



## Methodist Futures: The Local Church

# Leyland Methodist Church - Linking Lives Through Jesus

Leyland Methodist Church feels like a church on the brink! We are excited to be witnessing new people coming to faith, significant people being drawn into fellowship with us, and many "stepping out of the boat" to put their faith into practice, and yet more opening themselves up to the fullness of the Spirit. The full-time paid staffs include a presbyter (Phil Gough) and a deacon (Sylvie Phillips) and starting this September a youth ministry coordinator (Matt Lawley-Brown).

Two years ago, the Leadership Team and the wider church shared in a process of discerning God's mission and vision for this time. As a thriving and busy community, with over 1,000 people crossing the doors of our premises each week for a full programme of church and community activities, we were led to a Mission Statement of "Linking Lives

Through Jesus". The whole church is being encouraged to see how God provides us daily with rich opportunities to link lives through Jesus, at home, at work, at school, in the neighbourhood and community of Leyland.

Now we are working through a series of statements about who we are, and how God wants us to achieve this mission.

Firstly, we are about "ENCOUNTERING the living God" through worship which connects people to God, through the risen Jesus, and in the Spirit poured out amongst us. We are at an interesting point in our worship development, having experimented this year with different styles on different Sundays. We have traditional communion, all-age, teaching and "seeker style" (to accommodate the more than 20 baptisms and dedications

we conduct each year, and provide a first step for people to invite friends into), and we have established a new "creative arts" team who help design these services to reach out to the un-churched.

Secondly, we are about "ENJOYING life together" through networks of home-groups, interest groups, discipleship training, and opportunities to serve and make a difference together. In the same way that the early church couldn't stand the thought of not seeing each other from Sunday to Sunday, but met in each others homes, we put a high value on hospitality, and fellowship / doing life together.

Thirdly, we are "ENABLING the offering" of people's time, talents and money, so that individuals and families are able to see that God has a plan and purpose for their lives, and opportunities to "store up treasures

in heaven" through serving and building the kingdom today.

Fourthly, we are "EMBRACING the world" through mission locally and globally. As well as running a Fair Trade coffee shop (and we're hoping to see a new initiative through local high school pupils forming a Youth Cooperative to run the coffee shop after school), we are pushing for Eco-Congregation status over the coming months. We are passionate about supporting international development and local issues of poverty, debt and support for families and the elderly. We have a growing "Faith Sharing" ministry, seeking to build people's confidence in sharing their faith, and inviting others to share the journey with us.

Finally, we are "EQUIPPING to serve". Through helping people discover their God-given talents and Spiritual Gifts, and moving increasingly to a whole-body ministry, investing in people, training individuals up in pastoral ministry, vocational training, worship leading, children's and youth work, mission and outreach.

September 2008 is an exciting start to a new church year, as we welcome our first full time Youth Ministry Coordinator. Matt joins us to focus attention on "Creative Arts in Worship" amongst our young people. The desire is to become a "centre of excellence" in the creative arts, building on amazing work through our Music and Drama group, and especially our MADMob, a team of up to seventy 7 - 17 year olds who annually produce amazingly professional shows, frequently written by the MADMob leaders on strong Christian themes. This year's production of "MMTV Live" worked through Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, as the whole church followed a teaching series through the same material

Matt will build on the fantastic work amongst the 0 - 11 year age range, which includes Holiday Bible Club (120 children during a summer week, at which 30 gave their lives to Christ this year), ALF, BOB and BIG PICTURE discipling groups for 7 - 11 year olds.

Other initiatives which are key for us at present, include Prayer Ministry training, as we increasingly see God gifting us to be a community of healing for people, where people come bruised and broken (sometimes by church itself), and needing a safe place.

We are re-launching our "pubtalk" initiative this September - a monthly outreach in the local pub, providing evenings of food, talk on a theme, sometimes music and visuals, and a great atmosphere to break down barriers and "link lives".

We have a strong ministry in the local schools, particularly through Leyland Methodist Infant and junior school, linking us in to hundreds of families in our community. We are finding this a very fruitful outreach as more and more young families are joining the church community. We are seeking this year to establish a programme of activities "in school" which may link more children and adults to Christ!

As part of a dynamic and forward thinking South Ribble Circuit, with a great staff team, we support a "Just Fair Laughs" comedy night in nearby Bamber Bridge, where the Methodist Church partners in a clean comedy night, and raises awareness and funds for Fair Trade initiatives. These monthly evenings are seeing sell-outs where a good 50% attending are unchurched. We are building on our success with the Marriage Preparation Course, to promote it through Wedding Fairs, and the alternative wedding venues throughout the borough from this autumn. In this and other ways, we have sought to invest in the preparation for and further development of marriages and family life.

We are seeing fruit from "linking" in with what God is doing through a fantastic "Women's Aglow" group in Leyland, "Christian Vision for Men", who are helping us develop our Men's Ministry area, the Willow Creek Association, whose leadership training events are first class (we have more than 20 attending this year's summit in October), and in twinning with a church and Methodist School in Uruguay, amongst other international links.

God is stirring up a desire in line with much during "HOPE '08", to be involved in "Redeeming our Communities", by linking closely with local police, local authority, and churches together. A recent "fun day" in Worden Park saw 1,000 people enjoy a great afternoon of activities for all ages at no cost to the community. Loads of events like this are taking place throughout this year, and it is all about regeneration, community spirit, cultural engagement, and partnership. Here are further opportunities to "link lives through Jesus."



We believe this is an exciting and challenging time to be kingdom-builders with Christ, and we pray His Spirit will be poured out amongst the whole Methodist movement, as it seeks creative partnerships with all who long to see kingdom values.

**Leyland Methodist Church, Linking Lives Through Jesus;**  
**encountering - enjoying - enabling - embracing - equipping.**

Rev. Phil Gough has just marked ten years since his ordination, and previously served eight years in Blackburn. He is married to Maria and they have two children, Jemma and Jonathan. His passion is "helping make disciples", and he enjoys writing music, songs and drama.

