

Sheffield District Representative Synod 16th April 2016

COMMON GROUND: A Covenant Partnership in Extended Area - Sheffield

BACKGROUND

In June 2015, with the support of Sheffield Circuit meeting and the District Leadership Team, The Bishop of Sheffield and Chair of District signed a statement of intent that would lead to the development of a formal partnership between our denominations, in the spirit of the Anglican Methodist Covenant 2003. This stated:

“We hereby declare our commitment to covenant together in the area given by the Sheffield Methodist Circuit and the four Anglican Deaneries of Attercliffe, Ecclesfield, Ecclesall, and Hallam.

Recognising our common call to mission in the city of Sheffield, and giving thanks for the trust and co-operation that already exists locally between our denominations, we commit ourselves to

- seek out new opportunities for shared witness, worship evangelism and service
- collaborate in the sharing and deployment of ministry
- work together for a more effective use of our resources
- empower the leaders of the above named circuit and deaneries to work together for the development of our covenant partnership subject, to the appropriate standing orders of Methodist Conference and to the ecumenical Canons of the Church of England”.

PROGRESS AND OPPORTUNITIES

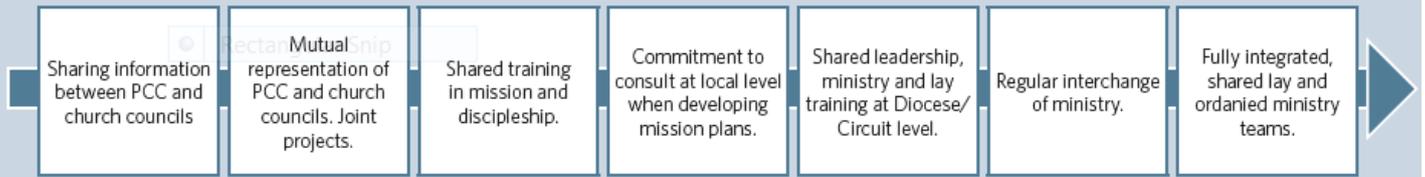
Since the statement was signed, regular meetings between Area Deans, Archdeacon and Co Superintendents have continued. These have been opportunities to share mission planning and to hold conversations about the further development of ecumenical working. Led by our LEPs, Methodist Churches across the city continue to look for creative opportunities for closer collaboration. There are some specific mission ideas being worked on and these are often in areas where there is already good cooperation between Anglican and Methodist congregations and leaders. The formal covenant partnership will provide a framework for partnership to be considered as a matter of course when churches are making plans for the communities they serve.

The joint document ‘Common Ground’ which was circulated in summer 2015, suggested how a partnership approach could be the answer to many of the challenges that our churches face today, suggesting that we need to think creatively about these questions:

- How can our churches use all our resources - human and physical - more flexibly for the good of our mission across the city?
- How can we go about looking together at the needs of our communities, and how might we form a joint response to the challenges and opportunities raised?
- How can we avoid duplication in ministry and how might we promote mutual co-operation and trust in mission?
- How might we find creative ways to respond speedily and effectively to mission opportunities in Sheffield?

The diagram below indicates how the partnership might develop according to local needs, resources and opportunities

What would the partnership look like?



Anglicans and Methodists working together: an example continuum of cooperation.

NEXT STEPS

A formal partnership document has been prepared by a small group representing both traditions with support from a URC observer as the intention is to broaden the partnership ecumenically. The final version is being checked by our Connexional Ecumenical Officer and will be sent separately to members of Synod. It encapsulates the principles set out in this paper

The principle of the agreement received the approval of Sheffield Circuit meeting on 15th March 2016. It needs the formal approval of The Sheffield Methodist District Synod; it is then sent to Conference for information. Approval is also needed from the Sheffield Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee.

Once the necessary approvals are given, a celebration and signing service will take in the Autumn. Individual church councils and PCCs will then be able to decide the extent to which they wish to implement the covenant at local level. At the same time regular planning at deanery and circuit level will continue.

RECOMMENDATION

Synod is asked to approve the document: 'Ecumenical Partnership in an Extended Area: Sheffield'

PB