

## Shetland Methodist District Theme for 2018

### ‘Growing together in faith’

In his letter to the Ephesian Christians the apostle Paul wrote:

***‘...we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:14-16, New International Version)***

Being tossed by the waves and blown by every wind sounds all too familiar to us in Shetland, but the emphasis of this passage is on the value of Christians not being buffeted, even separated by divisive teaching but growing together in faith and love.

Following three open meetings during 2017 at which members of all our churches were invited to come together to consider our future, we are proposing a theme for the life of our Methodist Churches during the year 2018. We hope that the theme will encourage us to think about and take action to be growing faithfully in our local churches and in shared activities across the District (such as Compass Praise).

The words from Ephesians remind us that our priority is to promote growth into Christ-likeness for each Christian and in the character of our shared life as churches. If our prayers and other actions aim to encourage us all to be more like Jesus, we will see growth in other ways such as our impact on those in need around us, our confidence in speaking of Jesus as he becomes more important in our own lives and even growth in the numbers of people interested and involved in our church life.

#### **How a theme for the year may help us**

We offer the theme of ‘Growing together in faith’ to the people of our District in 2018 in the hope that it may help to encourage you and your congregation to explore ways to grow in your faith in Jesus. Some ways you could explore could include:

- With the help of ministers and local preachers having worship services on the theme of growing together in faith (for example 6 services on the letter to the Ephesians)
- Meeting with others in a small group (including local Christians from other Churches) to find out more about the Bible’s message on growing in faith.
- Find a way to pray regularly on your own or with others, that you find helpful.
- Look for opportunities to serve your local community in Christ-like ways, as an individual or as a congregation.

#### **Examples of Resources available from the New Resource Base in Lerwick Methodist Church**

*The Bible Course* – an 8 session overview of the Bible for use in a small group, from the Bible Society.

*A Discipling Presence*- a workbook to help promote effective Christian presence in rural communities.

*Everybody welcome*- a 5 session course ‘where everybody helps to grow their church’.

*Building up the Body* (Richard Steel) – a book about encouraging and equipping volunteers in church.

*Lifebuilder Bible studies* from Scripture Union. Copies for Ephesians and many other books and topics.

*Resourcing Rural Ministry* (ed.Simon Martin) – a book of practical insights for mission in rural areas.

If you have an idea, feel free to explore it with others as God’s Spirit prompts you to play your part.

God bless,

Andrew, David, John, Paul, Peter, Bruce, Janet, Val, Maureen, Roger and Vaila

(The District Leadership Team)