



District Mission Development Plan

In line with the connexional Evangelism and Growth strategy of the Methodist Church we aim to prioritise our ability to help people to develop as disciples of Jesus Christ. We do this recognizing some particular emphases around the District and valuing the ministry and mission of each local Circuit.

Introduction

While we seek to respond to the love of God in Jesus Christ in worship and in mission, we do so in the light of the universal love of God for all people. Consequently, we see our DMDP as sitting within three wider relationships

- with the environment
- with ecumenical partners
- with interfaith friends

a. Environmental impact

In all that we do we seek to love God and to love our neighbours, by reducing our environmental impact wherever this is possible. In order to do this we have adopted an Environmental policy (*See the separate district Environmental Policy*)

b. Ecumenical work

In the light of our heritage as Methodists who recognize ‘the Catholic Spirit’ we believe that any work that can be done together with others should not be done alone.

It is recognised that the most effective ecumenical working is a helpful combination that takes place at a local level, supported by the ecumenical officers of the District and close collegiality with senior leaders in our District and our Connexional and national instruments of ecumenism. The District will, through the Chair and the Ecumenical Officers, do all it can to enable and support this work. The Ecumenical Officers through their representative submit a report to each meeting of the District Executive to enable this work to be monitored and supported and endorsed as necessary.

We intend all New Places for New People work to be as ecumenically designed and practised as is possible while being clear about Methodist responsibilities and

oversight. We will begin new work under Methodist accountability, working with ecumenical partners, or add Methodist contribution to ecumenical mission, depending on what is appropriate. We will work simply as Methodists when that is necessary. Where we are able to work ecumenically we will do so, but with clarity about what our Methodist contribution is and with regular review of the working relationships involved.

Targets 2020-21

- i) Support all churches and circuits to engage and cooperate with their local Churches Together or equivalent ecumenical grouping.***
- ii) Contribute, wherever possible, to ecumenical co-operation in missional planning e.g. FEASTS and New Housing Groups.***
- iii) Encourage churches and circuits to consult, and where appropriate, to plan together with other denominations in New Places for New People work.***

c. Interfaith relationships

Acknowledging that this district exhibits significant diversity provided by the wide variety of faiths represented in our communities, we continue to prioritize, in the times in which we find ourselves, the improvement of relationships with other faiths for the overall benefit of everyone in our communities.

Targets 2020-21

- i) Map the extent of existing interfaith relationships (both formal and informal) within our churches and more particularly circuits.***
- ii) Work with colleagues at St Philips Centre in Leicester to investigate ways in which opportunities for interfaith work can be developed in rural communities***
- iii) Develop work between our probationer ministers and trainee imams with St Philips and the Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE, Leicester) in 2021.***

1. Centred in God

a) Prayer for the mission and ministry of the churches

Recognising that all mission and ministry begins in prayer, we seek to encourage all Methodists to continue in prayer as we respond, and seek to help others to respond, to the Gospel of God's love in Christ. We affirm all that was made possible regarding worship on-line during the COVID 19 lockdown and we will continue to explore and encourage high quality and contextually relevant worship across the District.

Targets 2020-21

- i) Encourage participation in the Year of Prayer, including offering a monthly district prayer gathering***
- ii) Encourage and resource all circuits as they participate in Thy Kingdom Come***

b) Discipleship Pathways

We will aim to deepen knowledge of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ and will encourage all Methodists to use for themselves the Methodist Way of Life, as well as providing opportunities for those who would like to be new disciples to enter into this way of life which is centred on God.

Targets 2020-21

- i. Ensure every circuit is promoting and using the Methodist Way of Life***
- ii. Encourage the use of both face-to-face and online small groups for discipleship development***
- iii. Continue to explore and promote ways of supporting people new to Christian faith, as they begin their journeys as disciples of Christ.***

2. Everyone an Evangelist

Building on the success of the “Everyone an Evangelist” day (February 2020) we will aim to make all aspects of our life ‘good news’ for each other and for those around us, as we live life in the Spirit of Christ and give account of the hope that is within us.

Targets 2020-21

- i) Encourage each circuit to plan for Together Missions 2021 and to include some evangelistic activity as part of the mission of church life throughout the year***
- ii) Share testimony, as in the previous year, and extend this further to testimony online.***
- iii) Extend the reach of our evangelism, as churches and individuals, through our responsible use of digital media.***

3. Transformational Leadership

a) Supporting Superintendents, ministers and lay workers

The pastoral care of all ministers, both active and supernumerary, is one of the key duties of a District Chair. It is recognised that this is an extensive district geographically and the Chair believes that her primary focus should be on care and support of Superintendents who in turn should care for their ministerial colleagues both active and supernumerary and also widows of ministers/supernumeraries. She is committed to meeting, visiting and caring for all in these groupings wherever possible. It is recognised that pressures upon ministers seem to increase inexorably as the level of lay support is decreasing in many areas due to a smaller and older membership. Training events for circuit and church stewards will be provided to help them support their ministerial and lay staff as effectively as possible.

Targets 2020 - 21

Following the appointment of the District Vocations Officer and creation of the District Vocations Support (Discernment) Group

- i) Continue the development of and delivery of Lay Worker resourcing including a programme of development and a retreat for Lay Workers using Zoom or similar platform wherever appropriate***
- ii) All ordained staff to be encouraged to take sufficient rest time, quarter days and holidays.***
- iii) Discern together what we should cease doing and be focused on what are clear priorities in mission and ministry.***
- iv) Supporting all Superintendents to conduct annual MDRs for ordained circuit staff and to receive an MDR***
- v) All Superintendents are now in supervision, the development of their supervision skills as supervisors needs monitoring. Supervision implementation plans for their ordained and, where appropriate, lay colleagues should now be developed.***

b) Developing Local Preachers and Worship Leaders

Much of the preaching and worship leading in our churches is heavily dependent upon our accredited and in training local preachers and worship leaders. The district will work with the Learning Network staff to seek ways to support and endorse the loving service offered in preparing and leading worship week in and week out in our churches.

We will provide suitable training opportunities to enable them to continue their personal development and learning and help to increase their effectiveness in their role and also their effectiveness in evangelism. All this will be done in co-operation with our District Local Preachers and Worship Leaders Secretary.

Targets 2020-21

- i) *Recruit at least 44 (2 per circuit) new local preachers and/or worship leaders, including some aged under 40.***
- ii) *Recruit extra and support existing tutors and mentors ensuring that there is at least one tutor and one mentor in each circuit or a sharing arrangement in place with clusters of circuits.***
- iii) *Affirm and encourage those who have begun to offer online worship and prayer support as new ways for new people to engage with the worship life of the district.***

c) Chaplaincy

There is a significant amount of chaplaincy work of varying types carried out across the district, some by ordained persons either on a full or part time appointed basis but much of the work is delivered by ordained staff in addition to their circuit appointments/responsibilities and with the support of a very significant lay volunteer resource. We will seek to provide suitable on-going training to those undertaking the work and also training for those wishing to become part of the delivery of this work. This is with the aim of maximising the effectiveness of the work of evangelism carried out in our communities by chaplaincy workers.

Target 2020-21

- i) *Continue to promote chaplaincy as a model of ministry for every circuit minister and encourage all ministers to give at least one session (3 hours) per week to community presence and activity outside the church to be reviewed and reflected on within the MDR process.***

d) The Methodist Pioneering Pathways

Believing that God has always called Methodists to begin new work in relation to new contexts and cultures, as we accompany others into new journeys of Christian faith, we have been encouraging Methodists across the district to consider and, where appropriate, to join the Methodist Pioneering Pathways.

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/starting-new-places-for-new-people/methodist-pioneering-pathways/>

Targets 2020-21

- i) Share the stories of those on the MPP across the district***
- ii) Explore ways to ensure that all Methodists across the district have heard of the MPP***
- iii) Continue to include the vocational exploration of pioneering work whether or not people choose to apply for the MPP***

4. New Places for New People

Recognising that there are many people who would not naturally want to belong to an existing Methodist society but who will nevertheless want to grow in Christian faith and be committed to a Christian way of life, we will seek to develop new relationships with new communities of people and to develop new Methodist, or ecumenical, Christian communities.

Targets 2020-21

- i) Support the circuits in engaging with identified new communities which they consider God could be calling them to work with.***
- ii) Explore how the District can best support circuits in beginning new Methodist societies (or new ecumenical societies).***
- iii) Explore with circuits where new churches might be planted in communities where that is appropriate.***

5. Every Church a Growing Church

We continue to value and affirm all that is good about our current Methodist churches across the district and seek to encourage them as they sustain and develop faithful witness and mission in today's culture.

Targets 2020-21

- i) Work with circuits so that each church will have a Mission Plan and will begin to cease some things as we begin to focus on growth of all kinds.***
- ii) Continue to offer and to promote training opportunities for local churches as well as networking them with others in similar contexts, in order that we might all learn from one another.***

6. Church at the Margins

Agreeing with the focus of JPIT (the Joint Public Issues Team) on the shared humanity of all people, and the Methodist heritage of a witness to the link between evangelism and social justice we want to continue to support work that challenges injustice, and to develop new movements of Christian communities which are led by those who are at the margins of society for whatever reason.

a) **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.**

This plan recognises that the Northampton District is made up of communities that are gloriously diverse. The District has a great many countries of origin represented amongst our communities and significant numbers of people from a wide range of nations. We regard this diversity as one of our greatest treasures. We wish to celebrate our diversity and ensure that our church structures, District committees and Synods reflect this diversity in both representation and leadership, candidates for ministry and local lay leadership.

We recognize that the diversity of human experience requires a diversity of church models and we will respond to the diversity communities by valuing local leadership and encouraging pioneer ministry in a variety of contexts and cultures.

The Chair meets regularly with a Reference Group of ministers of World Church heritage who serve in the District. Conversations with this group include planning an annual Service of Celebration for the fellowship groups and language congregations, considering a mentor scheme for lay and ordained ministers to support and enable their wider representation and leadership development.

Targets 2020-21

In line with the new Inclusive Methodist Church agreement of Conference 2020 we will:

- i) aim to ensure that suitable training is offered to all ministers and other church leaders by our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group and Disability Advisory Officer on how to become a welcoming church to those of differing abilities/background.***
- ii) To increase more diverse participation in our representatives to the Conference and Synod, in our membership of committees and groups and those holding office, as well as on the Methodist Pioneering Pathways.***

- iii) To map, celebrate and encourage participation in each local church/circuit in areas of dementia awareness, wellbeing 'cafes' and support groups for those with mental health issues and those suffering from social isolation.*
- iv) The district will initially seek to map the differing language groups worshipping in their mother tongues within our churches – either as part of the regular congregation or as separate worshipping communities using our buildings for their own worship purposes.*
- v) In our conversations reviewing mission plans we will include questions about the diversity of our local communities, encouraging churches and circuits to be aware of these diversities and to have considered which communities they are, or are not, engaging with, as we seek to implement the Evangelism and Growth strategy, 'God for All'*

b) Use of Resources

In line with our Wesleyan heritage about use of money we will aim to use our resources to support those who are disadvantaged, and need them most.

Targets 2020-21

- i) We will aim to develop at least one new Christian community where we are already working alongside people who are 'at the margins'.*
- ii) We will consider the injustices of the contexts across our District as we allocate funding from our DAF and other resources.*
- iii) We will ask circuits to focus on which people among their communities might be currently marginalized when they are considering where to begin 'New Places for New People work (see 4.)*
- iv) We will begin a Forum for Rural Life (initially online), in order to allow a context for exploring issues of rural life and ministry, beginning with the visit of the President of Conference as a focus for this work*

7. Young evangelists, pioneers, and leaders

Recognizing our conviction that God is speaking to the church through the young leaders amongst us, we will continue to develop our Young Leaders Scheme

Targets 2020-21

- i) Review the scheme to consider how best to encourage young people in their faith and vocations, ahead of 2021-22.***
- ii) Run the Youth Zoom Network throughout the year to encourage young people in faith whether they are on a YLS placement or not.***
- iii) Offer opportunity, at the YLS Away Days, for young people to gather across the district and to explore their own vocations in an appropriate way.***
- iv) Consider the development of a District Youth Forum to inform the Synod in its Representative Session***
- v) Offer online worship led by and appropriate for the 16 – 23 age group.***

8. Digital Presence: Digital Age Mission

Following on from the adoption of our new district Social Media policy we want to develop a safe but effective use of the internet for digital evangelism and growth of many kinds

Targets 2020-21

- i) Develop a diversity of Social Media platforms for the district's work, initially increasing Facebook work.***
- ii) Recruit a number of voluntary Administrators for District social media, to help us develop this work, using Safer Recruitment principles.***
- iii) Encourage churches to consider how to take forward the various new 'congregations' and 'New Places for New People' that have developed throughout the Covid-19 crisis***
- iv) Identify online Christian community and activity which could be supported further by the District.***