

Isle of Man District

The Isle of Man is unique amongst the British Isles. Located in the middle of Irish Sea it is some 33 miles long by 13 miles wide. Its political status is that of a Crown Dependency, having its own government of Tynwald, in continuous existence for over a millennium.

The last few decades have been generally good ones for the Island. The economy has moved from reliance on declining tourism revenues to growing economic well-being mainly driven by the financial services sector with year-on-year economic growth for over 20 years. There has been a growing confidence and sense of national pride, evidenced by things such as the recovery of the Manx language (a Gaelic language related to Irish and Scots Gaelic) and a renewed sense of the importance of a unique cultural identity. The tide of emigration that witnessed many of the Island's young people leaving to earn a living elsewhere has been reversed and the population has grown steadily since the 1960s (currently around 85,000). Roughly half the population were born on the Island, most of the remainder originate from the neighbouring nations and the last decade has seen the arrival of sizeable populations from South Africa, the Philippines and Poland.

Quality of life is good, with excellent health-care and education, lower rates of income tax, very low rates of crime and a strong sense of community. The Island is family-friendly and is a good place to bring up children. It is world-famous as the venue of the annual TT races. There are 17 air routes linking it to neighbouring nations (it is possible to be in Liverpool in just 25 minutes) and ferries to England all year round and seasonally to Ireland.

There is evidence of the Christian faith on Mann since the fifth century, and the Island can boast more carved Celtic crosses and ancient *keeills* (chapels) per square mile than anywhere else in the British Isles. The Methodist Church has a history on the Island dating back to the mid-eighteenth century, including 2 visits from John Wesley. Today there are still 35 places of worship in regular use and a membership of approximately 1100. Across the denominations there are something like 100 places of worship. MHA is active with several successful Live at Home schemes in operation.

Ecumenical relationships are good, as witnessed by the signing of a Covenant for Mission between all the major denominations in June 2010 (Roman Catholic, Anglican, United Reformed Church, Salvation Army, Baptist, Elim Pentecostal, Methodist). The Methodist Church is one of a number of partner churches of Scripture Union Ministries Trust which runs an excellent gap-year development programme for young leaders as well as working within the Island's schools. In September 2010 the Methodist Church, along with the Anglicans, URC and Baptists began to deliver a programme of training leading to ordination through the Southern North West Training Partnership, offering a Foundation Degree in Mission and Ministry validated by Chester University. The District shares the same boundaries as the Anglican Diocese and both operate within the different legal jurisdiction that is the Isle of Man.

The District is made up of a single circuit which was formed from 3 circuits in 2008. Standing Orders were changed in 2010 to allow the Circuit Meeting members to constitute the District Synod. As from last September the roles of Chair of District and Circuit Superintendent have been formally separated. Current staff levels are 7 full-time presbyters, 1 full-time lay worker, 1 part-time supernumerary and a part-time administrator. The District shares a Development Enabler with the Cumbria District (0.1 FTE). There are 26 active Local Preachers and 3 'On Trial', and this year there is candidate for the presbyteral ministry.

The Chair of District is a non-separated chair and he/she will have pastoral responsibility for a number of churches. The current post holder lives in the town of Ramsey in the north of the Island, but given other staff appointments that are up for review it is not inevitable that the next Chair of District will be located in the same place. A key part of the Chair's role will be to act as an advocate for the Island to wider Methodism, and to encourage the church in its mission and ministry as it seeks to respond to the needs of the Island in culturally sensitive ways.