

**The West Midlands Church Leaders**

**invite you to a  
Regional Conference**

# **DISCIPLESHIP AND MISSION**

The Forum is arranged by the  
West Midlands Regional Training Partnership with a focus on

**Training to equip 'Fresh Expressions'  
of the Church and continuing to develop  
Learning for Discipleship**

Chaired by The Revd John Howard,  
Chair of the Wolverhampton and  
Shrewsbury District of the Methodist Church

**on**

**Thursday 20 May 2010  
10 a.m. until 3.45 p.m.**

**at**

**Droitwich Spa Methodist Church  
Worcester Road, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire**

**(Leave the M5 motorway at J5, take A38 towards Droitwich. Take the left hand turn onto the  
B4090 Bromsgrove Road. Droitwich Spa Methodist Church is on the right hand side)**

## **DISCIPLESHIP AND MISSION – A REGIONAL FORUM FOR LEADERS, TRAINERS AND PRACTITIONERS**

*What the Forum this year is about.....*

This year the annual Forum of the West Midlands Regional Training Partnership (RTP) has a twin focus :

### **i) Training to equip 'Fresh Expressions' of the Church**

'Fresh Expressions' is a national initiative, supported by the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. The initiative provides vision, encouragement, advice and good practice to assist local churches to become more missionary, to reach out through new and varied expressions of worship and church life. Different churches and church groupings within our Region have already benefitted from the support of the Fresh Expressions initiative and this Forum Day will introduce this work more widely with a focus on the training needed to equip local churches to develop and sustain mission opportunities.

### **ii) Continuing to develop Learning for Discipleship**

The West Midlands RTP has made significant strides in assisting partners in the region to develop courses, opportunities and vision to assist in carrying through the importance given to equipping Christians to be disciples in all that they do and all that they are. This part of the Forum Day will report on progress so far and enable us to see how to take this forward.

So far, new programmes have been offered by partners in the region, backed up by a Steering Group that shares vision, good practice and learning materials. The RTP has founded a Discipleship web-site to make widely available information about opportunities and programmes. There is also a working group on Discipleship in Daily Life. Each of the recent annual Forum Days has given us an opportunity to keep up to speed and to contribute a sense of direction and ownership to how the region is taking forward the priority of providing Learning for Christian Discipleship.

### **Our overall Aim for the Forum Day**

We wish to establish a fruitful interchange of understanding between practitioners in the Region who are seeking to develop 'Fresh Expressions' and those in our region who can assist with training. The training needs to be relevant to equip clergy and lay people to create and sustain mission initiatives through changes to worship and church life.

To help us with this aim, we are welcoming the **Revd Andy Turner** to join us. Andy has served in the Methodist District in our region and is now a member of the national leadership team for Fresh Expressions with a particular brief for training. He has provided advice and insights to the Steering group of the RTP in planning the Forum Day. He will especially guide us in looking at resources and this will be the topic for the first session after lunch. This is to point us to support for many people, clergy and local churches in taking initiatives in mission.

Our concern at the Forum Day is with training rather than the formation of 'Fresh Expressions' as such.

## **Please pass on this invitation**

It would be excellent if invitations for the Forum Day included those who have experience of participating in Fresh Expressions and those who hold a brief for the training, either local training or that provided by District, Diocese or Synod. This can include those trained in creating and leading 'Fresh Expressions' and those with a brief for training in worship. This encourages us to invite both practitioners and trainers so that the Forum Day can take place at this interface and help us to see that training is needed and how best to provide this.

It is quite possible to attend only part of the day.

There is an open invitation for those who are interested to attend the annual Forum Days planned by the RTP. This is the next in a series. There is a specific focus each year and an invitation especially for those with responsibility and interests in that topic. It is open to all who would find it helpful to respond to the opportunity - with others who share similar commitments amongst the partners of the RTP covenant - to attend.

## **Our objectives for the Forum Day 2010**

The Forum Day will provide opportunities

- i) for us all to develop in our Discipleship as people who can be rooted in local situations and can have the capacities to be pioneering in how we approach our ministry, both lay and ordained
- ii) to have a more informed understanding of what training would be helpful, in particular circumstances, to assist and support the creation and sustain the continuing development of fresh expressions of church
- iii) to assess what has been found helpful or lacking in training currently provided or available
- iii) to begin to assess how all the training which is provided for lay and ordained ministries can be shaped and invigorated by drawing on insights from the training for more identifiable 'Fresh Expressions'
- iv) to see how we can bring learning from training for 'Fresh Expressions' into the regular life of congregations, for example in training to facilitate informal worship well in the settings of inherited models of the church
- v) to begin to consider how the RTP might (in the light of this Forum) continue to monitor the development and adjustment of all training provided within the region

To assist us, the programme will include a range of case studies drawn from our region and presented live on the Forum Day. These studies will seek to illustrate and guide us in terms of :

- \* extending our church contexts to new people
- \* beginning to create a sense of Christian presence in currently 'non-church' contexts
- \* worship which can feed mission

## **Background to the Forum Day**

### *The meaning of 'Fresh Expressions' - what changes are in view?*

The opening of the Forum Day recognises that not all participants will have current experience of training for Fresh Expressions. The Forum Day is trying to open up discussion about the possibilities.

We do not wish to narrow down our understanding of 'Fresh Expressions' to mission initiatives that are formally identified or labelled as 'Fresh Expressions'. Much of the thinking about 'Fresh Expressions' points us to re-consider how all our expressions of church life and worship can inspire discipleship. A mixed economy of opportunities, some new in feel and some traditional in feel, would match this concern well.

We are aware of the fragility of many Fresh Expressions of church. They can flourish quickly and possibly also fade quickly. The 'gatherings' are less solid and less based on firm commitment made by people of long-standing faith and Christian involvement. Given this fragility, and the need for creativity and flexibility, and there is a concern about how to sustain these expressions, we need to be training people now to be ready in the future to offer vision and leadership, that allow for imagination, diversity and flexibility.

Our Forum Day also has a concern for how we can build up theology, worship and spirituality to support us in seeking to be 'Fresh Expressions' in all we do and in how we approach all ministry. This will be picked up in the panel discussion that will take place during the morning. It will be led by members of the RTP Steering Group.

This fits with the concern to see training for Fresh Expressions as an aspect of the training and exercise of all those already in ministry (lay and ordained) and those entering now into these ministries. The term 'Fresh Expressions' should not be separated off to refer only to new initiatives that are formally identified as missionary.

### *Fresh Expressions and Discipleship*

We wish to highlight the interconnection between the work on Fresh Expressions and the afternoon session on Discipleship. If we are to make creative 'Fresh Expressions', then we will also need to be providing opportunities for the development for clergy and lay leaders to help the local church to be more missionary. This is also about calling and vocation. We are developing individuals to be 'disciples' who can be rooted in qualities and virtues so that they can relate to the local situation, not just to have imaginative ideas about how to develop the situation. This means that what we may learn about how training for Fresh Expressions can assist us with many other aspects of the training and ministry of those already in ministry and those now entering lay or ordained ministry.

The afternoon session will especially bring us up to date with the work in the region to promote and provide training and learning for discipleship. Our regional working group on Learning for Discipleship will guide the afternoon session. Thought is to being given to how all disciples can be encouraged to be pioneering and how we can share the Christian Gospel with those meeting, both through our own church and through our daily life.

*Our worship during the day*

Our worship will seek to make links between the topics for the day and biblical insights.

*Continuing discussions and updates on the work of the West Midlands RTP*

- i) The Discipleship website has been launched and is regularly updated. We plan consideration of the Learning Revolution as part of Learning for Discipleship.
- ii) Mission and Evangelism in terms of Pioneer Ministry and Fresh Expressions. The 2010 Forum is a significant step.
- iii) A review has identified a convergence in the region with regard to understanding and practice in Ordained Local Ministry (as understood in the Anglican dioceses of the Region).
- iv) Practice and understanding is being shared around the way in which the partners provide **Life-Long Clergy Formation**
- v) A regional consultation was held to share expertise with training to support the policy for Adult Safeguarding.

## PROGRAMME

Coffee on arrival ready for 10.30 am start

Introduction and opening prayers - The Revd John Howard

### **Session 1: The Church Freshly Expressed for Mission**

10.35am Opening up the discussion: Opportunity in groups so that we can all listen and reflect on: what is our experience so far of training for fresh expressions? What has worked well and in which local contexts? What has been less helpful? What seems to be good practice?

10.50 am A range of **case studies** drawn from within our West Midlands region which reflect on Fresh Expressions in terms of training: what worked for us? Looking back, what might have been helpful? What training do we need now? What will help us develop and sustain our fresh expression?

11.30 am Theology and Spirituality to give a grounding for fresh expressions: a panel discussion

11.45 am Group Work (taking coffee with us into Groups)  
Time in groups to reflect on: "In the light of the case studies, what approach is needed to equip local churches and Christians to be able to develop mission in their local contexts? What changes might be needed in the training we offer? "

12.20 pm Plenary for feedback from the Groups

12.40 pm Worship - so that we are open to how we can better participate in the missionary presence of God in the church and in the world

1.00 pm Buffet Lunch - contributions to the cost will be invited

1.45 pm

### **Session 2: Resources for becoming more Missionary**

An introduction to national resources for training by the Revd Andy Roberts

2.15 pm

### **Session 3: Learning for Discipleship: progress and plans**

Led by members of the RTP Discipleship working group

3.15 pm Feedback on the priorities and next steps for the West Midlands RTP

3.30 pm Closing Prayer

# Discipleship and Mission

A Day Conference for the Churches of the West Midlands Region  
Thursday 20 May, 10.00 a.m. – 3.45p.m.  
at Droitwich Spa Methodist Church  
Worcester Road, Droitwich Spa, Worcestershire  
Chaired by The Revd John Howard, Chair of the Wolverhampton and  
Shrewsbury District of the Methodist Church

Please book a place by sending a letter or email to Jenny Harris, Secretary to The Ven Dr Brian Russell, Diocesan Office, 175 Harborne Park Road, Harborne, Birmingham, B17 0BH or email: [jenny@birmingham.anglican.org](mailto:jenny@birmingham.anglican.org)

Name .....

Your interest in the Regional Training Partnership:

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Issues or questions you hope will be addressed during the Conference:

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Address: .....

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Tel No..... Email .....

Signature ..... Date .....