

## Cultural Diversity and Methodist Circuit Ministry

The Methodist Church in Britain is an increasingly diverse Church, particularly in urban areas such as London. This diversity is reflected in the Church's ordained ministry: alongside the many international ministers who come to serve the British Connexion, the Methodist Church in Britain also shows increasing diversity in the cultural backgrounds of candidates for ordained ministry. This increased diversity gives rise to a number of questions: What is the relationship between cultural identity and experiences of ministry? How are relationships within Circuit Ministry, and the way in which this ministry is received, influenced by cultural identities and attitudes to diversity?

Such questions lie behind a research project being carried out by the Reverend Ermal Kirby, former Methodist London District Chair, for completion in the summer of 2017. The project aims to identify how factors, such as cultural background and attitudes to diversity, influence relationships in circuits and the way in which ministry are received. It is intended that these findings can be used to inform the policies and practices of the Methodist Church. Thus outputs from the research will include not only articles and reports based on the research findings but also learning resources for training, development and reflection and guidance and recommendations for churches at local and national level.

The work is exciting in that it will potentially make a contribution to academic research in the fields of missiology, church leadership, and Methodist ecclesiology; it will open possibilities for innovation and development in the life of the Church at a local level as the insights are applied; and the production of materials and the use of electronic media will ensure that the results are more widely available.

This research project underlines the commitment of SWF to engage with diversity, and will help the Church to use more effectively the abilities and insights of a significant number of ministers, as it seeks to be a discipleship movement equipped for mission in the diverse communities of Britain in the 21st Century.