

Information Technology and the Methodist Church

Using Technology in Worship and Mission

– Learning From Each Other

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Introduction

Technology – a means, not an end

‘At the heart of the Christian Gospel is the God who longs to communicate with the created order. The incarnation of Christ illustrates the lengths to which the God of love was willing to go to enable that. The Gospel writers present Jesus as an expert in communication who used signs, symbols and words most effectively to deliver the message about God’s Kingdom. At Pentecost the power of the Holy Spirit enabled the Church to communicate by speaking in languages that people understood.

Speaking in languages that can be understood is still our task today. The Church in British society has been slow to realise that the way we communicate the Gospel needs to change because those unfamiliar with church culture often find our methods unintelligible. Perhaps this is because our ways have changed very little, whilst things around us have moved on at a phenomenal rate.

We now find ourselves in a situation where the influence of Christianity upon society is drastically reduced, even compared with just a few generations ago. Many inside the Church lament this, but what is needed, as a response from the Church, is not lament, rather an appreciation of how this has happened. In part the answer lies in communication. At one time the Church had a huge captive audience. Now our ‘audience’ has many other options and has found them more attractive. But perhaps people are no less open to the ideas of others; in fact modern media advertising would suggest that with the right tools they can be influenced in very dramatic ways indeed.’

Mark Pengelly, *Using Technology in Worship: things you wanted to know about but were too embarrassed to ask!* (The Methodist Church, 2004)

The Methodist Conference in 2001 adopted a report that confirmed a strategy 'to develop the use of IT in all parts of the Church in the furtherance of the Church's mission'.

The strategy had two goals:

- To provide efficient IT systems for all the servicing functions provided by the Connexional Team, Conference Office and Methodist Publishing House.
- To develop coherent IT links throughout the connexion.

Significant steps had already been taken towards meeting the first goal. An integrated computer system is in place for use by the Methodist Connexional Team and its benefits continue to be explored. A connexional integrated database is in operation, the stationing process for both presbyters and deacons is better supported, statistical information is more accessible, and duplication of information is being minimised.

As part of the work towards the second goal, and supported by a grant from the Epworth Fund, it was possible to make available small grants to a number of innovative projects around the Methodist Connexion, which have explored the use of information and communication technology in various ways in furtherance of the Church's mission.

Using Technology in Worship and Mission – learning from each other includes reports on each of these eight projects, together with a profile of six further initiatives already well established around the connexion. It is hoped that by publicising these initiatives more widely, others will be encouraged to explore the potential for developing technology to support, enhance and challenge the Church's work in ministry and mission.

For those who are inspired to try out new ideas but are not sure where to start, an earlier Methodist publication, *Using Technology in Worship: things you wanted to know about but were too embarrassed to ask!*, has been incorporated into this booklet. For further information, the Methodist Church website (www.methodist.org.uk) contains pages on *Technology and the Church* and *Sharing ICT Resources*.

Chris Kitchin, Head of Communication
Laurence Wareing, Editor

A note on terminology

During the life of the initiatives described in this booklet, the use of the term Information Technology (IT) has been superseded by the use of the more inclusive term Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Except in the case of quotations from Conference and connexional reports, this booklet adopts the updated term throughout.

Chapter 1

MINISTRY AND MISSION IN A TECHNOLOGICAL AGE: Information and Communication Technology in the Methodist Church

In 2001 Conference received a report, *Information Technology and the Methodist Church*, and affirmed the strategy contained in it.

The report highlighted progress in incorporating technology into the Church's everyday life and witness, and gave a wide range of examples including website facilities, the emerging use of e-mail and campaigning for safe and ready access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for disadvantaged young people. The fruits of investment in technology and developing skills were already becoming evident. It was clear, however, that more could be done to guide further initiatives and produce coherent outcomes.

The proposed strategy aimed 'to develop the use of IT in all parts of the Church in the furtherance of the Church's mission'.

Information and Communication Technology has enormous implications for more effective administration and for improved communications throughout the Church, but every investment must be evaluated against its contribution to the Church's mission

in contemporary society. For this reason, development of an ICT strategy was set within the context of the Methodist Church's *Our Calling* process and the Connexional Team's Strategic Plan designed to support it. In 2001-2004, the Plan had three objectives:

- To communicate good practice and creative work around the Connexion
- To help children, young people and young adults to engage with God and to help the Church to engage with them
- To help people to enter into conversations about God and faith in all kinds of settings and in ways which make sense to all involved

In the belief that these objectives could be supported imaginatively by the effective use of ICT, two immediate goals were set for the development of ICT throughout the Connexion:

- To provide efficient ICT systems for all the servicing functions of the Connexional Team, Conference Office and Methodist Publishing House
- To develop coherent ICT links throughout the Connexion

Using a grant from the Epworth Fund,

a small connexional project group was established. It included both lay and ordained people with experience of the development and use of ICT. From the beginning, its scope of reference increased to include not only computers but also other related equipment.

Building an infrastructure

The infrastructure for an ICT strategy was developed in two stages, firstly the installation of an integrated computer system for the Connexional Team, and secondly, the development of a series of initiatives designed to facilitate the use of ICT throughout the Connexion and meet training needs.

Stage One: an integrated computer system for the Connexional Team

This was achieved by its target date of September 2002. Methodist Church House, the Resourcing Mission Office in Manchester, regional and home-based Connexional Team staff and the Methodist Publishing House were all linked by e-mail, and an intranet facility was developed for the Connexional Team.

A central database of contacts was developed that improved accuracy in communication and removed duplication. This has led to more efficient and effective administration, including the gathering, collation and use of core statistics and data in all appropriate parts of the Connexion; access on-line to information and forms

that need to be completed in application processes for all categories of authorised ministry; and access on-line to information, guidance and schedules related to the management of property.

Communication and the rapid transfer of information in the Stationing process have been greatly supported by the use of electronic communication.

The resources to complete Stage One were funded from allocations already in the Team budget and support from the Epworth Fund.

Stage Two: broadening the picture

In order to extend, facilitate and encourage the appropriate and imaginative use of ICT throughout the Methodist Connexion, the ICT Project Group developed a wide range of initiatives:

- 1 Churches, circuits, districts and Methodist bodies were consulted about changes and disciplines that might best be supported by developing ICT. A survey of current practice and initiatives was undertaken and the results of its analysis helped to guide the work of the ICT Project Group.
- 2 The standards for hardware and software used by the Connexional Team were provided for those who wished to ensure that their own computer resources were

compatible with those being used in the Connexional Team (see Appendix C, p.53).

- 3 The Connexional Allowances Committee (CAC) considered the potential provision of computers for ministers and deacons within the overall review of stipends and terms of service. No specific recommendations were made however. Current guidance reflects the 1996 Conference recommendation: 'Recognition should be given throughout the Connexion to the increasing use of information technology, with the capital cost of office equipment being considered a charge on the circuit or other body, and not a charge on the individual'. For further guidance, see Methodist Church Briefing Note BN 0201: Provision of Computer Equipment.
- 4 New formats for collecting statistics and data were piloted in different parts of the Connexion, to ensure that they were adequate for meeting clearly defined and widely understood purposes.
- 5 Exhibitions and facilities have been provided at successive Methodist Conferences, highlighting the benefits of using ICT, offering guidance on its use, demonstrating what is possible, and sharing examples of good practice. At the 2005 Conference in Torquay, a worship workshop titled Reaching

People - Reaching God offered an experience in the use of ICT to help in the planning and conduct of corporate worship.

- 6 Much of the guidance developed for the Church has been made available on the connexional website (www.methodist.org.uk).
- 7 A resource-sharing website is also now available providing copyright-free images and other resources that could be used by churches and related organisations. See www.methodist.org.uk/static/ICTshare/index.htm. If you want to share an electronic resource you have developed, and you own its copyright, why not offer it for others to use freely?
- 8 Working with the Creative Arts in Methodism network, a booklet was published on Using Technology in Worship, made available free for all those who conduct worship. It has been incorporated into this booklet and is available separately as a download from www.methodist.org.uk.
- 9 Expressions of interest were invited from across the Church to develop a wide variety of applications in the use of ICT. As a result, a number of pilot projects were established, partly funded from the Epworth Fund grant. These are described in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2

THE MESSAGE AND THE MEDIA: pilot projects from around the Connexion

Introduction

The ICT Project Group recognised that there was a wide-spread community in Methodism already taking hold of ICT technology and using it for mission within a local community context. The Project Group felt that these ideas could be opened up to the whole connexion with considerable benefits to all. It was decided, therefore, to invite groups and individuals to make submissions for sponsorship grants for their ICT projects. With the support of the Epworth Fund, the Project Group was able to offer up to £2,000 from the Epworth Fund to contribute towards or meet the costs of each agreed pilot scheme. (See Appendix B, p.51)

A report follows of each project that was funded. Contact details are provided for further information about each of them.

1. Audio Visual Media for use in Worship: Upper Calder Circuit, West Yorkshire District
2. MAYC texting project: Methodist Connexional Team
3. Make Contact Today: Nene Valley Circuit, Oxford & Leicester District
4. Network Church for the under-40s: Lincoln and Grimsby District
5. Share Jesus with Surfers: Share Jesus International
6. Window on the World: Coventry Circuit, Birmingham District
7. Outreach to 18-30s: York and Hull District
8. Mind the Gap: Gateshead and Jarrow Circuit, Newcastle Upon Tyne District

1. AUDIO VISUAL MEDIA for use in WORSHIP

Upper Calder Circuit, West Yorkshire District

The Upper Calder project stemmed from a desire to introduce a variety of visual and audio media into worship and small meetings, in particular to support meditation and prayer. It was felt that many existing materials available for this purpose, because they have been produced in the United States, inevitably have an American 'look' and feel to them. The Methodist Connexion as a whole, it was argued, might benefit from home-produced resources.

The project necessitated learning a number of new skills: operating a video camera; video and stills editing; and transferring the finished products onto DVD. Initially, materials were transferred onto CD using CDR and Flash compression technology. However, it became apparent that it would be more appropriate to use DVDs for transfers, in part because the market for DVD is an expanding one and in part because DVDs seemed to be more user friendly in a church context.

More than £3000 worth of equipment and software has been purchased during the development of this project, including a laptop computer, a DVD recorder, an additional computer keyboard and software programs that included Adobe Premier Pro and Photoshop 7. The need for additional resources is ongoing and further grants will be sought.

The project continues to develop. The first experience of Alternative Worship, which also included accompanying interviews, was well received. For this worship experience still images and a video were produced, and original music composed. The project coordinator owns the copyright to this material and has indicated that he would be happy for others to use it with an acknowledgment. Some material could be shared on the Sharing ICT Resources pages of the Methodist website, though any potential user would require broadband in order to download the amount of data involved.

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2. MAYC TEXTING PROJECT

Methodist Connexional Team

Increasingly, young people use mobile phones as essential tools for communication – for conversation, to search the Internet, and to send text messages and photos. As MAYC seeks new ways of communicating directly with, and supporting, young people (many of whom no longer belong to established youth groups), it has turned to mobile texting as one way of developing its communication strategy.

Research indicates that young people are more likely to offer feedback to surveys and questions by texting or using video rooms than by filling in forms. MAYC was also aware that forms and questionnaires are normally submitted in collated form by a Youth Worker or other group leader, which meant that organisers were not hearing from the young people directly.

At the 2004 Breakout event in Blackpool, and using a pilot texting system, the organisers requested participant feedback about the event by advertising a phone number to text. The system was then tested further throughout the following months. For example, participants at one 60th Anniversary event were asked to vote via text on options for a new MAYC logo.

Over time, organisers anticipate being able to send information out by text as well as receiving feedback, for example

to let young people know about new resources, to market events and recruit volunteers, or to send news updates and Bible verses.

The Systems Management Server required to operate a texting facility of this type has not been an easy one to develop, for a number of reasons: MAYC's desire to integrate it with the Methodist Connexion's database; the time it takes to research the range of systems available; and a desire to keep costs down. There is a cost for every message sent via the system, but MAYC organisers anticipate long term savings as the system catches on.

It is estimated that only 2-3% of MAYC membership has used the system during its first year of use. However, general feedback has been supportive, not least from Youth Workers themselves. In addition, a small group of young people has taken on the job of collating texted feedback as a way of getting more people involved with, and informed about, the new system.

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3. MAKE CONTACT TODAY

Nene Valley Circuit, Oxford & Leicester District

We use a lot of words in worship. This is fine for people who find words easy and helpful, say the organisers of the Nene Valley project. For those who don't, however, worship can become difficult and unhelpful. Building on the experiences of Contact, a new congregation established at a Methodist Church in Wellingborough, this project aimed to demonstrate throughout the circuit the power of images and the different ways in which they could be used in worship. Specifically, the aim was to produce materials for projection via a data projector in worship.

The project has produced a double CD pack with eight service outlines including music and images. This is supported by a website (www.makecontacttoday.org) that allows people to offer feedback and to share further resources. Contact holds the copyright for most of the material.

Developing the use of materials has strengthened the team members' belief in the power of images in worship and highlighted for them how reliant we often are on words in worship. They have been challenged to consider some of the standard Methodist Services, such as Holy Communion and the Covenant Service, and to explore how images can be used to replace or enhance some of the words used. A data projector, they observe, can

change the way you worship, but a projector on its own is not enough. The traditional way in which worship is planned, prepared and led needs to change in order to incorporate the opportunities audio-visual media offers and to make the resources a practical addition to worship, not another big drain on time.

Feedback to date has been very positive. The team has not produced material as fast as it would have liked. Nevertheless, people have welcomed the opportunity to explore what can be done with a data projector and, even more encouragingly, others have reported using the CD pack to explore new ways of worshipping.

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4. NETWORK CHURCH for the UNDER- 40s

Lincoln and Grimsby District

It takes over two hours to drive between one end of the Lincoln and Grimsby District and the other. Younger people without their own car find themselves stuck where they live due to poor public transport. How, in these circumstances, can creative technology assist in networking young people across a large geographical area? The Lincoln and Grimsby project grew out of this question and the desire to reach out to, and nurture, those in the 18 to 40 age range.

The project set out to connect young people across the District by use of Internet chat rooms and message boards, and even to establish virtual class meetings that brought together under-40s from different circuits. The District has registered a web domain name (www.methodist-lincs.org.uk) with the intention of establishing district email addresses and chat rooms designed to grow cross-District relationships.

The project also aimed to support Internet-based communication with local events. Opportunities for under-40s to meet together were already an established feature of the District's work, with the presentation of multi-media materials an important element of those gatherings, for example during the monthly Espresso 6:15 events at Moorland Park Methodist Church in the Lincoln (South) Circuit. One of the

project's intentions was that such materials should be made more widely available in the form of CD ROM's and directories of resources. Another hope was that other similar groups could be established elsewhere within the District, thus forming a network of lively under-40s initiatives. However, while Espresso 6:15 continues to attract greater numbers, an initial 'taster event', designed to replicate the idea in another circuit, failed to generate sufficient enthusiasm to take the idea forward there on a regular basis.

The project as a whole has not progressed as rapidly as its originators had hoped it would. This is for a number of reasons.

Multi-media, it was discovered, can be equipment-hungry. While the local church that sponsors Espresso 6:15 has purchased a digital projector, the initiative would benefit from having a good laptop to cope with the graphics required, a video mixer, a DVD player and the appropriate cables.

Secondly, the organiser of the overall project has found it difficult to make the time in which to draw together a team to move all the project elements forward. Without that team approach in place, the going has been slow. This problem has been exacerbated by the difficulty of making contact with other

individuals who themselves have the authority to make decisions and develop initiatives.

Nevertheless, enthusiasm for the Lincoln and Grimsby project remains alive. The very process of reflecting on the project for this report has itself raised possibilities of new ways forward and, with new project leaders now waiting in the wings, refreshed optimism.

CONTACT:

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5. SHARE JESUS WITH SURFERS

Share Jesus International

Though initially for use at the Dawn Patrol summer missions operated annually in the Cornwall District, the purchase of a high quality video camera has allowed Share Jesus International to develop a wide range of other media projects since 2003. Share Jesus International believes that 'too often, the Church is known for its poor image. The camera has allowed us to produce professional footage, aiding us to share our faith and mobilise people into mission.'

In purchasing the camera, Share Jesus International (SJI) aimed to produce resources of mission footage with a challenging message, to hand out free to holiday clubbers and surfers in Cornwall. In the event, no full-length resource has yet emerged from the Dawn Patrol initiative; however, a promo for that event can be found on a DVD documenting the Soul in the City initiative – a week of mission held in South West London in 2004. The DVD includes stories and news from each day of the event and personal testimonies, as well as carrying information about other SJI initiatives. (See www.sharejesusinternational.com.)

A second resource, available through the SJI website, is a DVD titled The Upper Room, targeted at church leaders. Designed to complement the 24/7 network of prayer, it includes suggestions for encouraging prayer in

church contexts. In addition, SJI has plans to develop a recorded chat show for transmission on cable television.

However, the SJI initiative doesn't focus simply on producing stand alone resources. Video footage has been edited for use at Christian festivals as far away as Nepal and Malaysia, for mission training events and for incorporation in church services. The camera is seen as an integral part of the organisation's methods of mission and ambitions for the future.

CONTACT:

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6. WINDOW ON THE WORLD

Coventry Circuit, Birmingham District

The Coventry project, initiated and designed by the Coventry University chaplaincy team, was designed to make an impact on the proverbial 'man in the street'; in effect developing a new kind of street evangelism.

The team created a number of image sequences that were projected onto a large screen situated in an office window overlooking a busy pedestrian area. The intention was to communicate something of the Christian message to a large number of passers-by, students in particular.

Strong images were combined with text in order to encourage viewers to think about the Christian faith. It was found that sequences relating to particular seasons of the year had the most impact, for example a Christmas sequence that combined a range of images of the nativity (including Christmas cards, the world church and cartoons) together with a recurring question, 'What does your Christmas look like?', and an invitation to a university carol service.

A number of practical considerations were addressed in creating the slide sequences.

Images needed to be selected sensitively in order to ensure that they didn't convey meanings or associations that distracted from the key message or

caused offence. They also needed to be of a very high resolution in order to look good when projected on to a six foot screen. This meant that the images demanded large computer files and a computer that could cope with the memory and storage involved.

Care was required when locating the screen. While requiring it to be as visible as possible, it needed to be placed away from strong light and not in a location that would easily distract passing traffic. While a white sheet works well as a screen, for a brighter image special rear projection screen fabric can be purchased by the metre on the Internet and a frame constructed to hold it in place.

Having someone who was proficient at manipulating and editing images made life simpler – but, say the organisers, it's fun learning the skills. They recommend taking a course in using Photoshop. Many of the images used for this particular project, although used with permission, remain under copyright and cannot be made available for further use.

Though a selection of images could be seen just as one walked by the window, some people did stop to watch an entire sequence. Speaking with people who had seen the sequences, the team received generally good comments. The project had been aimed at those

with no formal church, connection, to raise interest and encourage people to ask questions. This, it was felt, was exactly what had happened.

CONTACT:

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7. OUTREACH TO 18-30s

York and Hull District

As with Coventry's 'Window on the World' project (see above), the York and Hull District project was also designed to tap into the experience of what it describes as a highly visual culture – one especially associated with young people in the 18 to 30s age range.

The purchase of a video projector was at the heart of this project, which set out to demonstrate how still and moving images can be used to enhance our experience of worship. Whether the increasing number of video and data projectors now available in the District is entirely down to the demonstrations of PowerPoint and other media-based worship material associated with this project is hard to say. The time required for such demonstrations was not always available to the degree that had been originally hoped.

Nevertheless, increasingly church members have been taking up the idea.

The key worker in this project used the video projector in different locations within the District, with a particular emphasis on offering simple but effective visual materials in worship; backdrops for drama presentations or 'worship wash' images for meditation and prayer. The latter, he says, can be purchased or downloaded from websites such as www.sacramentis.com and www.visions-york.org but his experience was that sometimes only a

very few resources were available on a CD or from a single site, making the development of a substantial library a time consuming (and sometimes costly) exercise. One option might be for a District to employ someone whose remit included producing audio-visual resources for use by local churches.

For this particular project, the solution was for the key worker to create his own simple images – videoing a candle or the waves on a beach. The assumption that a resource has to be of broadcast quality is, he believes, misleading. It is more important for meaningful worship that the resources used be 'owned' by those participating in a service. Offer simple images that catch the imagination, he advises. 'Fast and flashy' is often distracting.

To those who say that modern technology is not appropriate in a traditional service, he tells of an older couple who produced a number of simple videos for Christmas services. One included images of grandchildren; another had an older member of the congregation reading extracts from the Gospel of John, overlaid with a computer screensaver image. These contributions made for genuine all-age worship.

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8. MIND THE GAP

Gateshead and Jarrow Circuit, Newcastle Upon Tyne District

Declining church attendance and a desire to make connection with those in the 20 to 40s range informs many of the pilot projects supported by the ICT Project Group. The Gateshead and Jarrow Circuit had already released two of its presbyters to work 80% of their time on a project comprising four key elements: 'seeker' events, Alpha-style courses, the formation of cell groups, and the development of contemporary worship. The ICT Project grant facilitated the purchase of a digital video editing package, which would build on the existing use of multimedia resources in worship and enable the production of further materials to support all four elements of the project.

To date, the editing package has been used to compile videos and graphics for use at 'seeker' events, in particular at Christmas and Easter, during which multimedia presentations were used to convey to visitors the particular Christian message of these festivals. Video clips and graphic images have also been used in order to update Alpha Course materials – in the words of one of the lead presbyters, making the Alpha Course sessions 'feel like a professional set-up'. Some of these materials can be made available to the resource-sharing pages of the Methodist website.

There is a strong feeling amongst project team members that resources

for use by church groups need to match the level of professionalism taken for granted in the secular and business worlds. 'We're beyond the stage of inviting a speaker and throwing a few acetates up. That only reinforces people's image of the Church as outdated.' Those who are not ICT literate, suggest the project leaders, don't always appreciate how much work goes in to producing resources of a high professional standard.

An exception to that rule has been the use of the editing package by the local Boys' Brigade Company in order to produce a record of their activities and camp for presentation to parents. Boys spent several weeks being trained in the use of equipment.

The equipment is located in a church office where it is regarded increasingly as a circuit resource. This is important for equipment that takes time to master – the more people involved in using it, the less likely it is to sit gathering dust between projects. It also develops the knowledge base – which means that if the project leaders move on then others will have the skills to continue using the equipment. 'Thinking ahead', say the team leaders, is critical for getting the most life and benefit out of this kind of equipment.

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Chapter 3

TECHNOLOGY WITH VISION:

stories from the Methodist ICT Project Group

Alistair Macfarlane

Introduction

In 2003, Phil Dale, on behalf of the Methodist ICT Project Group, undertook a survey designed to assess how Methodist churches throughout the UK were using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the areas of worship, outreach and administration. The results demonstrated that ICT was being used in more ways than had been expected. It was decided, therefore, that further work should be done in order to describe in greater detail, and to share more widely, the benefits, drawbacks and learning points raised by the survey respondents.

From the returned questionnaires, six situations and individuals were selected for further investigation and interview.

1. A church in training: Huddersfield Methodist Mission
2. 'That's another one': the York and Hull District website
3. 'Keeping up with the Joneses': Nottingham Central Mission
4. Teknololligie – what's that then?: three small churches
5. Tools for Christ: worship on the web
6. Leading from the back: worship without leaders

These are their stories.

1. A church in training: the Huddersfield Methodist Mission

Designated Mission churches achieve a variety of unique set ups across the UK. Huddersfield Mission is no exception. Pursuing the 'Service' element of the Methodist Church's *Our Calling* priorities, the Mission has developed two initiatives, each of which hold both Limited Company and Charity status: ThisisIT and Huddersfield Plus Point.

ThisisIT is an amazing little enterprise. When a new mission building was being planned, it was proposed that alongside the café, a facility should be set up to offer basic computer skills training to those who would otherwise not have easy PC access. A couple of computers were obtained, some volunteers were gathered and training began.

This relatively small church enterprise was then approached by an organisation called UK Online, who were looking to establishing a network of such training facilities. It linked the Huddersfield project to other similar initiatives and provided further funding. Subsequently, ThisisIT became a

Limited Company in order to facilitate the employment of staff, the registration of achievement certificates, and to benefit further funding applications. This development involved upgrading all the computers, employing four teachers and increasing from 150 to 180 students each week, each now gaining an accredited college certificate.

UK Online only operated ThisisIT for a couple of years, after which the project had to take on even more of its own running. Both this and the registration as a Limited Company meant that the staff and leaders of the Mission experienced a great learning curve. The original idea of sharing the gospel whilst teaching others a skill hadn't developed as originally planned, but Huddersfield Methodist Mission now operates an organisation employing three staff and nine tutors, and bringing 300 people through its doors each week.

The Mission has always had a special role within the circuit, and since the new building opened it has been an even greater resource. The computer suite development also brought about the establishment of the Methodist User Group (MUG for short!) in order to help people in the circuit get to grips with using computers within church contexts, not least for producing the weekly notices. Once a month the group gathers to exchange ideas and skills, to gain new skills, to get help and to have a look at specific issue. The group hopes to develop this

sharing and learning within the area of worship by using the Mission sound system, DVD player, computer, VHF radio system, digital projector and cameras. At present it is proving difficult to find people with the time and expertise to lead such a group, though through events such as the Circuit Service it is hoped that this will develop.

Huddersfield Plus Point, like a lot of church initiatives, grew from small beginnings. It started as an annual activity week for young people and now, 30 years later, runs as a professional youth work project. With trained youth workers, it provides a space and activities for 160 young people who have been excluded from schools and other organisations in the area. Like ThisisIT, it works with both volunteers and paid employees, and is a mammoth task to run and administer. As both projects cost thousands of pounds to run each year, a lot of time is spent fund raising and finding sustainable long term finance. Finding grants for short term projects or starting projects can be quite simple; finding core funding for things like administration is not so easy!

The two other charities based at the Huddersfield Methodist Mission are the Huddersfield Guild for the Disabled, and the Welcome Centre, which is a coffee bar for people in the locality. Both are run mainly with volunteers and link into the rest of the Mission's work. Overall it takes a lot of resources to operate all four projects as well as the normal running of a church and

other activities that go on at the Mission. The Mission is far from being fully where it wants to be with each initiative yet, but it faithfully serves the community and has contacts that most of our churches would love to have.

2. 'That's another one': the York and Hull District website

By the time you have finished reading this report, another person will have looked at the York and Hull District website. Every six minutes of every day, of every week, of every month, someone looks through these web pages!

How would you like 250 people every day to look up your church to see what it's doing? This was the reality of the York and Hull District website throughout 2003. Each day the website was being looked at thousands of times by an average of 250 different people. In 2004, during the month that followed a much-publicised bus crash that killed British pilgrims travelling in Jordan, the website had over 30,000 individual people visit it – a thousand a day. The website was accessed 140,000 times that month.

But what does this mean? It means that there are people wishing to enquire about what's going on in the Hull churches and locality, and that they are doing this by searching the Internet. They are searching not just from the UK but from all around the globe: Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Eastern Europe and America

particularly. Some people are looking for information about friends and family, researching family trees in Great Britain. Others are looking for somewhere to worship or visit when they come over for holidays.

But what about the hub of all this communication and the running of it? There is actually nothing terribly complicated about the way in which all this local 'Internet coverage' has been generated. Bob Lawe has been the York and Hull District Communications Officer for some 20 years, working on the York and Hull website from a small back bedroom in his home. From this base he also helps David Andrew out in the neighbouring District of Lincoln and Grimsby with their website, and works as Press and Broadcasting Officer ... alongside his full-time work!

Over the years Bob has seen computers, and in-particular email and the Internet, come into their own. With quicker and easier communication to the Press, and increased communication within the District and circuits, people are now able to share information with anyone in the world at the click of a button. Today we know that many other people increasingly find out information from the Internet, as the figures quoted above illustrate.

Bob describes his work as like being a hub for the dissemination of information from 'on high' to churches or secular people in his area, for example the monthly Buzz email news bulletins and other press releases from

Methodist Church House and The Methodist Relief and Development Fund. The site also runs a news service to which anyone can sign up. The clientele includes every one from clergy to the local press agencies. They receive information that Bob feels needs to be circulated. Likewise, when a church in Lincoln decided to show a free film on Halloween night, David Andrew advertised it on the Lincoln and Grimsby District website. Later, he received a thank you email saying that, as a result, the church had had people queuing around the corner!

As a result of advances in technology, the District's administrative structure has also changed a lot in the past few years. Currently it is in the process of establishing a District Administration Office with suitable computers and printers, with each church appointing a key person responsible for sending and receiving information to and from the office via email. One circuit already has this facility in place, and overall the York and Hull District has about 150 email contacts. The aim is for information to get onto the website quicker so that it can reach the churches in a more direct way. A little extra time is needed to get used to this method of communication, and a little expense to start it up, but the system will work well when all the circuits are on board.

3. 'Keeping up with the Jones': Nottingham Central Mission

How to have an outlook and style of presentation that is in keeping with the clubs and attractions in the area, whilst holding on to the importance of an already established ministry? This is the challenge to which Nottingham Central Mission has risen.

Over the past few years the Central Mission has been upgrading its sound system, computers and visual aids without losing the feel of it being a church. The Mission took the decision to pursue more expensive upgrading options after hearing stories of churches having to refit equipment after only a year or so because expectations and ambitions had too rapidly exceeded the capabilities of the equipment installed. The Central Mission has been able to keep some costs down by installing a lot of the equipment using in-house expertise.

The Mission first gauged the expectations of those of University age, noting both the style of advertising targeted at this age group and the kinds of presentations made at their normal evening and weekend activities. Then an assessment was made of the areas where there might be increased demand for computer technology in the future and a decision taken as to how systems might be expanded in the future. An easily up-gradable option also included a 'plug-n-play' system by which wires and cables are fairly permanently in place, but speakers and

inputs (for example from cameras, video players and computers) are on plugs and so can be easily changed.

High emphasis was placed on the use of each area of the church throughout the week and the 'look' that it already had. It was important to maintain the existing aesthetics as much as possible by hiding cables and using equipment that was both unobtrusive and in keeping with the current décor. The installation of a retractable video projector screen in the worship area, with easily removable plasma screens under the balcony areas (so that the entire congregation can have good sight of any words or images displayed), softened any visual intrusion into the décor. Any image, whether a live picture from the worship area or a computer generated image, can be shown on the main screens or fed downstairs to a plasma screen in the foyer. People coming in can then see what's going on in the worship area and those on door duty can stay involved. During the week the foyer screen is also used to show the website live so that people can use its interactive capability and find out information about the Church and its activities.

The Central Mission has its own media group called Awaken Your Senses Media. This has been set up so that any visuals created (both still and moving) have a clear copyright identity. This is considered important in today's society and it also means that everyone knows who owns the copyright on the

material. The Awaken Your Senses identity works across all media projects – from recording, copying and archiving the services to the audio visual resources recorded and mixed by young adults for background or meditation material in worship. In the church itself there are four CD ROM players and burners. There is also a vision mixer to help with original productions and recordings, and for mixing presentations from different sources in a service.

The following software is used:

- For words, PowerPoint
- For images and sound, Adobe Premier
- For video transfer, Dazzle
- For resources and information, websites such as www.flashkit.com and www.freefoto.com.

There are many other packages available but Central Mission's main comment is: 'Don't buy cheap stuff!'

Other developments have also been tied to new technology. Nottingham Central Mission has adopted an overarching title for its work with young adults: Life@theCentre. An up-to-date, Flash-driven website reflects that work in a sharp, contemporary way: www.lifethecentre.com. Although the site may take a little time to load up, when it does, all the information you might need to introduce you to the church is there at your finger tips.

With church information now available interactively on the website, a CD ROM advertising this facility can be taken away in place of a welcome pack. Online advertising identifies which of the church rooms can be let, and this facility is in the process of being accompanied by video shots of the rooms themselves. Constant evaluation of the various initiatives of the Mission – assessing how they are used and how they could be different – is the key to this project's success.

4. Teknollogie – what's that then?: three small churches

Not all of our churches are blessed with the latest equipment, or the technologically-minded people to run it. Most of us are just trying to get our heads around who's going to play the organ next week.

Picture a typical cluster of three churches, two of a medium size and one of the very small variety. The first church seats between 200 and 250 people and has a congregation of 30, plus a splattering of youngsters. It has an organ for musical accompaniment, no loop induction, but a sound system that consists of an amplifier, speakers, pulpit microphone (in a raised pulpit that is not ideal for the size of congregation) together with a stand microphone, which gets put out on occasions. Bible readings are presented from the front; the microphone may be used if it is set up. The amplifier can take an extra input, such as a CD player, but there isn't anyone to watch

over the amplifier, let alone try and organise CD music. When I asked about the future of this congregation and building I was confronted with silence, and then the statement: 'I hope that they move elsewhere or reduce the size of the building.' Two other problems hamper development. One is the dampness in the building and the second is the fact that they have been broken into on a few occasions. Some places are just not in a position to think about such grand stuff as 'technology' yet!

The second church has a similar membership to the first. It seats 80 to 90 and has a congregation of 30-40 but also has a Sunday School of 25 to 30. The use of new technology here comes in the form of a digital hymnal, which was purchased to fill the need for musical accompaniment since the only organist isn't always available. There is a permanent screen for use with an overhead projector, but unfortunately this can't be seen properly and the congregation is not yet sure whether it is a good thing or not. There is no amplification or loop system and, like the first church, this one also has damp problems, raising issues about where to store equipment. Because the OHP screen isn't ideal, if a video projector is used an additional screen has to be provided as well. This church does have a web site ... but the person who set it up has moved!

Despite the challenges, the future appears more promising at this second church. Although some may see the

digital hymnal as a move sideways rather than forwards, its purchase indicates a positive response to the congregation's needs and abilities. Two members of the congregation had seen the hymnal working elsewhere and demonstrated the enthusiasm both to get to grips with it themselves and to show others how to use it. The congregation took hold of a solution that they were capable of implementing and followed it to completion through the efforts of a couple of people who felt able to address the situation. This church is also encouraging its teenagers to join in more with services, and have found that new technology has played a vital part in this process. For one service a CD ROM presentation from Christian Aid established the theme and this was supplemented by other PowerPoint presentations. They found that booking and borrowing the District projector and lap-top was very easy and helpful. Overall, the experience was a positive one and the young people felt useful and valued.

The third church in this cluster can accommodate about 50 people and has a congregation of six. Its new technology consists of a CD player that, with a selection of compilation worship CD's provides accompaniment for worship (they call it 'Karaoke Worship'). The congregation also has access to a computer on which advertisements, such as posters for the Christmas Fair, have been produced for distribution throughout the locality. Like the other churches, this one does

not have a loop system. This lack needs to be addressed in order to comply with disability discrimination legislation.

The future here? The congregation is having to think about the other churches in its area and is looking to work in a partnership arrangement with them. The CD's and CD player are used in the other churches occasionally to provide variety in sound and content. The churches and circuit are not in a position to purchase a projector yet, but will continue to use the District one when needed. In addition, the minister is planning to purchase a digital camera – so the next PowerPoint challenge for the teenagers will be for them to use their own pictures!

5. Tools for Christ: worship on the web

If the life and work of your family is as bound up with the world of computers as Laura Ketteridge's is, then the potential of ICT in today's world takes on a whole new perspective. Laura and her husband set up computers and write software programs for them. Even the children are contracted to test and evaluate other people's software. Laura herself has done much positive work helping to develop Christian websites, advising on their design, delivering group sessions on where to start, and evaluating existing sites.

Church of Fools is one of the websites that Laura has been involved with. The world's first 3D online church, Church of Fools is a working project that has

evolved from the website Ship of Fools: the magazine of Christian unrest (www.shipoffools.com). In its initial trial period, Church of Fools offered prayer three times a day and a full service once a week, as well as operating message boards and a cyber café for discussions and study. During that time, Laura acted as Head Warden and Administrator, and as such she led the morning prayer time each day. She found this a great discipline. It helped in her own worship leading on Sundays and in her personal devotions, and compensated for the irregularity of the normal services she took. During the trial period, a further ten people helped with the running of the website, all from various denominations and backgrounds. They found the discussion board very useful for team interaction and discussion, and they kept up with each other on the phone occasionally.

Feedback from questionnaires indicates that the majority of the Church of Fools users are aged between 20 and 40 years. This shows that the biggest impact by the site is on what the Church is calling the 'Missing Generation'. Of this user group, 80% hadn't been into a Church building in the last year but felt quite happy in Church of Fools. The provision of a sacred space on the Internet was found to be a non-threatening environment for people to come into, either to chat or just 'to be'. People found it easy to access, without the perceived barriers that a church building imposes for them, such as the front door being

shut when they pass by. For some, going onto this website has been the first step back into a church environment, followed by a return to a physical church that they haven't attended for a long time.

Is this Church? I believe it is. After five months of regular services the website had a regularly worshipping congregation, with openings for question and answer sessions within Christian worship. For many it is easier to access than a physical church, and offers opportunities for lay service and training. Is this a substitute for physical Church? No, I don't think so. There is something to be said for 'body' worship and not just 'mind and spirit' worship. The main worshippers are, on the whole, part of local congregations, and there is a system in place for those who are searching for a local church to get linked up via a church contact agency.

A final thought. Laura is also writing and developing a program for young children to learn Welsh on their computers. The program is very interactive, with music, games, hot-spots and speech. A similar kind of program would be great for teaching children about Christianity within a Sunday School or Junior Church environment. It would bring an up to date and relevant feel to our churches. I asked if it could be done or whether such a program was already available. The reply was, 'This would be quite possible and in the US they do have suitable material, but it has never found

a market over here because there just aren't the churches with the equipment to run it.' If any technology has been invested in the church, then it has normally gone into upgrading the quality of the main adult service and it seems that the children's department doesn't even get a second thought.

6. Leading from the back: worship without leaders

People have always worshipped in a great variety of ways, and this new millennium is no exception. An increasing number of Alternative Worship groups and venues are being recognised. Year on year, people grow in their confidence to experiment with new forms of worship. (See www.alt-worship.org.) For some, the term 'Alternative Worship' suggests simply a worship band or a guy up the front playing a guitar with rainbow-coloured strap. Others think of a DJ and MC or rap artist. Some will smile ... others will cringe.

Alternative multi-sensory worship is the order of the day for Phil and Paula. It has been part of their lives for the last ten years. Their style focuses on a genre that has been seen and demonstrated through worship services such as the Late Late Service in Glasgow (www.andythornton.me.uk/Late%20Late.htm), the Nine O'Clock Service in Sheffield (now operating as The Nine O'Clock Community), Be Real in Nottingham, and Grace in London (www.freshworship.org). Other examples are found at the annual

Greenbelt Festival, where an array of multi-media alternative worship sessions are regularly offered. Other groups, such as the Iona and Northumbria Communities, share their own non multi-media alternative worship styles. (See www.iona.org.uk; www.northumbriacommunity.org.)

So what is so different about Paula and Phil's worship? Simply ... no communal singing, no sermon and no one up front ... at all! Disembodied voices flow through the speakers, being spoken from behind a screen at the back or played from CD or tape. Images are displayed in the centre and on both the left and right of the room by either video projectors, overhead projectors or a combination of the two depending on what is available. The service aims to draw people into the central space and into the worship, making it a dramatic experience without it being a drama. Using a combination of ambient or soft words, images and music, each of the multi-media stimuli take precedence by turns to give a changing audio and visual focus. All of this is to enable the worshipper to connect with God by having as gentle a stimulus, but as strong a direction, as possible, and without having someone or something taking the focus off God.

Paula and Phil have found this type of service to be more reflective than some of the other alternative services that are available. A lot is said about 'being' Church rather than 'doing' Church, yet often in our churches, and in our services, we can find we are just 'doing'

... and lots of it. However, this service doesn't demand anything of the people attending it. They don't have to participate in anything if they don't want to, even when communion is offered. Because this worship style is perceived to be different and non-threatening, services have attracted a diverse group of young adults, teenagers, people in their eighties and those in-between. It also attracts those who may be seen as being on the fringe of Church - those who might only turn up each year for the occasional special service.

Where does this fit in with the Body of the Church? This worship is not meant as a stand alone experience but as one other way for a current worshipping community to meet with God. For participants, it allows interaction with God in a more individual way. A lot of mindful and prayerful preparation goes into it, with a team of people working together on the theme, theological base, and the way that God may want each element to draw people closer to Him. Video clips, stills, music, sounds of nature, bible readings, projected words, colour, light and shade: these are all components. The members of the planning group have also found that they have got more out of the process of studying, praying and meditating on God's word than they may have done previously in house groups or study groups. This wasn't a planned outcome for the group but in the process of searching out new places and areas for people to meet with faith, combined with the search for a particular theme

or understanding of God, it has meant that people are stretched and challenged before the service has even began!

CONTACT: For further information about the projects described above, or about the Methodist ICT Research Project, contact ictquestionnaire@uk.uumail.com

Chapter 4

USING TECHNOLOGY IN WORSHIP:

things you wanted to know about but were too embarrassed to ask

Mark Pengelly

1. Introduction
2. A means of revolution?
3. What can be done?
4. Practicalities
5. Equipment
6. What next?
7. Use of images: a guide to Methodist policy

1. Introduction

Purpose

I have a friend who was given a DVD disk. Placing it in his car CD-player, he was mystified as to why he didn't get any music from it. If this story doesn't make you laugh, then read on – you might find something helpful here. If you've stopped chuckling from the above story by now, and already know how to 'defrag' your hard drive, then what follows isn't aimed at you. However, if you've been inspired by the projects and ideas described in the first half of this booklet but are not sure where to begin (or why my story is funny), then hopefully the following suggestions will quell your fears and give you some tips that will get you started.

The guide aims to:

- show why it's helpful to incorporate the visual and creative arts in worship through new media
- give an overview of some of the newer developments in technology that are relevant to worship
- cover some of the practicalities of using technology in worship and the life of the Church

2. A means of revolution?

Using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the life of the Church and in its worship is not about impressing people that we are 'up to date.' Rather, it's about using tools from the field of everyday communication and making the most of them.

It is crucial to remember that the technology is only the delivery vehicle for what we want to communicate and express – it's the means, not an end. The end is the Gospel, which by God's Spirit has been communicated through generations. Through those generations there have at times been revolutionary changes to the way the Gospel has been expressed. In the Middle Ages, embracing the new technology of the printing press helped transform the

Church theologically by bringing the Bible to all. Many believe that Information and Communication Technology is part of a similar revolution today.

3. What can be done?

Using a video projector

Modern technology brings many opportunities to worship that would have been inconceivable not so long ago. This overview does not cover all the possibilities. Rather, it has a bias towards those that can bring a dramatic visual aspect into worship. A video projector, also known as a data, LCD or multimedia projector (practically speaking, the terms mean the same thing), may at first appear to be an expensive slide or OHP projector. However, this new device has some distinct advantages.

Modern video projectors are usually much brighter than slide projectors or OHP's so can usually be seen without the need for a blackout. Moreover, all manner of visuals can be created on a computer with relative ease and delivered to the screen in a professional and smooth manner. Slides created for OHP using a computer printer are expensive and time-consuming to produce and cannot be adapted or changed. Using a PC (personal computer) brings a new form of creativity to a much wider audience or congregation. (I use the term PC in a generic sense, not to the exclusion of other kinds of computer such as Apple Macs.) A number of ideas for using this

technology are presented below. See also the more extended case studies in the earlier sections of this booklet (Chapters 2 and 3).

Always be aware, however, that many of the ideas suggested here and throughout this publication will require permission from a copyright holder unless a resource has been purchased with a specific statement permitting its use in public worship. There is a wealth of images, sounds and words that can be used but these only exist because people have set aside time to create them. Some depend for their livelihood on income from the sale of these resources. It is important, therefore, that we recognise and respect the requirements of copyright legislation and do not use work without permission, which may include payment of a fee. Ownership of a copy for personal use does not automatically give such permission. Further guidance is given in the Copyright Issues section (below, p.37).

Pictures

The old adage is: 'a picture paints a thousand words.' We live in a society bombarded with images. Many involved in worship are beginning to accept that using words alone as a communication medium alienates our message from an increasing majority. So why not try some of these:

- Use inspirational images before the service to prepare hearts and minds for worship
- Project a picture that links with the hymn or song being sung

- Find images that relate to a Bible reading
- Bring sermon illustrations to life with pictures
- Use images from art to stimulate thinking
- Use contemporary news images during prayers of intercession

Video

Many of the suggestions above can be even more powerful and stimulating when done with video clips instead of static images. Potentially, there are many video resources available from which clips can be played, and uses to which they can be put:

- Use videos of natural beauty – they're produced for many areas such as the Lake District
- Use clips from the news in prayers of intercession
- Record video footage on your local streets to inspire prayers for your community
- Bring greetings from housebound members to your congregation and send them back a video
- Use clips from contemporary films in presenting your message
- Get your youth group to 'make a movie' as an alternative to presenting a sketch
- Look out for specially made video clips for worship, which are becoming increasingly available, for example at www.worshipfilms.com

Using other people's pictures and video does raise copyright issues – refer to the guidelines later in this overview.

Song words

For many, using a projector for viewing song or hymn words is the easiest way of introducing fresh songs without the need for additional sheets of paper and the never-ending stream of new worship songbooks. Whilst for some those Mission Praise books bought 'only a few years ago' are seen as up to date, for others there is a desire to introduce new songs and hymns on a regular basis rather than assuming an agreed canon of worship songs. Other advantages gained from using the screen include:

- encouraging the congregation to look up instead of down
- freeing up people's hands for worship
- saving the uninitiated from figuring out which songbook is being used
- enabling church lighting to remain dimmed and words to be seen (for example, during a candlelit carol service)

However, it must be acknowledged that there are some difficulties in 'singing from the screen.' First, some people will be prevented from reading from the screen because of poor eyesight. Provision in the form of sheets (preferably large print) should always be available for those that require them.

Secondly, presenting song words in this way can actually change the way we think as we sing - an important dimension to worship. Because a projector will tend to show only a few lines at a time, it's harder to reflect on

what you've been singing, or anticipate the words that are to come (neither are visible). Often, without even realising it, when singing from a book, our eyes are scanning what we've sung or are about to sing and this helps in our expression and comprehension of the complete text. It is also possible for even an experienced computer operator to get 'lost' in a song. Many modern songs don't have a simple verse 1, verse 2 structure. Some hymns have variant versions or the verses are in different orders in different books. It's very important that the PC operator prepares carefully, and ideally practises the songs with the musician(s) to gain familiarity.

Because of these difficulties my experience has shown that it's better to make available hand-held copies for all who want them. If the only reason you're thinking of getting a projector is because you think projecting song words will get round all the practical issues of printing sheets for new songs, think again. Overall though, many are convinced that the advantages greatly outweigh the accompanying disadvantages. In either case, you will need to ensure that you, or your church, have copyright clearance to produce copies of, or display, these words.

Liturgies and other words

Using the screen to project words for prayers, meditations, communion liturgies and other texts has all the advantages of singing from the screen, but fewer of the complications.

Although you should still ensure printed copies for those who will struggle to see the screen, it isn't too difficult to run through the words without getting lost. This enables creative and new forms of words to be used in worship without producing sheets for all. Helpful pictures or graphics can be used as well. Here are some suggestions:

- Use words on screen to present special or last minute notices at the beginning of the service
- Make the service more user-friendly to visitors by explaining what's going to happen during worship
- Put your scripture readings up on screen
- Project prayers and responses for communion, releasing people from burying their heads in books
- Have points of the sermon come up on the screen – three of them of course!

Less is more

Because in some ways the technology is relatively simple, there is a temptation to overdo it. Already people in the business world are becoming bored or distracted by some of the fancy transitions and animations offered by presentation programs like PowerPoint. Song words don't need a picture behind them in every situation, and video clips don't always need to incorporate every fancy effect that the software will allow. 'Over the top' just distracts and pulls attention away from the real message. We sometimes see this in posters designed by people who

have just discovered they have 40 fonts on their computer! Technology is working best as a tool when it is virtually transparent and unnoticed. Just because you've invested in a video projector for your church doesn't mean it has to feature in every aspect of every service. If the medium (in this case the technology) becomes intrusive, it will be obscuring the message rather than assisting or enhancing it.

4. Practicalities

Creating image slides

A simple way to show images on a projector is to connect it to a PC and use presentation software such as Microsoft PowerPoint. This program, and others like it, works in a similar way to word processing programs but instead of the finished product being produced on printed pieces of paper, the result is a 'slide' composed on the PC's screen. So, slides are made up – text is typed in and pictures are inserted, as with a word processed document. Several slides are created and then can be run through automatically or at the operator's command. When running the slide show, all that appears on the screen are the slides themselves. No part of the controlling PowerPoint program itself is visible.

Presentations can be made quite sophisticated by inserting sounds or music into the slide, making text appear one line at a time and even adding video clips into the slide.

More resources for producing such presentations are being made available all the time, such as:

- CD-ROM disks with thousands of good quality images that are often royalty free
- Pictures that can be scanned onto your computer (see section below on Scanning, p.40)
- Using a digital camera and taking your own pictures for scanning
- Using images available via the Internet
- Using online (Internet) worship resources, which often now include downloadable images. For example, the worship material magazine Roots has an online website for subscribers (www.rootsontheweb.com); the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has free images connected with its theme each year
- Using ready-made PowerPoint presentations – becoming more available either on CD-ROM or downloadable online

Using video clips

The most basic use of video involves using an excerpt from a video tape. A VCR or camcorder can be plugged into the video projector. Remember to cue the tape up and know when it needs to stop. Sound can be played back through the projector's speakers, but these are often very small and tinny. A better solution is to play the audio through the church sound system.

One difficulty of using a VCR for video clips is that even the most carefully

cued-up tape can move its position slightly when it is ejected and re-inserted into the VCR. I have heard of a number of incidents where a tape has ended up showing something undesirable when miscued or allowed to roll on past the desired point!

Putting video clips onto computer and playing them from the PC to the projector means that you won't have to worry about using a VCR or cueing up the tape. However, transferring video from tapes onto computer requires a reasonable degree of computer skill as well as (usually) extra computer hardware to get video onto the PC in the first place. The subject is beyond the scope of this guide, but nevertheless should be considered by those who plan to do this frequently.

Video resources for worship are becoming more readily available. Take a look at groups like One Small Barking Dog (www.osbd.org) or Reaching the Unchurched Network (www.run.org.uk) for examples of 'off the peg' video resources. When these resources are provided in DVD or CD-ROM format, as they increasingly are, they can be played and cued either from a stand-alone DVD player or from a PC using a program like Microsoft's Windows Media Player – though cueing a DVD, like a video, is not always a straightforward matter.

Some of the most effective video work involves using locally produced footage. (See Chapter 2, Outreach to 18-30s, p.19) Although in the past this has been technically difficult, as technology

advances it becomes possible for more people to experiment. It should be pointed out that even with the advances in technology, well produced video for worship will take some considerable time to create.

See the Copyright issues section (p.37) with regard to sourcing pictures and video.

Projecting song words

If you plan to sing from a screen frequently, special song-projection software is highly recommended. There are several different packages available such as Words of Worship (www.nobletech.co.uk/Products/WordsOfWorship/), Easy Worship (www.easyworship.com) and SongPro (www.creationsoftware.com). Such packages usually include good databases of popular songs and hymns, which can be quickly found and used in a service even when unplanned. The size of text can be changed 'on the fly' and pictures or video placed behind the text. Although there are some people who will have difficulty seeing this, it is worth noting that for others seeing the screen can be easier than looking at paper.

The text for songs is sometimes included with a music book, on a floppy disk or, increasingly, CD. Very rarely is it necessary to type in songs manually; often the text can be found by doing an Internet search. Other sources of song texts include song and hymn database software programs such as HymnQuest (www.stainer.co.uk/

[hymnquest](#) - containing the text of literally hundreds of hymn books) or Visual Liturgy (www.vislit.com – containing all the text found in Hymns & Psalms and other hymn books).

PowerPoint can be used for projecting song texts but this involves creating slides for every song individually and is a time-consuming business. The end result is a collection of presentations that cannot be changed or altered (for example, their font size) without a lot more time and effort.

One further issue to consider with all text on screen is the use of colour. Many people with a visual impairment have discovered that the apparently obvious black text on a white background doesn't always produce the most visible combination. There is a debate about what is most legible. Yellow on black, yellow on crimson and blue on yellow are often used. The RNIB website has more information about this: www.rnib.org.uk. When considering placing a picture or a video clip as a backdrop to song words do remember that this can drastically affect the legibility of the text.

Copyright issues

This matter is often considered a minefield and not without good cause. Many people consider that the non-commercial nature of worship means that they don't have to worry about copyright issues. However, this is not the case.

There are a few simple principles that can give guidance. Unless otherwise stated, all copyrighted material can be assumed as unavailable for use without the express permission of the copyright holder. Sometimes, however, there are special 'conditions of use' granted for copyrighted material. Examples of such copyright conditions that are those attached to collections of graphics that come as 'clipart', or similar images 'bundled' with other pieces of software (for example, greetings card software). Often the copyright conditions on such collections will allow considerable freedom of use, so long as not for commercial purposes. According to the conditions, such images could be used as part of a PowerPoint presentation. For software of this kind the answers to some copyright questions can often be found in the small print of the packaging or in the software Help File.

For images found on the Internet there are often copyright restrictions to be observed but there are also some images without copyright restrictions for certain types of non-commercial use. Examples include websites whose purpose is to provide visual resources for worship, such as Roots (www.rootsontheweb.com) and CTBI resource pages (www.ctbi.org.uk).

In the case of using video clips from sources like commercial films or TV news, copyright restrictions also apply. Using such clips legally has been made less complicated by Christian Copyright Licensing (CCL). CCL allows churches to photocopy music words or scores

and a large range of music by paying the appropriate fee. They have also started to compile a list of film producers who will allow use of clips in a church context according to certain conditions. Most recently Disney movies have been added to this list. For churches to take advantage of this, an additional video licence may be purchased from CCL. The projection of song words is also covered by CCL licensing. Some song projection software will automatically place the church's CCL number at the end of each song as well as provide a print-out of CCL of songs used. CCLI can be found at www.ccli.co.uk.

Resources like The Methodist Worship Book for Visual Liturgy include a licence to reproduce the words of prayers and readings from both the Methodist Worship Book and also from some of the Companions to the Lectionary series. This includes the material in the Worship Book that is not copyright to the Methodist Church. Even the modern form of the Lord's Prayer is technically under copyright. The Methodist Church does not own this form of words.

Copyright in the written word and music lasts for 70 years following the death of their creator. You would be free to reproduce the words to a hymn, for example, if this were the case. However be sure to use the original words since any updating of them in the interim may have created a new copyright for the person who updated them. You should also avoid simply

photocopying them from a new hymn book or song collection because the publisher will also have a copyright on the typographical arrangement.

Finally, don't forget that contacting the copyright holders and asking for permission to use their material is always an option. You might be pleasantly surprised at the response to your request. Sometimes, even when dealing with large corporations (such as the BBC), the response can be positive and not necessarily cost prohibitive. Such a route, though, does require forward planning and a long lead time.

5. Equipment

Projectors

Video projectors are a substantial investment and a very powerful and useful tool. They have often been considered too expensive for smaller individual churches, though recent months have seen prices drop dramatically. Alternatively, there are other ways of obtaining one for use. Resources like this are sometimes bought by a group of churches (for example, a Methodist circuit) and I have experienced such sharing to work very well. For occasional or special events projectors can be hired from local organisations or borrowed, perhaps from a workplace that doesn't have weekend use. Arrangements like this can be a good way of introducing a projector to a congregation – the advantages over an OHP are appreciated quite quickly, even by the most techno-phobic!

As well as coming down in price, modern projectors are getting smaller and brighter all the time. Visibility in daylight conditions is of course a key consideration and although many projectors will work reasonably well even in sunny conditions, sunlight or a bright window shining directly onto the projection area can cause the image to appear washed out. The brightness of projectors is usually measured in ANSI lumens. Projectors of 1700 lumens will cope reasonably well in many situations but, where there is high ambient light, 2500+ lumens would be much better. Though brightness is one of the factors affecting the price of a projector, nowadays even a projector with 3500+ lumens will be within the budget of some churches.

The other factor affecting a projector's price is the resolution of the image. The term 'resolution' refers to the number of pixels or dots that make up the screen. For example, 'SVGA' resolution represents a graphics standard supporting 480,000 pixels. The higher the resolution the finer the overall image will appear. However, put your money towards higher lumens rather than a higher resolution. SVGA is usually adequate. Higher resolution projectors are for showing detailed graphics such as spreadsheets. In most worship contexts it is large graphics that are displayed.

Modern projectors can often receive input from one or more computers and video signals (from a VCR or

camcorder, for example) as well as having small speakers for audio. As already noted, the speakers that accompany many projectors are designed for a boardroom presentation situation. For all but the smallest of scenarios it's much better to run the sound through the church PA or sound system. A projector's remote control not only allows easy switching between these different inputs and the facility to 'blank' or 'freeze' the screen, but can also operate as a remote control computer mouse. This means slides can be advanced by someone not necessarily sat by the computer - the preacher during an illustrated sermon, for example.

Screens

Although images can be projected onto walls, a good screen further enhances the brightness of the projected image. (See Chapter 2, Window on the World, p.17) Proper video screens contain special reflective properties which improve the visibility of the projected image. Screens can be wall mounted and pulled down, or tripod mounted and pulled up. Perhaps the most adaptable screens (and most expensive) are the free-standing, fast-fold type, which can be used with either a front or rear projection. A rear projection places the projector behind the screen, inverts the image horizontally and uses a special translucent cloth on the screen. This has the advantage of the image being less affected by light falling on the screen and also means that the projector is out of the way. It achieves a neat uncluttered look but

often there isn't enough room at the front of a building to permit it. Do remember to site the screen carefully so that all can see it. Special consideration should be given when buildings contain pillars. (See Chapter 3, 'Keeping up with the Jones', p.24)

PCs

Laptop PCs are often used with projection equipment because of their portability. Frequently a projector will be used in more than one location, so a portable PC really makes sense. If the projector set up is to be a permanent installation, save money and buy a cheaper desktop PC, but consider carefully where it will be sited. Putting it at the back of a church (perhaps near a sound desk) will involve the added expense of cables running from the front to the back, though providing the operator with a better position from which to work.

Scanners

Scanners have recently been included in many PC packages. However, this hasn't necessarily made the business of converting your collection of photos or slides into a resource for worship an easy process. Scanning is not a straightforward matter and many people leave the scanner abandoned on the bottom shelf of the computer desk.

The mystery of scanning is simplified when it is appreciated that different end results require scans at different resolutions, usually measured in 'dpi' or dots per inch. For example, if you want to scan a 6' x 4' print and print out the

picture as an A4 poster you will need to scan at a high resolution. To scan at low dpi will result in a print-out that is pixelated (blocky or dotted). However, a high resolution scan results in a large file size because of the amount of data contained. It is for this reason that the picture would be scanned at a much lower resolution if the picture was being placed on a webpage. Large file sizes take a long time to download across the web and slow things down. Also a computer monitor has a low resolution (typically 72dpi) and will never benefit from the higher resolutions that printers need (often 300dpi or greater).

This means that there is no simple way of scanning an image once to work appropriately in all circumstances. To complicate matters, the choice of resolution is also affected by the size of the original material. For example, scanning a 6'x 4' print may produce a good image on your screen at 100dpi (even when dragged out to full screen, as in PowerPoint use), a similar scan of a 35mm slide will, when stretched full screen, appear very grainy. The smaller the image, the higher the resolution at which it needs to be scanned in order to produce comparable results. This issue can also be encountered when taking a small, low resolution image from the Internet and stretching it large for a PowerPoint slide.

For further help, an Internet search engine will refer you to many websites which give much more information and insight into the issue of scanning.

People

All the best equipment is useless unless someone knows how to set it up and operate it competently. The good news is that as this technology becomes increasingly common in many walks of life the number of people familiar with it also increases. The downside is that enabling this technology to serve us does need more effort. To have song words and presentations running smoothly involves careful preparation with musicians and other people leading worship. If preachers are to use visuals and video in their sermons they will need more preparation time. This doesn't necessarily rule out such things but the costs in terms of preparation should be considered before committing your church to buy expensive equipment. Sadly this dimension to using technology is often overlooked, yet it is probably one of the most important aspects of its effective use.

How to make all the right connections!

Many people who are quite comfortable using computers start to perspire when it comes to connecting everything. This is partly because there are different ways of doing things according to your situation. To help avoid this confusion here are two of the most common scenarios.

1. The simple portable set-up

This situation involves equipment that is used in more than one location. Everything has to be portable and easily set up. In such situations the

projector can be connected to the laptop PC and (optionally) a VCR. The laptop will be located adjacent to the projector and the operator will be sat beside it. Most projectors have the means to control the mouse of the PC with a remote control. This gives the preacher or speaker the ability to advance PowerPoint slides on their command. When preparing the next item the projector can be 'blanked' by pressing the mute button which cuts sound and vision.

2. Permanent installations

If the projector and screen are to be used frequently there are advantages in locating the operator at the rear of the church (perhaps near a sound desk) and installing the projector permanently. This allows a more aesthetically pleasing set-up - for example, projectors can be ceiling mounted, or even be hidden by placing them behind the screen for a rear projection. For the smoothest of presentations a vision mixing desk which allows the gradual fading of inputs and cross mixing between two different sources gives much greater control of the set-up but requires more expensive equipment.

Connecting up the equipment in both these arrangements takes care and sensitivity. It's hardly a great advance towards the visual dimension of worship if right at the front of the building is a conspicuous projector and computer with its associated 'spaghetti' of cables!

6. What next?

An action plan

This introductory guide has tried to encourage users to think through the reasons for using ICT in the Church. Perhaps a set of questions for discussion in your situation could help – here are some examples:

- What do we want to achieve with this technology?
- What equipment will we need?
- How much will it cost?
- Who will operate it?

Further information

This overview has been designed to give enough information to encourage rather than daunt. For a wider range of information, and to locate the increasing number of resources available, the use of an Internet search engine proves invaluable.

There is a growing desire for training and encouragement in this field and this is a very positive step. Some Methodist Districts have appointed ICT coordinators or specialists to advise and provide training. As these technologies become more commonplace, our ability to use them also increases. We ignore them at our peril.

For future information and developments in this area consult the Methodist Church website: www.methodist.org.uk.

You might also find it useful to read the Methodist Church's 'Use of Images' policy, which is reproduced below.

7. Use of Images: a guide to Methodist policy

The choice of images to illustrate text requires great care. The Methodist Church works with many wide-ranging and varied groups of individuals and it is essential that while illustrations should be appropriate to the text they do not imply characteristics that are inaccurate or demeaning.

General guidance

Use accurate images and text - avoid lazy or negative stereotyping, contradictory messages and clichés.

Use images in context, and match accurately with text.

- Consider the joint impact of image and text
- Do not mislead readers by using an outdated photograph when writing about a current situation, without explaining the distinction
- Take care not to use a photograph from one country or culture to illustrate a point about another

Text and images selected solely for shock value can trivialise, distort or misrepresent. To prompt concern, interest and action, present facts and photographs accurately.

When seeking to use images that are representative, try to be imaginative. A collage of every conceivable type of person may not be the only way of doing it.

Try to ensure that wherever possible images are faithful representations of the message you are trying to convey. If an individual is overtly portrayed as a Methodist, then the image should be of a Methodist.

Achieving a balance

Try to achieve a balance of images that accurately convey the spirit and diversity of the Church's work in Britain and overseas.

Try to reflect aspects of self-help, training and long-term development when portraying the Church's work. When that is impossible - say in an emergency - then use judgement to portray human crises accurately, in context and without presenting people as helpless recipients of handouts. This does not mean limiting the choice to bland antiseptic images. They are equally untrue.

The people with whom the Church works both in this country and overseas are active partners and not just passive recipients. By clearly showing this side of the story, text and pictures are strengthened, not weakened.

Disability

Disability takes many forms. Disabled people are an integral part of the community and should be seen that way.

A person in a wheelchair is an over-used depiction of disability which reinforces rather than broadens society's common view of disability.

Avoid using that image unless it is particularly appropriate to the situation.

Gender, ethnicity and age

Make sure that the images you use to illustrate text maintain a balance of gender, ethnicity and age appropriate to the text. For example, do not use images of one ethnic group to illustrate text relating to another.

Language

Consider carefully the language you use to describe the people with whom the Methodist Church works, not only in terms of factual accuracy but also in tone. Do not use patronisingly feeble, sentimental or demeaning words or phrases.

Identity

Try to communicate the views and experience of the people featured.

If people wish to remain anonymous, this should be respected.

Do not use close-up images of people if you do not know their name and/or the specific context of the original image. This means that those who take photos must ensure that they know the names of those they are photographing, ask permission to use the image and explain the sort of uses to which it might be put. Where practicable, obtain written consent. There is an example of a consent form used by the Connexional Team at www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/photoconsent.doc. (You will need to make changes to the form before it can be used locally.)

Use of images in design

Be aware that the way a photograph is treated in the production process may caricature or diminish the subject and cause offence.

Do not crop or edit images in a way that misrepresents the truth.

Safeguarding

When using photographs of children and young people, it is preferable to use group pictures.

When a photograph of an individual child or young person is used, surnames or other personal details should not be used in any caption or associated text.

Obtain written and specific consent from parents or carers before using a photograph.

Finally

Show a draft to someone who is not directly involved in the project but has experience of the subject being covered.

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Appendix A

REPORT TO METHODIST CONFERENCE, 2001

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE METHODIST CHURCH

Introduction

1. We may expect the possibilities opened up by information technology to be gladly embraced by the Methodist Church. Methodism prides itself on being a connexional Church. IT promises to develop inter-connectedness, not only between the many Churches, circuits, districts, connexional bodies and Methodist-related institutions of British Methodism, but also between British Methodism and ecumenical partners in Britain and Ireland, between British Methodism and the World Church, and between British Methodism and untold numbers of partners, points of information and consultees in every facet of contemporary society.
2. In all sorts of ways, and to varying levels of sophistication, parts of the Church, or individuals within the Church, have incorporated IT developments into their everyday life and witness. There is a Methodist Church web-site, for example; and connected to it are many Churches and Methodist bodies who have developed their own web-sites. From its inception, the *Our Calling* process has had its own page on the web-site, and an e-mail address. An Information Management and Technology Project Group have been working to co-ordinate information, management policy, strategy and action across the Connexional Team. E-mail communications are

now taken for granted within the Connexional Team and routinely link the Team with certain identified groups in the Church, like the district chairs (whose administration of the stationing procedures, for instance, has been streamlined in consequence). The networking between students connected with the Methodist Church is now electronic (Methodist Student Link). Some forms of evangelism and some aspects of worship are in particular places enriched by IT. NCH is campaigning for safe and ready access to IT for disadvantaged young people. There are many other examples which could be cited.

3. Already the fruits of these investments and developing skills are evident. However, much more needs to be done. Among some enthusiasts for IT there is already the sense that we are losing out because the world is passing us by and the Church is behind the times. In particular the Church as a whole would be helped by agreeing:

- A clear strategy to guide these developments;
- Coherent outcomes which do not advantage some parts of the Church and leave others feeling left out;
- Some understanding of the resource implications.

4. An IT strategy needs to be widely owned because it affects the whole Church and the different ways we may do things in future to mutual advantage. It is hard to overestimate the changes in attitude and approach to issues which will be necessary throughout the Church – among members of the Connexional Team, presbyters and other authorised ministers, and among lay leaders – if we are to capitalise on these possibilities and win value from the financial investment that will be essential. Using IT is about far more than installing hi-tech systems. It functions effectively only in partnership with new ways of working.

The Strategy

5. THE OVERALL AIM may be summarised like this: to develop the use of IT in all parts of the Church in the furtherance of the Church's mission.

It is crucial that we set our sights first and foremost on the Church's mission. IT has, of course, enormous implications for more effective administration and for improved communications throughout the Church (see para 8 below). But every investment must be evaluated against its input to the Church's mission in contemporary society.

We shall need to develop throughout the Connexion particular projects and clear objectives about how IT can enhance our mission and promote new forms of mission (see para 20). Already it is evident that working with children, young people and young adults will require IT resources and skills as a matter of course. Worship and evangelism will be taken into new dimensions and forms. 'Learning and caring' as well as 'service' (to use the shorthand headings of the *Our Calling* process) will be enlarged and enriched by open access to untold resources of wisdom and information. Re-configuring the Church's mission with the resources of IT at our disposal may well be the major challenge to Christian imagination in the opening decade of the 21st century.

6. There are two obvious goals we must achieve in order to move towards this objective.
7. GOAL ONE: to provide efficient IT systems for all the servicing functions provided by the Connexional Team, Conference Office and Methodist Publishing House.
8. GOAL TWO: to develop coherent IT links throughout the Connexion.

These developments will lead to immediate and strengthened communication between key

personnel and groups, with a stress on information flowing freely in all directions. They will widen the scope for consultation on proposed policy changes and on policy innovation. They will facilitate efficient and effective administration, for example:

The gathering, collation and use in all appropriate parts of the Connexion of core statistics and data (see further paras 17-19);

Access on-line to information and forms which need to be completed in application processes for all categories of authorised ministry.

Access on-line to information, guidance and schedules related to the management of property.

Building the infrastructure

9. The infrastructure needs to be developed in two stages, each with a target date.
10. STAGE ONE: We must first complete what is needed to achieve GOAL ONE, i.e. an integrated computer system for the Connexional Team.
11. A target date has been set for the achievement of STAGE ONE in its entirety (Methodist Church House, Manchester, regional and home-based Connexional Team staff and Methodist Publishing House): 1 September 2002.

12. The resource implications for STAGE ONE. We believe that most of what will be needed can be funded from allocations already in the Team budget for 2001/2002, together with provision made from the Epworth Fund for database development in three successive years, 2000-2003. It is possible a small additional grant may be requested from the Epworth Fund for 2002-2003.

13. STAGE TWO establishes the infrastructure and training needs which will underpin GOAL TWO.

14. A target date has been set for the achievement of STAGE TWO: 1 August 2003.

15. During 2001/2002 the Connexional Team will consult with Churches, circuits, districts and Methodist bodies about the most effective changes and disciplines which will achieve STAGE TWO.

The current standard for hardware and software which applies throughout the Connexional Team is available to guide ministers and circuit and local Church officers who wish to ensure that their own PCs are compatible with Connexional Team working. For information, please contact the IT Manager, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR; telephone 020 7467 5202; email: it@methodistchurch.org.uk

The Connexional Allowances Committee (CAC) have been considering the potential provision of computer availability for ministers and deacons within the overall review of stipends and terms of service (which will come for debate to the 2002 Conference). A recent circular (12 April 2001) from a sub-group of CAC to all ministers, deacons, probationers and lay workers, enquired about the current provision of IT at circuit level. The information obtained from this circular will be a contribution to our understanding of the present situation throughout the Connexion and provide insights into the funding and training issues which need to be addressed in circuits. The CAC will work in partnership with the Connexional Team and the Methodist Council to devise a strategy which can be delivered by the target date for Stage Two.

Achieving aspects of GOAL TWO: Statistics and Data

16. The following paragraphs link the general strategy for IT in the Church to one example which must be resolved in 2001: statistics and data. It is the subject of a separate paper before the Conference, 'Counting for a Purpose'. This is indeed but one aspect of what GOAL TWO implies. It needs to be kept in proportion. So it is important here to recall the opening section of paragraph 8 of

this Report, and to contemplate the transformation that will be achieved when key personnel and groups are reliably and routinely linked to one another, through e-mail, in a coherent manner. However, this one illustration points the way forward.

17. By the middle of 2003 we expect to have fully on-line: forms to be filled in and returned which will provide key statistical information about each congregation (both for Sunday activities and specified midweek activities); comprehensive data about personnel ministering to and from each Church in every circuit; and information about training resources. This will be updated annually.

18. The design of new formats for collecting statistics and data is at varying stages. In 2001 and 2002 we expect to trial these new formats in pilot projects in different parts of the Connexion, to ensure that they are adequate to meet clearly defined and widely understood purposes.

19. We expect to develop Church/circuit profiles, principally for stationing purposes, from summer 2001. After the September Circuit Meeting each superintendent will be asked to amend or complete a form tailored to his/her circuit. The form will list the current ministers and deacons serving or residing in the circuit, the Churches of which

each has pastoral charge, the category of each Church (village/rural, suburban/neighbourhood, etc) and information about chaplaincies; and the names of the circuit stewards.

Action towards THE OVERALL AIM

15. The Connexional Team Strategic Plan covers the period 2001-2004. Everything the Team does is to be set within the *Our Calling* process, in support of the Church's work. The Methodist Council is recommending to the Conference that in the period 2001-4 the Team's primary objective is to promote and support the *Our Calling* process throughout the Church. Linked to that the Team has been given three secondary objectives:

- To communicate good practice and creative work around the Connexion;
- To help children, young people and young adults to engage with God and to help the Church to engage with them;
- To help people to enter into conversations about God and faith in all kinds of settings in ways which make sense to all involved.

All of these objectives, but most notably the first two, require effective and imaginative use of IT. Herein lies the urgency behind the present report and its tough targets

for achieving STAGE ONE and STAGE TWO. The Team wants to devote most of its developmental energy in the next three years in fulfilling its primary and secondary objectives, in working collaboratively with every part of the Church, and with ecumenical and other partners in devising pieces of work which can be evaluated and whose outcomes can be measured. These will include ways of fleshing out THE OVERALL AIM of the IT policy.

Resolutions

- 47/4. The Conference receives the Report, 'Information Technology and the Methodist Church'.
- 47/5. The Conference affirms the strategy in paragraphs 5-8 and directs the Methodist Council to oversee its implementation.

Appendix B

PILOT PROJECTS SCHEME

Phil Dale

Introduction

Conference 2002 agreed an Epworth Fund grant to support the work of 'inspiring, raising awareness and inculcating a sense of ownership of the goal of wider IT use throughout the connexion in the furtherance of the Church's mission'. (see Appendix A)

Subsequently, it was agreed by the Methodist Church's Connexional Team that it would be appropriate to use the term 'Information and Communications Technology' (ICT), a term commonly used in educational circles.

The Connexional Team already made extensive use of email, intranet and its website, but wished to build a picture of ICT usage throughout the whole connexion.

Existing knowledge

An ICT Project Team was formed drawing not only upon expertise already existing within the Connexional Team but also involving a number of people from throughout the connexion with appropriate and wide ranging knowledge.

The Project Team was aware of groups within or related to the connexion already using ICT. These included:

- Creative Arts in Methodism Project - part of the Connexional Team's

Worship and Learning Office (see www.methodist.org.uk)

- Evangelism tools, including the Know and Grow CD-ROM (see www.methodist.org.uk) and 'reJesus' website (www.rejesus.co.uk)
- Roots for Worship (www.rootsontheweb.com)
- Methodist Insurance
- District, Circuit and church websites
- Training and Development Officers' use of PowerPoint and email
- MAYC website and ICT usage
- Home-based workers throughout the connexion

They were also aware of the use, or proposed use, of ICT for a wide range of tasks and initiatives:

- Text messaging
- Chat rooms
- Web cam and Internet meetings
- Cyber cafés and chapels
- Swipe card offertory and gift aid
- Information despatch
- Publications
- Collection of contact details and statistics
- Guidance notes
- Processing information, storage of archives, and administration
- Security systems (CCTV etc.)
- Sermons on line
- Two-way links from local church to residential homes
- Link to a 'virtual pastor'

- Web casting of events
- Training materials

The ICT Project Team felt that it would be valuable to carry out a widespread consultation exercise around the connexion in order to discover in more detail what was happening already and what the possibilities were for the future of ICT within Methodism and the wider world.

As one element of this research, it was decided to request submissions for pilot projects that explore different possibilities for the use of ICT in ministry and mission.

Projects Brief

The Pilot Projects scheme was established with the following criteria:

- They had to be pilot projects, either from within the Connexional Team or in the Methodist Districts, exploring possibilities for ICT
- The ideas would have to be innovative, relevant to mission, and beneficial to those involved as well as an experience that could be 'written up' and evaluated for others around the connexion
- The sponsorship grant would be used for the purposes stated in the original application, or for such similar purposes as were agreed with the Co-ordinating Secretary for Church Life and/or the ICT Project Team
- Grants would not normally be paid to individuals, but would be made payable to a church or other organisation's

account

- A statement of expenditure in relation to the grant, certified by an accountant or other finance professional, had to be submitted within twelve months of receipt and any unused balance of the grant returned at that time, unless an extension had been agreed
- A short account of the ways in which the grant had been used, and the lessons for the recipient and the wider Church, had to be submitted with the financial statement

Choosing the Pilot Projects

The Project Team received in excess of twenty applications. These were wide and varied in their aims. Those that requested grants for 'standard' office hardware, projectors and laptops that had no other specific project associated with them were rejected and their authors directed to their respective District Advance Funds. The projects that were accepted were those that adhered most closely to the team's guidelines. These included the requirement that projects contribute to the *Our Calling* process in churches. Projects were also assessed for their focus on Young Adults and on outreach and mission, and for their potential for wider application. Finally, the team asked of each project: Can the story be told at the end of the project in a way that others could understand and be encouraged?

Appendix C

STANDARDS FOR HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE FOR THE CONNEXIONAL TEAM

WORK STATION	Processor: Pentium IV 2.4GHz plus Memory: 512 MB Hard disk drive: 40 GB Graphics adaptor: 16 MB on board Monitor: 17" SVGA DVD CD-RW
Operating system	Windows XP Service Pack 2
Application software	Office Professional 2000 / XP: Word processing, Spreadsheet, Database
E-mail	Microsoft Outlook 2000 / 2002 or Outlook Express supplied as part of Internet Explorer
Web Browser	Internet Explorer 6
Anti-virus	Products by Sophos, Norton, Panda, F-Secure
Desktop Publishing	MS Publisher 2000 / 2003
Printer	Inkjet, colour. Hewlett Packard DeskJet 1200D or equivalent plus 2 year Extended Warranty Option Pack Laserjet: Hewlett Packard 1022, LaserJet or equivalent

No recommendation is implied by the provision of this information.

Appendix D

THE COST OF TECHNOLOGY

The funding of ICT equipment may be a concern to you. But, for example, from a local high street store the computer hardware and software recommended in Appendix C (p.53) would cost around £800. You might find a better price on the Internet or through a magazine. For a typical Methodist Church of 30 members, spread over a year the cost works out at about **52p per member each week**.

There are several ways this might be achieved:

- Invite members to donate the money
- Suggest the equipment be provided in memory of someone
- Use local church funds
- Consider the Circuit Advance Fund
- Consider the District Advance Fund

When church property is sold, the proceeds are usually paid into **the Circuit Advance Fund**. Their use is governed by Church standing order SO955. Members of the Circuit Meeting are the managing trustees and may make grants out of capital for building schemes, and **out of income for other purposes**. Up to 50% of the interest earned on the fund may be spent, for example, to support ministry projects or repair and maintenance.

Not all Districts originally had an Advance Fund. Where they did exist they were nearly always created and sustained by way of grants from Circuit Advance Funds. All circuits with an Advance Fund are now required to contribute 1% of the capital each year to the District fund. The use of the **District Advance Fund** is in the hands of the District Synod. The purpose behind the fund is that the more wealthy circuits can help to meet the need for financial help elsewhere in the District.

There are **procedures** to be followed in making the application for funds. Your minister will be able to provide the necessary guidance about how to do this.

Appendix E

USEFUL ORGANISATIONS AND WEBSITES

Association for Church Editors

Network of self-help groups for editors of church magazines of all denominations. Provides access to high quality materials for use in church magazines, and supports training days.
Tel: 01452 521062
E-mail: l.barrett@ac-editors.co.uk
www.ac-editors.co.uk

Church Computer Users Group

Non-profit making charity whose aim is to gather and share ideas and information about the use of computers in churches.
E-mail: ccug@ccug.org.uk
www.churchcomputer.org.uk

Churches' Media Council

Recognised agency of Churches Together in Britain & Ireland bringing together individuals, Churches and other organisations to support Christians in the media. Offers an annual conference, consultancy, continuing professional development, local groups, a magazine, prayer support, training, and representation on public policy issues.
Tel: 01245 322158
E-mail: office@churchesmediacouncil.org.uk
www.churchesmediacouncil.org.uk

reJesus

A quality, accessible and welcoming website where Jesus can be discovered and faith explored. The Christian Enquiry Agency works in partnership with Churches and organisations to provide opportunities for people to enquire about Jesus Christ and, in confidence, supplies information about the Christian faith. Links with local churches are offered to all enquirers.
E-mail: lifeline@premier.org.uk
www.rejesus.co.uk

ROOTS Worship and Learning for the whole Church

Lectionary-based resource programme for churches from all denominations, specially designed to support and develop the worship and learning of the whole Church community. Companion website which features supplementary resources for subscribers, and material developed in quick response to topical events.
Tel: 01733 325002
E-mail: sales@rootsontheweb.com
www.rootsontheweb.com

Christian Copyright Licensing International

Provides a range of licence arrangements that enables churches to keep within the law and concentrate on communicating the Gospel in a way that assists churches to grow. Useful brochure sets out the main

licences available.
Tel: 01323 436 103
E-mail: info@ccli.co.uk
www.ccli.co.uk

echurchactive.net

A recently established magazine designed to help the Church use technology effectively in its worship and administration. Helps the reader to explore possibilities offered by many types of technology, from computers to photocopiers, OHP's to video projectors, word processing to editing software.
Tel: 01954 206 219
E-mail: editors@echurchactive.net
www.echurchactive.net

NCH IT OK Campaign

Helping children achieve their potential includes offering them the chance to use and understand computers and the Internet. NCH launched its IT OK project to campaign for safe and equal access to IT for all children.
Tel: 020 7704 7000
www.nch.org.uk/itok/

The following organisations may be able to offer discounts to churches:

Phoenix Software

Tel: 0870 836 1213
E-mail: enquiries@phoenix.co.uk
www.phoenix.co.uk

Pugh Computers

Tel: 01974 200 5201
E-mail: sales@pugh.co.uk
www.pugh.co.uk

Entec

Tel: 01462 499 599
E-mail: sales@entec.co.uk
www.entec.co.uk

Civica

Tel: 020 7760 2802
E-mail: enquiries@charitylogistics.org
www.civica.co.uk
Works through Charity Logistics at
www.charitylogistics.org

Microsoft

www.microsoft.com/uk/education/

National Council of Voluntary Organisations

Tel: 020 7520 2444
E-mail: membership@ncvo-vol.org.uk
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

Appendix F

MEMBERS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH ICT PROJECT GROUP

The following people were members of the ICT Project Group:

Vince Blanchard
Phil Dale
Paul Ingram
Jonathan Kerry
Chris Kitchin
Alistair McFarlane
John Nelson
Mark Pengelly
David Perry
John Robinson
Angela Shier-Jones (from November 2003)
Tony Stock (until November 2003)

