

Our Church Worship Space - Kirkby Lonsdale Methodist Church

Guidelines for discussion at the church meeting on 11.1.11

At the last church meeting on 11 November 2010, we agreed to look at our church worship space and consider if it could better serve our current needs. This note sets out a way in which we may approach the task.

Whenever a group of people deliberate over a tricky problem, it is usually a good idea to agree a way of working that includes everyone, is thorough and is as enjoyable as possible. It is useful to separate out certain stages such as preparation, information gathering and decision making and to organise our thinking in a disciplined way. A particularly useful way of doing this is known as “thinking hats”, in which everyone, whatever their own personal views, joins in thinking about the situation from a set of different directions (with “different hats on”). All aspects of the situation are considered by everyone, including the advantages and disadvantages of different courses of action, and everyone joins in thinking constructively from all angles, rather than just defending particular positions.

In this way we might structure the meeting as follows:

- **Blue Hat: setting the process.** This is that hat under which all participants discuss the way we are to proceed and to organise the thinking and decision-making process. It sets out the ground rules at the beginning of the task, sets objectives, defines the route to take and eventually evaluates where the group has got to.
- **White hat: facts and information.** This hat considers purely the information that we already have available. It may identify things that we need to find out, and may also summarise the views of people not at the meeting. No judgements or emotional responses are recorded at this stage.
- **Green hat: new ideas.** This hat encourages creativity and imaginative thinking, considering opportunities, identifying new possibilities and brainstorming new ideas. Again, no judgements are applied at this stage.
- **Red hat: feelings and emotions.** This hat deliberately draws out instinctive gut reactions or statements of emotional feeling either from people’s previous thinking or what they have been thinking about at the meeting so far, but done in an orderly and positive way.
- **Yellow hat: being positive and optimistic.** This hat uses a positive attitude to identify the benefits of the proposals made so far. It looks for reasons to favour something.
- **Black Hat: being cautious.** This is the opposite of the yellow hat and deliberately looks for the flaws or barriers or mismatches of any proposal. People tend to automatically use this hat even when it is not requested and not appropriate but it has a valuable place in problem solving and can be very helpful when used constructively.

At the end of the 'thinking hats' process, all views should have been able to be aired in a positive manner without fear of criticism or judgement. It may be that the meeting arrives at a clear proposal for the future of the worship space or there may need to be another round of consideration, possibly using one or more of the hats again. But at least we should have cooperated in love, listened carefully to each other and made progress in considering how the church worship space can best serve our current needs.

David Porter, 01.01.11

N.B. Andrew approached David after the last church meeting to ask him to use his significant experience and expertise in this area to help enable this process for our church. After meeting with Andrew and having carefully reflected on the issues involved David is offering this as a way forward for our consideration'.