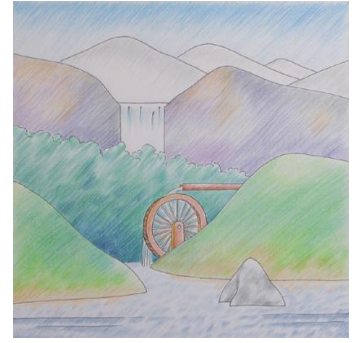




The Methodist Church

Flowing with Life Moving in God's Power

In Altrincham, Bowdon Vale, Hale and Timperley



At the beginning of 2009, Rev Kevin Johnson was explaining that now the decision had been made not to merge our circuit with those nearby, we now needed a stronger plan that would take us forward as a circuit. I volunteered my skills having facilitated this kind of process for businesses and wondering whether it would work for churches.

The process started in February 2009 with one-to-one confidential interviews of the ministers and circuit stewards, asking the questions:

- Who is the circuit?
- Who does the circuit serve?
- Where are the circuit now, and where would you like them to be in the future?
- What is stopping the circuit from getting there?
- What are the most meaningful initiatives the circuit could take on to reach the future?

The interview findings prompted me to propose a plan, which the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) approved. So far it has involved:

1. The District Mapping Exercise

The CLT met with the District Team, who presented their findings from what they called a 'Mapping Exercise', providing facts about the demographics of our area and allowing us to compare ourselves to other circuits

2. Preparing for Change

All the CLT members read a book on how to inspire change called 'Our Iceberg is Melting' (we've placed a copy on the church bookshelf if you'd like to take a look)

3. Vision Day

A Saturday in March brought the CLT together for food and prayer, resulting in agreements on who the circuit is serving, and an honest sharing of views on where the circuit is now. The CLT used 'creative' processes to help them articulate four different descriptions of their future vision for the circuit, deciding on the one that resonated most for them...it was a powerful metaphor of a river linking to the book of Ezekiel

4. March Circuit Meeting

The CLT took a summary of everything they had produced to the March Circuit Meeting, which has since been described by some as 'the best circuit meeting they've ever seen'. The meeting liked the metaphor, and in the meeting an individual came up with a snappier phrase for us all to use that was instantly approved...this is the phrase we now know as "Flowing with life, moving in God's power".

5. Making the Vision a Reality

At the circuit meeting, volunteers were invited to join the CLT at a full Saturday in May to pray and eat together, share the story so far, separate into smaller groups to look at what we are doing now, and what would look different if we were applying the above vision statement.

For example, I shared how our 4th Sunday worship called Difference was 'Moving in God's power', but wasn't really 'flowing with life' right now as we weren't reaching anyone outside our existing congregation. We discussed what Difference would look like if it was meeting both parts of the vision statement.

After the small groups had presented back, we then created a view of the obstacles stopping the circuit from reaching the vision.

Lastly, we created a 'map' of all the initiatives that would break through the obstacles to achieve the vision and prioritised the four that seemed most needed right now.

These four are the initiatives that are now up and running:

- Communicating vision and strategy
- Exploring agile location
- Establishing church facts
- Creating small life & faith groups

I won't explain more about these, as I don't want to steal the thunder from the teams themselves.

6. Agreeing the Scope & Sponsor for each Initiative

The CLT met to agree a single person to be responsible for each initiative - we called them a 'sponsor' - and to agree what was in and out of scope for each initiative.

The scopes were agreed by the Circuit Meeting and each sponsor was asked to create a team representative of the entire circuit so that we could achieve the initiatives *together*.

7. Building the CLT Team

The CLT came together again for a full Saturday in September. We worked on a new remit and ways of working for the team that would support the process they had started.

In Conclusion

I've been delighted with the way in which the Circuit Leadership Team has involved people, spent time discerning the right way to move forwards, and are putting it into action. I was stunned to see how individuals have already responded to the vision with artwork, which is now displayed in all the churches. I encourage more people to get involved as it continues forwards and to support us having a Methodism which is really 'Flowing with life and moving in God's power'.

Will Sudworth