



# Engaging the circuit with the world of work

FI

## Purpose

This worksheet explores ways in which Methodist circuits might engage more fully with the world of work. Many of the suggestions made could be applied to similar ecclesiastical groupings within other denominations (such as an Anglican deanery).

## Preparation

Methodism has recently reaffirmed the circuit as 'the primary unit of mission' (Deeks, 2006; *The Missional Nature of the Circuit*, 2008). A vital aspect of the missional nature of the circuit is to engage with the world of work. At the same time, through the *Mapping the Future* process, numerous circuits are being re-aligned. Here again, high on the agenda for such 'new' circuits should be engaging in mission in relation to the world of work. [For this to be effective, it is important that the area covered by any 'new' circuit approximates as closely as possible to a *zone humaine*; that is a region, city, town or rural area with clearly identifiable economic, as well as social and administrative 'boundaries'.]

For 'new' and existing circuits to engage effectively with the world of work there needs to be:

- a clear understanding of the nature of mission in this context;
- new initiatives undertaken to make this form of mission a reality;
- leaders designated and equipped to further this aspect of mission.

## Process

### *The nature of mission in the world of work*

Every circuit needs to develop its own theology of mission in relation to the world of work. This will determine its priorities for and approach to engaging with the working life of its area. Many of the worksheets produced here will be of help in this discernment process, but those on 'Literary resources' [KI] and 'Discerning the gifts of the kingdom community at work' [EI] are likely to be of particular value.

Two key foci for the circuit's mission in the world of work are:

1. *direct* engagement with the world of work *within* the geographical area on which the circuit is based;
2. equipping lay people for ministry and mission *within and beyond* the area covered by the circuit.

### *1. Engagement with the world of work within the circuit's geographical area*

- The circuit needs to be well acquainted with issues relating to the world of work which concern its area – within such spheres as business and economics, education, health and welfare, law and order, leisure and governance. This means assimilating information concerning the area's current situation and plans for future development published by relevant bodies and agencies.
- As part of this 'auditing' process, the circuit needs to identify and enter into dialogue with those bodies and agencies which, from its own missional perspective, might be useful partners. [It goes without saying that in relation to mission in the world of work ecumenical partnerships are vital, though a good deal of effort is sometimes required to make them operate effectively.]

- The circuit should take a lead in enabling people to develop a collective vision for the future of their area. The circuit's theology of mission in the world of work should be offered as an important contribution to this visioning process.  
[See, for example, the visioning process set up by an association of churches within a rural market town (*Faith in Bakewell*, 2008).]
- As a follow-up to this process, the circuit should seek to identify initiatives (many of which may be small-scale) that exemplify the collective vision (including the circuit's theological vision) for the area and invite those involved to share their stories. Such stories might be published on a circuit's website, in a circuit newsletter or offered to the local press and media, perhaps with reference to the signs of the kingdom which they might be felt to exemplify [see again *Faith in Bakewell*, and worksheet E1].
- The circuit (wherever possible, ecumenically) could organise a celebration and/or display of the working life of the area setting it in the context of God's gifts as creator and sustainer [see worksheet F5].

## 2. Equipping lay people for ministry and mission within and beyond the area covered by the circuit

Mission in the world of work depends on the circuit empowering and equipping its lay people to fulfil their ministry and mission *wherever* they work, be that in a paid or a voluntary capacity. Many suggestions described in 'Engaging the local church with the world of work' [F2] could be undertaken as circuit initiatives thus enabling all churches to work together in developing this aspect of mission.

### Leadership

It is extremely difficult for any circuit to engage effectively with the world of work unless a person with the necessary commitment, skills and time is designated to take a lead role in coordinating such missional endeavour. Currently no denomination has a form of church leadership explicitly identified and trained for this kind of ministry. Amongst those who might make an important contribution to meeting this leadership deficit are:

- members of the Methodist Diaconal Order, who have a particular responsibility to make connections between the Church and world, including the world at work;
- chaplains, who can help circuits keep in touch with and reflect on key issues relating to the world of work [see, for example, worksheet G1];
- worship leaders and local preachers, who could more often address the relationship of faith to the world of work [worksheet F4].

### Resources

Deeks, David, *Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission*, London, Methodist Church, 2006

Association of Bakewell Christians, *Faith in Bakewell*, 2008 (available from

[www.methodistdiaconalorder.org.uk](http://www.methodistdiaconalorder.org.uk))

Methodist Conference, *The Missional Nature of the Circuit*, London, Methodist Church, 2008