

Role Description for a District Ecumenical Officer

The variety of roles undertaken by District Ecumenical Officers in conjunction with their District Chairs and District Policy Committees makes it difficult to provide one set role description; some Districts, for example, have more than one Ecumenical Officer and some District Policy Committees delegate some or all of their ecumenical responsibilities to their District Ecumenical Officer(s).¹ Following meetings of the District Ecumenical Officers in 2014 and 2015, this document is offered as a resource for Districts; it includes a list of possible responsibilities to assist the Districts and their Ecumenical Officers discern which of them are priorities, how they are most effectively fulfilled, and what resources are required.

A District Ecumenical Officer encourages, supports, and challenges the District and its component Circuits² and Local Churches³ to explore how they may work best with churches of other denominations in accordance with the Lund Principle,⁴ 'Our Calling',⁵ 'Priorities for the Methodist Church',⁶ 'Towards an Ecumenical Strategy',⁷ and 'Our Ecumenical Calling: Making a Difference Together in the twenty-first century',⁸ noting that 'wherever possible the work of the District is carried out ecumenically'.⁹

In the Scotland District, a District Ecumenical Forum fulfils many of the roles fulfilled elsewhere by a District Ecumenical Officer.

In addition to the ecumenical responsibilities of Synod Cymru and the Wales Synod, Y Cyngor has particular ecumenical responsibilities.¹⁰

The range of a District Ecumenical Officer's work may be divided into representative and missional roles, as described below:

1. Representative Role

- 1.1. to represent the District at ecumenical gatherings and services of worship;
- 1.2. to liaise with the District Chair and District Policy Committee on ecumenical projects and proposals within the District;¹¹
- 1.3. to liaise with the Connexional Ecumenical Officer on ecumenical projects and proposals within or affecting the District;¹²

¹ See Standing Order 434(3A).

² See Standing Orders 500(1) and 532(1)(iv).

³ See Standing Orders 600(1), 604, and 650(6)(iii).

⁴ The Lund Principle was formulated in the third World Faith and Order Conference in Lund in 1952, saying, 'Should not our churches ask themselves ... whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?'

⁵ See <http://www.methodist.org.uk/who-we-are/vision-values>.

⁶ Priorities for the Methodist Church, adopted by the Conference in 2004, begins, 'In partnership with others wherever possible...' (see <http://www.methodist.org.uk/who-we-are/vision-values/priorities-for-the-methodist-church>).

⁷ See <http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-ecumenical-issues-2001.pdf>.

⁸ See <http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/2136601/ec-Vision%20-%20Our%20Ecumenical%20Calling.pdf>.

⁹ See Standing Orders 400(A)(1), 434(2)-(3), 440(2) and (4), and 963(3).

¹⁰ See Standing Order 491(3)(ii-iii); Y Cyngor is the leadership and co-ordinating team for Yr Eglwys Fethodistaidd yng Nghymru/The Methodist Church in Wales.

¹¹ See Standing Order 434(3)(i) and (iii).

¹² See Standing Orders 434(3)(v) and 334.

- 1.4. to work alongside ecumenical officers or their equivalents of other denominations to establish, maintain and develop ecumenical projects within the District. The District Ecumenical Officer's role may include helping to establish appropriate governing documents for such ecumenical projects and making recommendations on them to the District Policy Committee and the Synod;¹³
- 1.5. to work in co-operation with District Ecumenical Officers of neighbouring Districts in respect of intermediate bodies on projects that cross District boundaries. This will be especially relevant to ecumenical areas where the boundaries of partner denominations include parts of more than one Methodist District;
- 1.6. to work in co-operation with County Ecumenical Officers and intermediate (usually county level) Churches Together bodies where they exist;
- 1.7. to serve as a member of, or relate to, any Intermediate Bodies within the District. In some places, where several Intermediate Bodies are involved, others may need to attend their meetings and report to the District Ecumenical Officer. The District Ecumenical Officer's function on Intermediate/Sponsoring Bodies is to:
 - a. bring the concerns/plans/policies of the Methodist Church both locally and connexionally into the work of the Intermediate/Sponsoring Body;
 - b. play a full part in the work of the Intermediate/Sponsoring Body, sharing in reviews and Local Advisory Groups and promoting the initiatives of the Body especially within the District;
- 1.8. where appropriate, to liaise with the District Chair in relation to the Methodist Training Forum to which the District relates. The District Ecumenical Officer may be designated as the District Chair's representative on such a Forum at the Chair's discretion;¹⁴
- 1.9. to advise the District Policy Committee and relevant Circuit Superintendents regarding proposals to promote or to alter the category or status of Methodist or ecumenical schools within the District;¹⁵
- 1.10. to attend the two annual connexional meetings of District Ecumenical Officers, one of which is usually a consultation with ecumenical officers of other denominations.

2. **Missional Role**

- 2.1. to encourage the District and its component Circuits and Local Churches to engage in mission in partnership with others wherever possible;
- 2.2. to encourage the District Synod to think ecumenically by providing ecumenical reports to the Synod and engaging with its business. This may be achieved through conveying information and experience of work which is being done ecumenically in other districts and across the Connexion;
- 2.3. to be aware of the nature of the District and its Circuits as a whole and to imagine the ecumenical possibilities which exist within the District. To that end, the District Ecumenical Officer will keep up to date with relevant national and international ecumenical developments. In order to ensure as full a breadth of knowledge as possible, the District Ecumenical Officer will maintain a good awareness of the relevant websites of ecumenical bodies and other denominations. The District Ecumenical Officer

¹³ See Standing Orders 412(3) and 434(3)(iv-v).

¹⁴ See Standing Order 340(2)(iii).

¹⁵ See Standing Order 342(4) and (6).

will draw such websites and other ecumenical reports to the attention of District, Circuit and Local Church Leadership Teams as appropriate;¹⁶

- 2.4. to be available for invitation from Circuit Superintendents to visit Circuits and Local Churches within the District to discuss and explore opportunities for further ecumenical work within these localities;
- 2.5. to act as a point of reference/contact for Circuit Superintendents, Circuit Leadership Teams and their counterparts in other denominations when ecumenical projects are being established and to remain such a point of contact after such projects have been established.¹⁷ In this respect, the District Ecumenical Officer may act as an Ecumenical Accompanist to such projects;
- 2.6. to assist the District Policy Committee to fulfil its responsibilities in relation to New Towns and New Areas;¹⁸
- 2.7. to assist the District and its Circuits in the development of ecumenical chaplaincies wherever appropriate;
- 2.8. to guide Circuit Superintendents, the District Policy Committee and others in the formulation of constitutions and other documentation during the establishment of ecumenical projects within the District;¹⁹
- 2.9. with the permission of Circuit Superintendents, to collect information about the Circuits and Local Churches so as to form an overall picture of ecumenical relationships and activity across the District and to assist in their further development;²⁰
- 2.10. when invited, to liaise with ecumenical officers and corresponding representatives of other denominations as appropriate on behalf of Circuits and Local Churches in order to develop ecumenical relationships and activity in these localities;
- 2.11. to act as a link between the Connexional Team on the one hand and the District and its Circuits/Local Churches on the other in relation to ecumenical matters.²¹

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¹⁶ See Standing Order 434(3)(i).

¹⁷ See Standing Order 343(vi).

¹⁸ See Standing Order 1005.

¹⁹ See Standing Order 412(3) and 431(ii).

²⁰ See Standing Orders 434(3)(i) and (vi), and 962.

²¹ See Standing Order 412(1).