
From the Circuit Meeting

A Circuit Meeting was held on 25th March, hosted by King's Hall at Greenford Methodist Church.

Opening Devotions

The meeting opened with devotions from Rev Sue Male. Drawing from the Annunciation in Luke's Gospel, she reflected on Mary's courage and trust in God's plan, encouraging all present to consider their own callings within the life and mission of the Circuit.

New Circuit Stewards

The Circuit Meeting welcomed new representatives Matt Whitehouse (Northolt) and Robin Masih (King's Hall), and guest Thomas Winter from the District Property Team. Thanks were also given to Anil Griffin for his service, with Robin Masih now taking on the King's Hall representative role.

Property Matters

Circuit Vision and Worship

The Circuit continues shaping its long-term vision, with an augmented Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) meeting monthly from April. Churches had been asked for

feedback on how worship is organised across the Circuit. While local arrangements seem to be working well—with most churches content using The Vine resources—joint services continue to present mixed results. Some value the opportunity to worship together, though practical barriers like transport and parking can reduce attendance. There was support for ‘natural pairings’ between churches, such as Ealing Green with Kingsdown, and Greenford with Northolt. The meeting encouraged flexibility and creativity, including both worship and social activities. The CLT will propose three or four potential Circuit-wide events each year, to which churches can respond based on local needs.

King’s Hall Redevelopment

Thomas Winter shared a revised approach to the redevelopment of King’s Hall, and gave the meeting a presentation he planned to present later that week to the Southall Community Alliance. Earlier proposals for the site had stalled, but a new plan is being developed that honours the building’s heritage while addressing practical and financial considerations. A concept was shared involving community and worship space in the existing rotunda area, with housing at the rear to help fund the redevelopment. The Circuit hopes this could include facilities such as a nursery, café, or health provision. Meetings continue with Ealing Council and Southall Community Alliance, and land agents 31ten are advising on legal and planning matters.

Property Matters

Pitshanger Methodist Church

Drama Studio London has withdrawn from leasing discussions, citing estimated upgrade costs of £2.7 million. Trustees are now reconsidering the site’s future. A working group will be formed to explore other lease or sale options, with final decisions expected at the June meeting. Current users of the building will be updated after that decision is made.

Costons Avenue (Vacant Manse)

Remedial works are complete and the property is now ready for sale. The CLT will instruct an estate agent shortly, with hopes to bring the property to market by early summer.

Renters' Rights Bill

A summary paper was circulated about the Renters' Rights Bill, due to come into effect in August. The Circuit is already broadly compliant, and Andy Brierley, the Circuit Manager, is auditing all rental properties to ensure readiness. Key points likely to be in the legislation include:

- **End of Fixed-Term Tenancies:** All new and existing tenancies will automatically become rolling (periodic), meaning they no longer have a defined end date.
- **End of No-Fault Evictions:** Trustees will only be able to end a tenancy using prescribed legal grounds (e.g. needing the property as a Manse, sale, rent arrears). Simply giving notice without a reason will no longer be permitted.
- **Minimum Tenancy Length:** A minimum of 12 months will be standard—this already aligns with current Circuit practice.
- **Limits on Rent Increases:** Only one increase per year will be allowed, up to market rates—again, in line with existing practice.
- **“Decent Homes” Standard:** New health and safety requirements (e.g. resolving damp or mould promptly) will apply. The Circuit is already compliant.
- **Ombudsman Scheme:** The Circuit must register with a new ombudsman and pay a fee.
- **Tenants' Rights:** New protections will include the right to request pets and to be free from discrimination based on income, benefits status, or family circumstances.

Finance

Stephen Sears, the Circuit Treasurer, presented a draft of the 2023–24 accounts and trustees' report. Trustees are invited to share comments before a final version is brought to the June meeting. The Circuit's current financial position was also reviewed and described as relatively healthy. A new Circuit Treasurer is being sought, and members were encouraged to share the role description within their churches.

Safeguarding and EDI

Recent and upcoming training dates were shared, including a Foundation session in June and an Advanced session in May. Rev Steve presented a Memorial to the Methodist Conference calling for greater flexibility in who can deliver Advanced Safeguarding training, in response to delays caused by current limitations. The motion passed unanimously.

EDI training is also being planned for after Easter, and those interested in attending in-person sessions are encouraged to contact Rev Steve.

Local Preachers and Worship Leaders

The meeting heard updates from the Worship Leaders and Local Preachers section. Fi Dunn continues on trial as a Local Preacher, and both Karen Whitehouse and Sybil Corbin are in training to become Worship Leaders. A retreat on the theme of storytelling will be held on 7th June for all preachers and worship leaders in the Circuit.

Forthcoming Events

Greenford Methodist Church is preparing for its centenary celebrations, which will take place across two weekends in June. A special commemorative plaque will be unveiled by Lord Leslie Griffiths.