

Appendix 11 Orientation for Incoming Ministers to Methodist and United Reformed LEPs

Introduction

LEPs can be among the most exciting churches in which to serve as a minister. At their best, they are growing and developing situations that enable congregations and community to see the church fulfilling Christ's prayer "that they might be one." However, each LEP has a different constitution that sits alongside "normal" denominational practice and allows for creative development. It is therefore necessary for incoming ministers of either denomination to understand the practice of the specific LEP to which they have been called, or in which they have been stationed. This means that it is necessary to understand:

- the differences between the LEP, and the Methodist and United Reformed Churches;
- the expectations of the wider church structures on the LEP;
- how and why the original Constitution and Sharing Agreement are implemented now.

The orientation process

- a) As part of the orientation process a URC minister will be expected to attend the orientation course on understanding the Methodist Church course in the same way that a Methodist minister will be encouraged to attend the History and Ethos of the URC.

The course will include:

- The different processes used for "calling" (United Reformed Church) and "stationing" (Methodist Church) ministers.
- The different roles and understandings of leaders and ministers in the two churches at congregational, Circuit and District levels.
- The different understandings of local church governance and authority in relation to decision-making, pastoral care and worship.
- Different accounting and church years have implications for local decision-making and the relationship of the local church to the Circuit and District. The United Reformed Church works on a calendar year (January to December), while the Methodist Church uses the "Connexional" Year (September to August)
- Different rules, practices and laws concerning property.
- Differences around communion practices (for example: how, and by whom, the elements are served to the people and lay presidency), baptism, and transfer of membership.

- b) Reading essential documents will be helpful. They include:

- The Constitution or Declaration of Intent.
- The Sharing Agreement. (NB: Please be aware that Sharing Agreements are drafted according to the Sharing of Buildings Act 1969. They are legal documents and might not appear to reflect the dreams and hopes in local situations for equality and goodwill.)
- Practice Documents. Where these exist, they might include terms of reference for committees, processes for electing Elders / Stewards etc.
- Annual Reports
- Minutes of meetings with powers of governance such as Elders and Church Meeting, Church Council, and Joint Councils.