken at Bishop Street and offer their prayers for the ongoing continuance and growth of this work and all of those involved.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are in no particular order of priority or significance and are offered very much in the spirit of trying to help the church improve and increase the already significant work that is carried out at Bishop Street.

- a) To seek to identify a form and structure of worship that can become the main (but not exclusive) form of worship offered at Bishop Street as a part of an attempt to define clearly what being Bishop Street Methodist Church actually means to everyone.

- b) To seek to expand and grow the core congregation of Bishop Street as the current workload is being carried by a comparatively small number of people.
- c) To seek, together with the circuit leadership team, to ensure that all of the expanded Leicester Trinity circuit is fully aware of, and hopefully supportive of, the work carried out at Bishop Street in the name of the whole church.
- d) To consider with the circuit leadership team and the wider circuit whether this work is considered by them to be of sufficient importance that the circuit is willing to attempt to resource the deployment of a full time presbyter to lead and support the work at Bishop Street.
- e) To consider seeking guidance and support from the Methodist City Centre Network to identify if there are any useful lessons that can be learnt from the experience of other churches in similar situations.

In closing the Visit Team would like to thank those members of the Bishop Street community with whom they came into contact for the warmth of their welcome and their willingness to enter into a full and open discussion about the work they do, the challenges they face and the achievements that they have already made.

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