

Some questions about the scheme for LOCAL LEADERSHIP in the North Western Synod.

1 How new is this scheme?

Synod approved in principle the scheme for Local Leaders back in 1999. Other Synods have introduced similar schemes following a resolution of General Assembly in 1998, notably Mersey Synod, whose successful training programme is the basis for our own.

2 Is this "official"?

The main change, of practice rather than of principle, is the greater involvement of District Councils in sending would-be Local Leaders forward for training and in accrediting them when they are trained.

3 Why "Leader"?

We wondered about using the word "minister" but felt it would be misunderstood and were advised that this would not be permitted. Leadership in the church is the opposite of domination and control - the word "ministry" means "service" - so we are looking for people who will lead by example of service as a colleague to the ordained minister in a particular pastorate. We hope that "Local Leader" will soon become a familiar and honoured term across the whole Synod.

4 What about the existing Local Leaders?

Uniquely in this Synod we already have around a dozen people serving in diverse ways as Local Church Leaders. But because they are very different we need to go back to first principles and cannot model the new scheme on any existing example.

5 How is this different from Eldership?

Local leadership is a development of the ministry of Elders and rooted in the Elders Meeting. But among existing Elders, including non-serving Elders, there are some who are recognised as having potential to pursue additional training and thereby make a proportionately greater contribution to the overall ministerial leadership of the church in its mission.

6 What is the role of District?

First, advocacy: there is a responsibility to keep the need for ministry of every kind, including Local Leadership, before the churches on a regular basis by including this matter on District Council agendas from time to time.

Second, commendation: those offering to serve as Local Leaders, on the recommendation of their Elders' Meeting, will be commended for training by the District Pastoral Committee after an initial enquiry to confirm their sense of call and the probability of useful service

Third, accreditation: after training is satisfactorily completed, District Council will accredit the new Local Leaders in an act of worship which will be held at the local church where they will be serving, which will normally be the church where they belong.

Fourth, support: towards the end of the second year of the three-year period of service, District Pastoral Committee will review the position of each Local Leader before inviting District Council to commend them for a further period of service.

7 How much training?

Prior to the second course (early 2004) each potential Local Leader will meet with a member of the Task Group, probably Mr Leo Roberts (Synod YCWT). The inevitable questions will be dealt with, to ensure full ministerial support and District backing of each candidate, plus negotiation of any exemptions from particular sessions.

8 How will the training be organised?

For this second course, the venue is Radcliffe United Reformed Church, Bury, starting in February 2004. There are 20 modules running around two hours each (plus some homework). Some will be run in pairs, morning and afternoon, on Saturday.

9 Will the training be open to existing Leaders?

The course is designed to lead to District accreditation for the new generation of Local Leaders. But some people who are serving or have at some time served as Local Church Leaders will be welcome to re-train under this new policy.

10 How much will it cost?

Nothing, we hope. It is planned to offer travelling expenses to those commended for training by their Districts. Lunch will be provided for those doing two modules on a Saturday.

11 So, what will Local Leaders actually do?

Each situation is different and Local Leaders accredited following the first course are engaged in a variety of tasks. Every Local Leader will have a statement of their role, spelling out their contribution to the total ministry in the pastorate. This will be agreed in outline with the District Pastoral Committee before they go forward for training and will be confirmed in more detail towards the end of the training before accreditation. The tasks of ministry are various, both within the life of the church in worship and education, in caring and administration, and also outside in the community through witness and service of various kinds.

The basic aim of this scheme for Local Leadership is to enhance and strengthen through training, accreditation and other support, the particular gifts of each person in the distinctive context of a particular pastorate.

We hope you will give it serious and prayerful thought.

North Western Synod of the United Reformed Church

office: Franklin Street, Patricroft, Eccles, M30 0QZ

telephone: 0161 789 5583

e-mail: modpa.nwsynod@urc.org.uk

revised in June 2003