

Serving the Methodist Church  
in South Yorkshire,  
North Nottinghamshire  
and North East Derbyshire

# Reports to Synod April 2024

## Chair's Introduction

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this Annual Report which seeks to review the life of the District over the last year.

As you read the pages that follow you will glean a key insight into the work carried out by our officers and volunteers including:

- the growing work with children and young people and the recruitment of three interns as part of the new ONE Opportunity Programme.
- the growth of the social media channels and the printed District Magazine, as well as the launch of the podcast 'Faith, Hope and The Journey'.
- new initiatives like the Peak Wesley Way.
- the challenges and potential changes in the stationing process.
- the stories of those encountering faith through the Persian Ministry Development project.

In the year when the 'Justice Seeking Church' Report came to Conference it is good to see how the 'Sheffield Circuit Justice and Peace Mission Action Group' has now become the 'District Justice Seekers Group' and is promoting Fairtrade and other ways of seeking a just way of life.

There are still many challenges facing the church of today – and as you will read some of our congregations are currently in the process of ceasing to meet for worship. We hold all those facing tough decisions in our thoughts and prayers. Alongside this there are signs of new life. The work with new Christian communities continues to grow – and there have been several ways in which the District has helped to bring together people who are serving in similar roles so that they can support one another through communities of practice.

One of the biggest news stories of the year has been the delight that we have taken in seeing Rev'd Gill Newton take on the office of President of Conference. We look forward to her return to the District with lots of new experiences and reflections to share.

Thank you to everyone who serves across this District, whether in the local churches, the Circuits or on District groups and committees. All that you offer is appreciated and valued and every contribution is an important part of the mission in which we share.

As we join in this District Gathering and Synod may we find new and creative ways of taking care of ourselves as we seek to continue to serve God and one another. Grace and peace,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie Coates".

Rev'd Julie I Coates, Deputy Chair

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## **Archivist**

The normal activities have proceeded in the usual way although not always to the pre pandemic form.

One difference in the last year has been the number of contacts who are in the process of writing family, social or local histories and even university dissertations. Acknowledgements are even beginning to appear on the printed page.

An unusual request was from St Marys, the University Church in Oxford regarding the establishment of an archive for their material. I have no idea how the request originated but this is still on going, but I will keep you informed of any development.

I have just received a copy of "A History of Cundy Street and Howard Road Methodist Churches Walkley Sheffield by Stephen Johnson who works at the Record Office and Local Studies Library in Sheffield. He very kindly acknowledges the District Archivist as well as the Rev Maurice Stafford as well as members of the Ebenezer Church.

*John Tranter - District Archivist*  
*trants10@tiscali.co.uk*

## **Children & Youth Work**

This past year I have been very busy supporting in different ways around the district. I feel we're making good progress in building a fellowship amongst those who work with Children and Young People. I have produced a calendar of events to suit different needs with quiet days, prayer breakfast, quarterly community of practice drop ins, plus lots of training opportunity including First Aid and Joined Up conferences. Resource sharing is also a key part within my role, practical resources we can use in our setting or linking people together to share knowledge and wisdom. This year we are hosting our first Celebration Service to thank all the people who volunteer and work with Children and Young People across the district. We want to say thank you and celebrate everyone! Put the date in your diary and let others know too, Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June 4pm at The Grove Methodist Church, Retford.

We've just hosted our third District Youth Day on 16<sup>th</sup> March, which we saw over 50 young people, plus another 20 leaders. This year we explored the theme of Hidden Treasure through our workshops which we explored our God given treasure – the gift and talents we have inside us, how we trust God has a plan for us even if it seems hidden and working together as a team to find the hidden treasures. We then enjoyed our subway lunch before moving on to on-site activities including climbing tower, cube, zip-line, archery, nerf guns and peddle karts. This was the biggest uptake we've had and can't wait to do it all again next year.

In September we launched our ONE opportunity programme with three interns across the district. It's been such a blessing journeying with each of the interns so far this year. We are now looking for our next group of interns to join us from

September. So if you know anyone aged between 16-23, who wants to start a new project within your church or circuit, wants to grow in their faith and test their leadership skills. Please get in touch.

We want to encourage as many as possible across the District to attend 3Generate which will be on 4 October – 6 October 2024 at the NEC in Birmingham. Transport will be covered by the district.

Please do get in touch with me if you want to chat about all things children, families, youth or schools work in your setting.

*Victoria Loveday - District Children & Youth Co-ordinator*  
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*T: 07483 100 864*

## **Communications**

As technology moves on so does the world of communications and it's important that we embrace this.

Over the last 12 months we have continued to grow our social media channels:

<b>Channel</b>	<b>Followers</b>	<b>Reach</b>
Facebook	624 (increase of 93)	Over 20,000 people
Instagram	207 (increase of 41)	540 people
Youtube	120	1400 views in the last year.

Facebook remains our best performing social media channel as this is where we find most of our audience prefers to interact online. We have also started to create Facebook adverts for events and for only a few pence a day we have been able to reach thousands of social media accounts who live close to where we are holding events and might not have heard about it in other ways.

The twice-yearly district magazine has gone from strength to strength with 2,750 copies now being printed and distributed around our circuits and churches. As much as we spend a lot of time in a digital world, it is still important to create printed materials for those who are not digitally savvy or just prefer to read a magazine rather than a screen. We are continuing to print it on recycled paper and leave it uncoated so it can be recycled when everyone has finished reading it. The articles in the magazine are based on the themes of the District Gatherings and include details of the event so people can still join in with the learning even if they can't be there in person.

The district held its first digital training day - Getting Started Online, with the help of Connexional colleagues in 2024. It was an interactive and hands on day where people from around the district were able to learn what's possible online but to

also share their own experiences of what works for their church or circuit social media and doesn't. We were also able to offer 1-2-1 sessions during the day so people to get help with a specific problem or to be shown what is possible in their context.

Finally, we have launched our first district podcast. Faith, Hope and The Journey is a brand-new venture as a new way to share our stories with everyone even if you don't have a faith. The conversations are aimed to inspire and help people on their journey through life.

At the time of writing this we've released the first three episodes from series one and we've had 420 listens and positive feedback. It's released every two weeks and can be found on Soundcloud, Spotify, Amazon Music, iTunes and on the district website where you can listen to it from our podcast page:

[sheffieldmethodist.org/podcast](https://sheffieldmethodist.org/podcast)

A reminder that the District Communications Officer Sam Roberts is able to offer help and support to all circuits and churches in the District.

You can follow us on social media:

- Facebook @sheffieldmethodist
- Instagram @sheffieldmethodist
- Youtube @SheffieldMethodistDistrict

And if you haven't already – do sign up for our weekly email:

[sheffieldmethodist.org/news/newsletters](https://sheffieldmethodist.org/news/newsletters)

*Sam Roberts - District Communications Officer*

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## **District Leading Team**

The District Leading Team (DLT) has met six times since the last Synod report. Meetings continue to be held over Zoom as the most effective use of time and resources.

The Team's regular and continuing work includes setting and monitoring the District's budget, approving grants, and considering requests for authorisations, extensions for On Trial preachers and church closures. During the year the DLT has received a variety of reports about work in the district from all District employees and the main District committees.

The DLT has considered in detail the budget for 2024/25 and subsequent years, and the Treasurer's report sets out the decisions reached.

## **Lay Authorisations**

No applications for lay authorisations to preside at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper were received this year.

Applications for the Revd Kim Mason and the Revd Kate Barclay to be granted status as an Authorised Presbyterian were reported to the May meeting and have been granted by the Methodist Conference.

## **Cease to meet**

Three requests to cease to meet have been received as follows:

### **Sheffield**

Wesley Ebenzer – to cease to worship in the building and for the Circuit to take over the church finances. The congregation are exploring new ways to be church in the area.

### **The Peak**

Litton – to cease to worship in the building and for the Circuit to take over the church finances. The Circuit is exploring alternative uses for the building and land.

### **Trinity**

Whitwell – to cease to worship in the building and for the Circuit to take over the church finances. The Circuit will explore alternative uses of the building as well as exploring other ways in which a Methodist presence can be maintained in the village..

**These decisions require Synod approval.**

## **DLT Membership**

The new constitution was agreed at the April 2023 Synod. Nominations have been received for the additional membership and Synod is asked to approve the following:

- Employed Children, Families or Youth Worker – Amy Roddam (14)
- Young Person (aged 16-23) – Grace Perkins (17)
- Superintendent Minister – Revd John Henry (16)
- New Christian Community/Pioneer representative – *Name to be brought*
- Synod Elected Representatives (to serve for up to 3 years) – David Burton (01); Revd John Simms (01)

*Katrin Hackett - District Administrator*

## **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**

In the past year within the District I have:

- dealt with two substantive enquiries about EDI issues, one of which became a Safeguarding issue - which shows how these two things are often linked;

- spoken at the two District Gatherings - emphasising that implementing the Justice Dignity and Solidarity (JDS) strategy is part of following Jesus' commandment to love others as we love ourselves, and not a dry technical thing;
- gave a brief introduction on my role to the new ministerial staff across the District at their induction day;
- supported the creation of a District Justice-Seeking Gathering to further JDS and other justice issues;
- and am developing guidance on how we can implement mentoring to encourage people who are not-the-usual-suspects to take up responsibilities within our churches and Circuits, to enrich the range of skills and understandings in our decision-making processes.

Importantly, the Connexional materials for the course that all in leadership are asked to complete online or attend in person, have been changed to make them much more integrated with our faith and church life, and it is pleasing to note that people attending the course are finding it helpful and accessible.

This change was encouraged by the District EDI Officers across the country in our regular on-line meetings.

The Second major piece of work I have done (which took me away from my two hours per week for the District) was for the Connexion. I was invited in January 2023 to be one of two Evaluators researching how the Justice Dignity and Solidarity Strategy was developing across the Connexion and made a presentation of our findings to the Connexional JDS Committee in January 2024.

I am pleased to say that Sheffield District was not behind the curve, but nor are we doing as well as we might be, in making the changes that the training challenges us to do.

I hope that in the coming year, as I have more time to concentrate on Sheffield, we will develop a team of EDI Officers for each Circuit who will help to promote and embed JDS approaches in all our work.

*Erica Dunmow - EDI Officer*  
*edi@sheffieldmethodist.org*

## **Ecumenical Report**

I can write only as Ecumenical Officer for our Derbyshire Section. Sheffield and North Nottinghamshire are beyond my ken. It was in that capacity that the District paid for me to attend the national Gathering of Churches Together in England, held at Swanwick. The keynote input was from John Bell of the Iona Community, who spoke and sang and strummed his guitar as only he can. I was joined at the Conference by Pastor Toyin Taiwo of the Grace Chapel in Chesterfield, and we spoke jointly of what happens ecumenically in our town. Toyin is also giving



pastoral oversight to several RCCCG congregations in the North East, and one of her colleagues, from Bradford, is on the national committee of CTE.

Somehow, I found myself more recently sharing in a zoom meeting of certain Methodists and Anglicans, called together to reflect on the 21st anniversary of the Anglican-Methodist Covenant signed 21 years ago in the presence of the Queen. A screenful of Methodists and Anglicans were more or less of one mind that, where there was fruitful Anglican-Methodist partnership, it was not brought about by the Covenant itself. And where there was an absence of partnership, the 21-year-old Covenant did not seem to help. There was limited enthusiasm for any celebrating event on November 4th, the actual date of the signing in 2003.

Which harmonised with my own experience and conviction: Many partnerships are multi-lateral rather than bi-lateral, and the 'diversity',- to put it politely - within Anglicanism means that our relatively coherent polity sometimes 'clicks' with the CofE, but sometimes does not. Our travails over same-sex relationships and marriage are nothing compared with what is happening - or not - in the C of E.

Meanwhile, in Chesterfield, we have held a second 'pilgrimage' visit to the Markham Vale Walking Men Memorial, and there will be more local-style Songs of Praise' events, and we are gently merging with the long-standing Christian Education Chesterfield organisation which ran Scripture Exams and a Whit Walk for 150 years. Some effort is being invested in drawing together the various forms of 'Christian Education' in the town, many of which are not recognised as such.

Further info and queries are welcome.

*Paul King*

*Ecumenical Officer for Derbyshire*

## Fairtrade Report

**Proverbs 13:23 "The fields of the poor may produce abundant food but injustice sweeps it away."**



The biggest change that has happened in recent months is that the Sheffield Circuit Justice and Peace Mission Action Group has now become the District Justice Seekers group. This means that this group can now take on the remit for promoting Fairtrade across the District rather than just the Sheffield Circuit.

Another big change is that Fairtrade Fortnight has finally moved out of Lent (so Fairtrade chocolate and cakes are back on the agenda!) and will now be from **September 9<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>** which puts it firmly within the Season of Creation. This is a welcome move by the Fairtrade foundation as Fairtrade fits well with a more general theme of caring for God's creation. Not only does it emphasise the idea of justice for growers, but growers are also encouraged to use sustainable methods of farming. However, it is worth a gentle reminder to all FT churches that one of the criteria for Fairtrade status is that churches commit to promoting Fairtrade so we

hope that you will be able to weave Fairtrade into any Season of creation /harvest themed services.

This would be a good opportunity to remind everyone that Jenny Carpenter, along with Jenny Bywaters, developed some excellent resources on the theme of Fairtrade which can be found on the District website and are appropriate for any service on the theme of Justice, whether in Fairtrade fortnight or at any other time so we would encourage you to have a look at them. They are particularly useful for “own arrangement” services.

We haven't had a Fairtrade launch event since the pandemic, and it is probably better that we focus attention on doing something relating to Fairtrade in our own churches rather than organising a city centre event.

We would like to encourage all churches to consider becoming Fairtrade churches. It really is not as difficult as you might imagine so do please get in touch or visit the FT Foundation website for more details of what is required and how to apply on [www.fairtrade.org.uk](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk) **NB Please let me know if you apply and get your certificate as we need to keep accurate records!**

Finally – we are very proud that we are a Fairtrade District and would just like to remind any churches hosting a District event that, at the very least, Fairtrade tea, coffee and sugar need to be provided for refreshments.

*Alison Trezise -*

*Fairtrade Co-ordinator for the Sheffield Methodist District*

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## **Lay Employment**

When I am asked how I am, or how my day is going, I often say ‘I'm keeping busy’. Throw away words that mean little and offer no explanation about my work. This is because the documents I prepare, the meetings I attend and the conversations I have are sensitive, and, nearly always, held in confidence.

In brief, since I wrote here last year, I have supported leadership teams from 6 of the 7 circuits that make up the Sheffield Methodist District, guided more than 50 local churches, advised a number of district-local faith projects, and spent as much time as needed with people who just want to talk.

Appreciating that my work doesn't always result in a happy ending, I am humbled by those I meet who put their faith in me to support and represent them fairly (be that as employer or employee) even when the discussions are challenging,

personal, sensitive, and emotional. I don't take this for granted, and I thank them for their continued trust.

To book a 1-1 with me, either remotely or in-person, regardless of your role in your church, please be in touch.

Andrew Crawford HR Officer  
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## Learning Network

Thank you for continuing to make space for the Learning Network (LN) to share our updates with you!

The LN continues to shift and change in response to the needs across the Connexion, wider society, and creation; we are working mindfully towards our Net Zero target, evolving our inclusive and justice-seeking practice, and deepening collaboration. Our online provisions are increasing, with most meetings, training and events now accessible online, yet our team remains flexibly available to you; offline and in person where and when appropriate. We hope you might now be encountering more of the LN team since we have moved to a 'one team' way of working!

Thank you for your engagement with our Facebook group and the newer Methodist Resources Facebook Group – we greatly appreciate these Connexional-facing opportunities for conversation, questions and sharing, and thank you again for moving with us, so swiftly, to this centralised model of communicating.

Please be encouraged to stay in contact or get in touch with us – we are a relatively small team yet with big dreams to develop our relationships with you, to deepen our learning from and with you, and to thereby serve you as best we can. If you would like to know more about our LN team and our work, please visit our new webpage area.

Here are some of the forthcoming LN opportunities available to the Connexion:

- Positive Working Together, Online opportunities in April, June and July for training centring on transforming conflict and managing change and transition.
- Explore: Beginning again this spring, Explore is a nine-session course for any member of the Methodist Church in Britain to take a breath, step back, and consider how they are called to respond to God's call through worship, learning & caring, evangelism or service.
- Circuit Stewards' Communities of Practice sessions continue on the last Wednesday of every month, where Circuit Stewards from across the Connexion are invited to gather online to learn together with members of the Connexional Team, share good practice, ask questions and build relationships.

For more, and to keep up-to-date with how the LN can support and resource you, please sign-up to our newsletter, join our Facebook group, and or contact your aligned officer:

**Siggy Parratt-Halbert** [parratt-halberts@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:parratt-halberts@methodistchurch.org.uk)

07799 902575

Sign up to our newsletter: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about/sign-up-for-newsletters/>

Find out about us at: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/learning-and-development/about-the-learning-network/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/thelearningnetwork>

## **Methodist Council**

I was privileged to attend the Induction to the Methodist Council on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 2023 (on Zoom). The Methodist Council met on the 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2023 and the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of January 2024 via Zoom.

Detailed Reports were extensively considered, proposals adopted, and updates on on-going work were provided. The reports can be found on the Methodist Church website should one require additional information.

Here below are some of the key elements of our discussions in areas that have a bearing on our District, Circuits and Churches:

### **1. Annual Reports and Accounts**

The Council heard that the total funds were lower due to reductions in investment values, but these were anticipated to recover in future years.

### **2. Financial Planning**

The District MCF Assessment is to be reduced by a further 3% with the Connexional Priority Fund (CPF) being used to cover the transitional impact of these cuts. It was also confirmed that where districts engage in reorganisation, any savings accruing from reducing the number of Chairs would be made available to the affected districts until the end of 2027/28.

### **3. Investors in People**

The Connexional Secretary informed the Council that the organisation had been presented with the Investors in People (IIP) silver-level accreditation award.

### **4. Action for Hope Funding**

The Methodist Church has set itself an aspirational target of becoming a net zero carbon emissions church by 2030. The Council approved (i) the allocation of £3m to districts to fund Action for Hope grants, (ii) the draft connexional grant criteria and delegates oversight of the Action For Hope grant-giving process to the Strategy and Resources Committee and (iii) supported a review

of the replacement project criteria to ensure that they are consistent with the Church's net-zero aspiration.

## **5. Part 11 Review Update and Recommendations**

The Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice presented paper which provided an update that proposes some recommendations that will contribute to improvements in several areas of the church's Complaints and Discipline process including communications, record-keeping and to being more flexible in terms of proportionality.

## **6. JDS Committee**

The Chair of the JDS Committee gave a snapshot of what has happened on the strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity since the last meeting. She highlighted that to move forward with the full implementation of the strategy, substantive work was on-going in the emerging priority areas such as mandatory EDI training, establishing of solidarity circles, having Truth and Reconciliation conversations, Reparation Group work addressing Memorial M22 to name but a few.

## **7. Embedding the Justice-seeking Church report**

The Methodist Conference in 2023 adopted the report, A justice-seeking Church, and directed the Council to agree a plan to enable and embed the proposals. The report MC24-7 sets out the key actions and the four strategic aims: Integrating the 'Principles for justice', collaborating between partners, engaging with the practices and supporting local churches to engage with local communities within a justice framework.

## **8. Safeguarding**

The Chair of the Safeguarding Committee, presented the report (MC24-11) on the proposals to update the Foundation Module Safeguarding Training. She told members that the module is updated every four years and reassured them that recent developments within safeguarding in the church will be taken into account in the next update, including resources from the Conference's Theology of Safeguarding report. The Council voted to receive the report and approved the updated training module which will be ready to use by Easter.

In a separate proposal (MC24-12), she explained to members that those in senior leadership roles in the Church would be required to have advanced safeguarding training to inform and support senior leaders in their handling of and responding to serious safeguarding concerns. Chairs, Assistant and Deputy Chairs and other senior leaders (lay and ordained) in the Connexion will be required to complete the training and refresh their training every four years.

## **9. Minutes of the Conference and Directory of the Methodist Church**

The Council at its sitting in March 2023 had recommended to the Conference of 2023 that to be GDPR compliant, the Minutes of the Conference and the Directory of the Methodist Church ought to be split into two separate volumes,

one of which would contain those items which constitute the Minutes for a wider yet targeted readership while the other would be the Directory, containing the address lists and restricted to ministers. Presenting the latest paper (MC24-19) on this matter, the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice, informed Council members that the Conference of 2023 had assented to their proposition.

For the above changes to be made, the present Standing Order (SO124) would need to be revised. The Council directed the Law and Polity Committee to bring the revised draft of SO124 to the next Council meeting in order that it can propose it to the Conference of 2024 and directed the Connexional Team to consider whether the Minutes should be published online.

*Romeo Pedro*  
*Methodist Council Representative*

## **Methodist Homes (MHA)**

Thank you for the wonderful support from our friends within the Methodist Church, your tremendous dedication to Methodist Homes (MHA) and your overwhelming support of our mission, vision and values has again supported our vital work in helping people to live later life well.



### **Changes at MHA**

2023 was another challenging year with the cost-of-living crisis, inflation, massive increases in energy costs and a shortage of workers across the care sector.

The biggest changes were announced in May 2023 following a strategic review of MHA's services. The decision was made to sell ten care homes, place Auchlochan Garden Village in Scotland and its two associated care homes, into administration and sell the charity's three remaining retirement living schemes in Scotland. Since the announcement, Hafan y Waun in Aberystwyth has transferred to the local authority. The sale of eight homes is proceeding well and should be completed by spring. Sadly, the buyer for the tenth home, Cedar Lawn in Stratford upon Avon, withdrew and in January, MHA had to make the difficult decision to close the home.

### **Revd Crispian Acher**

In August 2023, we were shocked by the unexpected and very sudden death of our Head of Chaplaincy South, Crispian Acher, who at that time had just taken on the role of Acting Director of Chaplaincy and Spirituality. Crispian was a much loved and respected member of staff throughout MHA and beyond and is greatly missed.

### **Celebrating MHA's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

The 80<sup>th</sup>-anniversary service held at Wesley Church, Harrogate on 23 September was a joyful occasion, and it was wonderful to be joined by so many friends from the Methodist Church. President of Conference Revd Gill Newton preached an

inspiring sermon, encouraging us to look back with thanksgiving, and to continue forwards in confidence, knowing that God is good, loving and faithful.

### **Finding Nana**

The children's book, "Finding Nana" was championed by Crispian Acher up until his untimely death in August, and now becomes his legacy. It was developed in recognition that it can be daunting for children when a loved one moves into a care home and seeks to address the anxieties that such young people may have when preparing to visit a friend or relative for the first time. The story has been written by author Jenni Bacon following visits to an MHA home and is illustrated by Sophie Parmenter. It has been published in partnership with Methodist Publishing and BRF. It is now available to order and will be formally launched in February 2024.

### **MHA Sunday**

In 2023, MHA Sunday was themed around our intergenerational work, reflecting on 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, and how we need one another for our wellbeing. Through your generous support, we have raised approximately £160k through MHA Sunday activities and other support from faith communities.

This year, our MHA Sunday will be themed around Mark 4:30-32, the parable of the mustard seed, as we reflect on how the seemingly small act of making a regular telephone call has a big impact in our telephone befriending service. In this year's video, we meet Dot and Grace, who were matched through this service, and witness them meeting face to face for the first time. MHA Sunday is held on 9 June 2024, but you are welcome to hold your service on any date that fits with your calendar of activities.

Our dedicated web page has free downloadable resources including an order of service (available in English and Welsh), the video, sermon notes and a fully worked sermon; everything you need to plan your service. You can also order Gift Aid envelopes for your church or circuit. To find all of this, visit [mha.org.uk/Sunday](http://mha.org.uk/Sunday).

**Thank you for all your support. In faith and kindness, we are stronger together.**

## **Methodist Women in Britain**

Over this last year we have enjoyed fellowship together in many ways.

In April, Bakewell Methodist Church was the venue for our Quiet Day which was led by Revd Nel Shallow

Swanwick Annual Conference was, as always, a weekend where it was good to meet up with members from all areas of the Connection. Pam Rhodes was the keynote speaker and she spoke about the origins of Hymns and the hymn writers with many emotional stories.

May found us at Victoria Stafford Rd Methodist Church enjoying a Quiz about Women of the Bible. Revd Michael Brown was the Quiz master, and everyone enjoyed the afternoon tea afterwards.

Our Easter offering service was held at Killamarsh Methodist Church in June and was well attended.

The District Day was held in July at Victoria Stafford Rd with Deacon Annabel Terry and Rev Lisa Quarmby.

The Rededication Service took place in October at Bents Green Methodist Church followed by lunch and was well attended.

December found us enjoying an Advent Quiet day with Rev Lisa Quarmby and Deacon Annabel Terry with a time spent in various ways of contemplation with prayer stations, activities and the making of Christmas Wreaths - once again enjoying eating together and fellowship.

The Annual Christmas lunch and Carols was once again enjoyed by everyone at Frecheville Methodist church and was well attended.

Looking forward to this coming year we are planning several events, and it would be great to see more people coming along and supporting MWiB.

*Pam Meek*

*MWiB Sheffield District President*

## **Mission Development**

There has been much to be encouraged by over the last year, and also plenty of challenges. Like other members of the District team my work over the last year has continued to be shaped by *For Such A Time As This*, our strategy for resourcing mission. The variety and wholistic nature of my work continues to be a privilege. Here are just some examples of what I have been engaged in.



### **New Christian Communities**

Our District NPNP Pilot continues to gather momentum in Chesterfield, with regular informal worship now happening in Barrow Hill. This continues to inform and be informed by learning happening in other places as part of the Connexional New Places for New People movement. More locally I am working with other circuits to explore what pioneer roles might be possible in their contexts. We now host three New Christian Communities gatherings each year for people from across our district, and ecumenical friends.

### **New Beginnings**

In recent months I have been preparing for launch of a new seed funding programme, supporting churches with activities inviting new people to start journeys of Christian discipleship – joining existing congregations or starting new



expressions of Christian community. This has been shaped by conversations with many people from across the district recognising the complementary value of both inherited and new forms of church, and of volunteer-led mission alongside waged pioneer expertise.

Training and other resources will be available to support churches, and we have hopefully learned from what worked well in our Warm Space and Eco Survey programmes.

### **Justice Seekers**

Our District Justice Seekers group has settled into being an active forum for sharing ideas, information and encouragement. We have held thought provoking webinars on themes of asylum and UK poverty. Teams from Barnsley and Sheffield organised and hosted the Life on the Breadline exhibition. This has started and reinvigorated conversations with many people within and beyond our churches. How this leads to significant shifts in our ways of being as church and as wider society is not straightforward but must not be ignored.

### **Enabling Transforming Mission**

Throughout the year I have supported circuits in exploring how their governance might be more simply shaped to better facilitate local mission. I have also been involved in the starting of major new pieces of missional work, such as the Peak Wesley Way pilgrimage.

### **Talk to me about...**

I am keen to speak with churches that are already or are keen to prioritise: increased use of testimony in worship, digital/ hybrid worship, pathways for deepening discipleship, renewing their mission plan (or creating one for the first time).

*Neil Harland – District Mission Enabler*

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## **Peak Park Rural Development**

A snapshot of the past year.

### **Pilgrimage**

My personal faith journey has involved pilgrimage as a useful tool for growth and discernment. This year it has been a significant part of PPRDE. I have walked the Peak Park Pilgrimage with others as an introduction to mission in rural areas.

I am part of the team creating the Peak Wesley Way (PWW). I have been writing the guidebook and at times attending the planning and development meetings. This project has been a great team effort. As part of a group of deacons I made a pilgrimage to The Holy Land. This experience was at times beyond wonder, but also very disturbing. As deacons we were able to support each other, pray together and rejoice together when it was as appropriate. Lead by Deacon Angleena we visited

the sites, but also met and connected with projects and with people who extended warm fellowship and grace towards us, offered us learning and experience, and prayed with us. We hold them all in our prayers.

### **The Peak Wesley Way**

This 6-day self-guided pilgrimage links rural chapels in the Peak Park starting in Matlock and ending in Edale. Pilgrims are encouraged to sleep in the chapels at night. Chapel buildings have been adapted to have a small kitchenette, shower, toilet and low-level heating. Camp-beds are provided. Each group is provided with a guidebook and a notebook in which pilgrim stamps can be collected. We encourage pilgrims to leave cars at home (accessible by bus and train) and buy supplies locally. The website is now open for bookings and can be found at <https://peakwesleyway.com>. This project has taken an immense amount of time and commitment. Huge congratulations to the circuit leadership team who have stuck with it. We have all learnt so much.

### **Edale Methodist Chapel, Barber Booth.**

It has been a joy seeing this chapel used as a place of worship for over 200 years begin to take on a new and fresh appearance as the very specific renovations continue. Not completed yet but can now make hot drinks, turn on the heating and we have the luxury of a toilet! The open space created at the front can be used creatively. Led and encouraged by Kate, a local church member, local folk have caught the vision and are committed to the mission and development program which goes beyond the building stage. The chapel is currently being painted and then we start to develop the garden all as part of the bigger mission project.

### **The Hub in Hope in the Hope Valley**

This outdoor church project that involves hiking and biking and other explorations of worship in our natural environment is growing. Our meetings draw all ages including young families. We keep in contact with the older faithful who held the Christ light in Hope chapel until giving their full support to The Hub. We have walked, hiked, biked, baked, visited, learnt about being a shepherd, shared communion on the hills and meals in varied places. We joined local organisations for a carol service, prayed on the streets, painted, created, shared, welcomed the toddler group and the youth group and so much more. We are blessed with the appointment of a Pioneer Minister to the Hub whose presence in the village is making a huge difference to the local awareness of the church.

### **Positively Rural**

A webinar project that addresses many and varied rural issues, continues in strength. We have continued to liaise with Dreaming beyond a similar project in the South of England and jointly advertise our meetings, which increases access to a wider range of subjects.

## **Monyash**

This village chapel is a Caleb project supported by a small monthly prayer group on a Sunday. The prayers also meet at our monthly, busy messy church. The dates are staggered so there are activities twice a month. We had reached the stage of discussing how we might grow leaders to have two messy churches a month as the young people and the guardians are very enthusiastic. However, the group unfortunately (surprisingly) struggled during my unplanned absence. We are back meeting again regularly but need to discern the way forward.

*Deacon Lorraine Brown*

*Peak Park Rural Development Enabler*

## **Persian Ministries**

*The Persian Ministry Development project started in August 2021, whilst the covid pandemic was still impacting church and other activities. Evolving plans for the project had already been discussed with stakeholders for some time. This report summarises progress to date in Hull, Doncaster and Sheffield against the originally planned programme of activities. It also sets out some suggestions for priorities over the coming year.*

### **Hull:**

Arman continues to be effective at open doors, providing translation for refugees and asylum seekers from Iran and Afghanistan. He gets to encourage newcomers by helping them in every possible way, including their day-to-day needs. In 2023 Arman saw a peak in the numbers attending the Bible studies/Baptism course which is run in Farsi after the open doors project. Many had and continue to have a lot of opportunity, not only to hear the Gospel, but to explore the Christian faith by simply having Q & As in their native language. This led to a baptism celebration service where 10 people were baptized in April. Four of them became full members of the local Methodist Church after completing the membership course. Arman continues to share the Gospel with the newcomers on regular basis. One main challenge is that many people got relocated either by the Home Office to different places in the country after 10-12 months, or when their asylum application is finalised and people can move to their favourite area. This makes continuous discipleship very hard as often there isn't a Farsi speaking fellowship to be introduced to these new believers.



### **Doncaster:**

The fellowship in Doncaster continues to be a place of welcome for asylum seekers and refugees. Although there has been a decrease in the numbers of newcomers and conversions, 3 people including a Father and his young daughter from Afghanistan were baptized in April. Arman has encouraged and



equipped 2 more believers into a worship leader position. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of July Arman organized a mini gathering of the 3 congregations (Hull, Doncaster/Sheffield) to come and worship together. There was a well-known Iranian guest speaker who preached on what it means to be Christian and to follow Jesus. About 60 people attended the event which followed by lunch. The church in Doncaster continues to draw people in by providing hospitality on Persian events such as Iranian New year or Christian ones throughout the year to share the love of Jesus and His teachings.

### **Sheffield:**

There is now a regular warm space for Farsi speakers on Wednesdays followed by Bible study in Farsi. Although it has been a challenge to connect with Iranians and asylum seekers in Sheffield, one woman has become a believer. She started attending these meeting in December 2022 and has become a solid member of the study. A man in his mid-twenties have now been prepared for baptism, upon his confessions in faith in Jesus and completion the baptism course that Arman leads.

*Arman Ghamari - Persian Ministry Development Enabler*

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## **Probationers' Committee**

There are currently no probationer ministers in the Sheffield District, and none are expected to join us in September.

Since my report last Spring, we rejoiced in the ordination and reception into full connexion on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June of Deacon Emily Hoe-Crook (Trinity Circuit) and Rev Michelle Deans (Sheffield Circuit), and the reception into full connexion of Rev Claude Mwansa Kimpinde (Sheffield Circuit) who had been previously ordained in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

In January of this year Emily, Michelle, Claude and I attended the Yorkshire Plus regional retreat at The Briery in Ilkley. This is a retreat for probationer ministers and those in their third year of ministry. Our retreat leaders this year were Anna Bland and Sam Havis from Leeds Sanctuary on the theme of 'Finding enough' – being enough, doing enough, having enough, and finding balance in our lives. The retreat was much appreciated by all and the timing of this annual retreat also helpfully provides a good opportunity for those in their third year of ministry to share their experiences of ministry and ordination with those in the region who are in years one and two.

*Revd Tracey Harris*

*Sheffield District Probationer Secretary*

*We thank Tracey for her work as Probationer Secretary and wish her well in her new appointment.*

## Property

**Introduction:** The Sheffield Methodist District has been witnessing significant shifts in its property landscape, which necessitate a thorough examination of its implications and strategic planning for the future. This report aims to analyse the current property situation within the district and forecast its trajectory over the next decade, particularly in light of the burden of property, declining membership, and the imperative for a renewed focus on mission and growth.

**Current Property Situation:** As of the latest data, the Sheffield Methodist District comprises 156 churches, each representing a significant asset in terms of property. However, the burden of maintaining these properties has been steadily increasing, placing strain on financial resources and human capital within the district, circuits and as managing trustees. Many of these churches face challenges such as aging infrastructure, declining attendance, and limited community engagement.

**Forecast and Projection:** Based on current trends and projections, it is anticipated that the number of churches within the district may significantly decrease over the next ten years. Conservative estimates suggest that this number could potentially drop to as low as 42, signifying a substantial consolidation of property assets. This also removes the outward facing face as an asset to enable mission and community work.

**Membership and Governance Concerns:** While the reduction in the number of churches may provide some relief in terms of property management, it is imperative to recognize that the decline in Methodist membership is likely to persist. The current governance structure, which is heavily reliant on traditional church structures, may not be conducive to addressing the evolving needs of the Methodist community in Sheffield. Therefore, alongside property considerations, there is an urgent need to reassess governance models and explore innovative approaches to sustain and revitalize Methodist membership in the district. The decline of membership would reduce to 10% of current size in a forecasted model of 9 years.

**Shift Towards Mission and Growth:** In light of these challenges, there is a growing consensus within the district that the focus of Methodist communities must shift outward, towards mission and growth. Rather than being inwardly focused on property maintenance and preservation, churches need to reorient themselves as vibrant centres for community engagement, social outreach, and spiritual development. This necessitates a strategic realignment of resources, with an emphasis on investing in initiatives that foster inclusivity, diversity, and meaningful connections with the wider community.

## **Recommendations:**

- Start having meaningful and hard conversations about the future in circuits and with individual churches
- Develop a strategic plan for sustainable property management, prioritizing investments in critical infrastructure and exploring innovative funding models.
  - Having pilot projects in each circuit
- Reassess the governance structure of the district to ensure it is agile, inclusive, and responsive to the evolving needs of the Methodist community.
- Invest in initiatives that promote community engagement, outreach, and growth, fostering a culture of inclusivity and belonging within Methodist churches.
- The reworking of the consents process to be shared and used as a base across circuits.
- The reworking of the sales process to be shared and used as a base across circuits.

## **Additional Recommendation:**

One significant recommendation to alleviate the burden of property management and enable swift, large-scale change is to transfer managing trusteeship back to circuits. This move would empower circuits to make decisions autonomously regarding property assets within their jurisdiction, allowing for quicker adaptation to changing circumstances and needs. Moreover, decentralizing managing trusteeship could facilitate more agile responses to challenges, such as the need for property consolidation or repurposing. By streamlining decision-making processes and reducing bureaucratic hurdles, this recommendation may not only save valuable resources but also potentially safeguard tens of churches over the next decade. Furthermore, it aligns with the broader goal of fostering a culture of innovation and flexibility within the Methodist community, ensuring that resources are deployed effectively to support mission and growth initiatives and its ongoing work past 10 years.

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## **Sabbaticals**

The Methodist Church describes sabbaticals for its ministers as opportunities to ‘re-train, refresh and renew the very base from which future activity may spring’. Many discover it to be a gift which enables them to refocus on God and the priorities for their ministry, as well as appreciating the chance it offers for

concentrating on a particular project or theme and spending time with friends and family. The Sheffield District Sabbaticals Advisory Group seeks to help both ministers and churches to receive the greatest benefit possible from this gift.

During this year the DSAG has received and approved reports from Reverends Julie Coates and Mick Neal and Deacon Jackie Wright. The group has also considered and approved prospectuses, together with sabbatical timings and arrangements, for Revs Judith Jessop, Sean Adair and Claire Rawlinson. The list of those due to take sabbaticals in the 24/25 Connexional year includes Revs Romeo Pedro and Jonathan Haigh. The DSAG expects to consider their sabbatical prospectuses along with reports of any completed sabbaticals at its next meeting which is currently scheduled for October 2024.

We are grateful to all members of the Local Sabbatical Support Groups (LSSG) in enabling sabbaticals by supporting ministers and their families and ensuring adequate cover during sabbatical periods. These groups have a critical role in helping to explain the purpose and value of sabbaticals to local churches.

We have been glad to have the help and advice of Rev Julie Coates as Deputy Chair whilst Rev Gill Newton has been President of Conference this year and I am very grateful to the other members of the District Sabbaticals Advisory Group –, John Lashmar, Agnes Tranter and Rev. David Hunter - for the time and care they give to the process of considering and approving sabbatical prospectuses, giving advice, receiving reports and supporting ministers.

*Revd Liz Wills*  
*District Sabbaticals Officer*

## **Stationing**

We started the 2024 stationing round in May of 2023. The meetings with individual presbyters were held at the District Office, and the training for Circuits was held at Greenhill Methodist Church.

At the beginning of July 2023 our District Chair Gill Newton took up her presidential duties. For this period of twelve months, I am serving as Gill Newton's deputy for District stationing matters. Rev Claire Rawlinson from our Barnsley Circuit is currently serving the District as presbyteral support for the stationing process. We extend our thanks to Claire for the supportive and gracious way in which she carries out these responsibilities.

We held our annual District Stationing Forum on 18th July 2023, at Central Methodist Church, Aston. All Circuits in the District were invited to attend and share information on their particular circumstances and hopes for the future development of ministry. All superintendents, or their representative, and at least one circuit steward from each circuit attended. This did give an early indication of which circuits might be entering stationing, and which appointments we would wish

to be considered to be critical should they enter stationing. The alternative possibility of seeking a probationer presbyter, diaconal, or MOCC (Ministers of other Churches and Connexions) appointment through their related processes was also considered.

At the beginning of this 2024 stationing round, there were eight presbyters and one deacon across five circuits prayerfully seeking to discern God's calling upon their ministry. As time progressed, two indicated their desire to sit down, one was granted permission to be without appointment, three sought and were offered re-invitation, and three entered stationing. In addition: one presbyter entered stationing a year early, and sought and was offered re-invitation; one presbyter curtailed and entered stationing.

In October 2023, conversations took place with those presbyters entering stationing. In addition, there was a meeting with the one circuit entering stationing to consider possible matches from the presbyteral profiles in stationing. The circuit was unsuccessful in getting the circuit profile for a superintendent to be designated 'critical.' At the time of writing, this circuit profile remains unmatched. The stationing process continues with monthly meetings of the Stationing Action Group (SAG) up until May, followed by meetings of the unmatched ministers' group up to the meeting of Conference, when final stations across the Connexion are called.

This year, there has been a close match in numbers between presbyteral probationers, MOCCs and deacons, and the submitted circuit profiles. However, there have been significantly fewer presbyters available in stationing to match with submitted circuit presbyteral profiles, and also more specifically with the availability of presbyters willing to be considered for superintendency vacancies. (Early indications are that this will continue to be the case for stationing in 2025.) The stationing scrutiny group has been strict this year about not accepting circuit presbyteral profiles that have been considered, in line with published criteria, to be 'light' in terms of responsibilities and missional opportunities, resulting in some being re-shaped as part-time appointments, and some circuit profiles being withdrawn.

The Stationing Review Group continues its work in reviewing and overhauling the current process of Stationing. The Stationing Committee has agreed to some minor changes for September 2025. For example, there will no longer be the designation of 'critical' circuit appointments. These changes will appear in the Code of Practice 2025 for Stationing and Re-invitation, published this May, and be shared at the May 2024 circuit training. It is anticipated that the results of the full stationing review will be brought to the 2025 Methodist Conference, and come into operation for 2026.

In May 2024, we will be starting the stationing and re-invitation process for September 2025. At this point, Rev Sean Adair will be providing presbyteral support for the conversations with ministers and training for circuits. This stationing training



event will take place at 7pm on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May at Central Methodist Church, Aston.

We continue to encourage all Circuits to prayerfully consider their local situations including staffing, ministerial and lay, in relation to Circuit Mission Plans. Circuit Invitation Committees should be appointed this month. There are currently three presbyters in three circuits in the District who are starting to think and pray about the future direction of their ministry. Your prayers are invited for the process to be positive and affirming, and for sensitivity and integrity throughout.

*Gill Daly*

*Lay Stationing Representative*

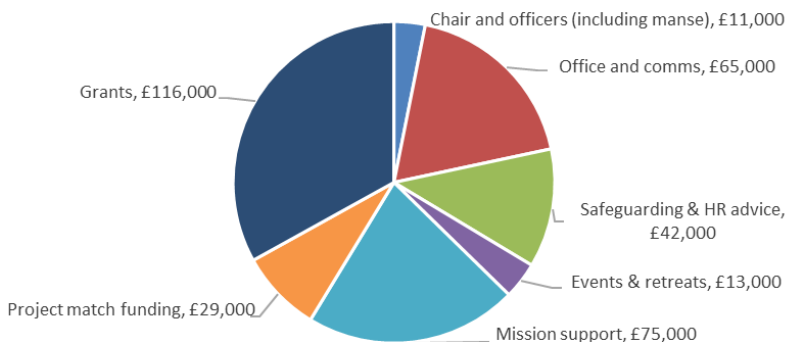
## **Treasurer**

Full statutory District accounts for 2022/23 have been approved by the District Leadership Team. Copies are available on request and will be made public via the Charity Commission website. A summary of the District finances is provided here:

<b>INCOME AND EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2018/19</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
<b>INCOME</b>					
Unrestricted	171	148	130	119	108
Restricted	149	230	154	205	282
District Advance Fund	296	256	176	178	159
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>634</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>549</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>					
Unrestricted	160	142	112	108	103
Restricted	190	328	180	263	288
District Advance Fund	173	142	45	116	157
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>548</b>
<b>SURPLUS/ (DEFICIT)</b>					
Unrestricted	11	6	18	11	5
Restricted	(41)	(98)	(26)	(58)	(6)
District Advance Fund	123	114	131	62	2
<b>Total surplus/ (deficit)</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>

The main source of unrestricted and Advance Fund income continues to be contributions from our circuits and distributions arising from property sales. The uncommitted balance on our Advance Fund increased by £98,000 during the year, with distributions from property sales being higher than anticipated. The balance carried forward in the fund is expected to decrease over the next three years as circuit plans for new Christian communities, amongst other initiatives, reach a point where committed funding is required.

## UNRESTRICTED AND ADVANCE FUND SPEND



FUNDS HELD AND OUTLOOK	31-Aug-22 £'000	31-Aug-22 £'000	31-Aug-21 £'000	31-Aug-20 £'000	31-Aug-19 £'000
<b>CLOSING FUNDS</b>					
Unrestricted funds	297	289	286	268	259
District Advance Fund	330	232	160	54	36
Restricted funds	52	65	118	119	131
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>441</b>	<b>426</b>

Months expenditure held as liquid funds	6	6	8	6	4
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Our reserves policy is to hold between three and six months unrestricted expenditure as liquid funds (i.e. cash and debtors, less creditors). The District Leading Team are aware of the severe financial pressures facing our circuits and churches in an era of high cost inflation, but also of the need to invest in the future of mission and ministry at a time of rapid change for our church. We will continue to manage district finances accordingly.

*Neil Harland - District Treasurer*

## Worship and Preaching

As a district we have several local preachers on trial and a few that have begun on note, which is fantastic news. This past year I have been in discussion with the local preachers office and the learning network to get our district-wide tutoring programme up and running in a way that works for everyone. The learning network have also agreed to look at training for mentors and tutors in their roles and in the course content.

We have also had several groups of worship leaders trained to work within our churches and circuits over the past year, using a variety of different courses. This again is fantastic news.

I hope that soon all the groundwork will become a functioning training programme with tutors trained in each unit and students able to work with people who can encourage them and have a deeper knowledge of the area which they are studying. If you are interested in being involved, please do get in touch.

A huge thank you to all those who act as tutors, mentors, local preachers and worship leaders. We continue to pray for you all in your various ministries and continue to support you.

### **Local Preachers (LP) who have passed away:**

#### **Sheffield:**

- ❖ Doreen Driver
- ❖ David Ford
- ❖ Pamela Grayson (had moved to Kent)
- ❖ Kathleen Luff
- ❖ Muriel Peacock
- ❖ Harold Weeder
- ❖ Alan Wilkinson

#### **Derbyshire North East**

- ❖ Denis Morrell

#### **Doncaster**

- ❖ June Cobb
- ❖ Gerald Dixon
- ❖ Peter Douglas
- ❖ Glenys Taylor

#### **Barnsley**

- ❖ Douglas Birkbeck
- ❖ Edwin Hambleton
- ❖ Eda Rogan
- ❖ George Senior

#### **Rotherham & Derrne Valley**

- ❖ Edith Fox
- ❖ Ian Maw

#### **Trinity**

- ❖ John Newton

*Apologies for any missing information which was not available at the time of writing. Please let Claire know of any omissions.*



