

# How Do **You** Share Christ's Invitation?

**Stories from around Sheffield Methodist District**

Barnsley, Derbyshire North East, Doncaster, Rotherham & Dearne Valley, Sheffield, Trinity and Peak Circuits



# A Prayer for Synod

Almighty God,  
At the start of our new Methodist year,  
we offer our worship and adoration.  
You alone are worthy to be praised.  
Thank you for your great love that has gathered us.  
Thank you for the opportunity to serve you  
and others in this new Methodist year.  
Guide and lead us in all we do in our gathering today,  
the weeks and months ahead.

We pray for your blessings and guidance as we worship,  
celebrate your greatness, explore how we extend Christ's invitation,  
share testimonies of your work in us and through us.  
Discuss our mission and transact Synod business.  
We commit ourselves to you today.

Lord, we pray for our President Gill and Kerry our Vice President this year.  
Be with them, guide them as they serve and lead your church.

God of love,  
Help us to understand and remain deeply aware of  
your love for us so that we share our faith without fear.  
Inspire us as we show our gratitude to those we meet  
and encourage them in their journeys of faith.

Gracious Lord,  
We pray you will speak to us.  
Increase our courage to step out by grace,  
to share the invitation Christ offers to all  
through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, God,  
as we step out, you are already there  
to empower us;  
to help us share your love with those who feel unloved;  
embrace the lonely and victims of injustice.

Compassionate God  
Thank you for the care you show us  
Help us to show same care to others,  
And may sharing the story of your love  
be part of our daily lives  
Through the power of the Holy Spirit, and  
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,

- Amen -

*Revd. Margaret Mwailu – Synod Secretary.*

## WHAT IS A SYNOD?

There are two district gatherings each year in which the business of the Representative Synod is conducted.

The District Synod sets the policy for the district, serving as a link between the Conference and the Connexional Team on the one hand and the circuits and local churches on the other. It has oversight of all district affairs, formulating and promoting policies, through its various officers and committees to assist the mission of the Church, to give inspiration to the leaders in the circuits and to ensure the interrelation of all aspects of the Church's life throughout the district. The Synod may bring matters to the Conference.

Our Representative Synod, comprising over 100 ministers, circuit lay representatives and district officers, meets in September and April each year. In addition to discussing formal business, Synod is an opportunity for us to gather as a district to worship, learn and share stories.



## CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the autumn edition of the Sheffield District Magazine, which is filled with stories from across the district to encourage each of us step out and share Christ's invitation through our own lives and churches.

The reason that I have been asked to write this letter is because our Chair of District, Rev'd Gill Newton, is currently serving as President of the Methodist Conference and spending the next year travelling around the country – and beyond. You can read about Gill's role and some of the key experiences from the Conference on pages 4 and 5.

Also, on page 5 there is an introduction to each of the five panel members who joined us for the District Gathering to enable us to take the next steps in sharing faith without being afraid or put off by the word 'evangelism'. You can find out more about their 'Next steps in' sessions on pages 12 and 13.

In the pages that follow you will see articles about the experiences of those taking part in a 'Chaplaincy Everywhere' course in Barnsley and you can find out more about Alison Hill, the District Safeguarding Officer, and Tim Jansen, Sheffield Circuit's Mental Health Coordinator on page 8. Then take further inspiration from the district's work with 50 young people at Hesley Woods and the launch of the ONE Opportunity Programme for interns which are outlined on page 9.

On pages 10 and 11 Neil Harland describes the Why? What? How? and



Who? of new Christian communities. He emphasises that this is a grassroots movement that starts with the vision and encouragement of local Christians who long to take the message of hope to new people in new places.

This is followed by accounts of a range of different projects from Prayer Walking in Barnsley, Contemporary Exploration in Chesterfield, the Little Boat Club in Rotherham and Christian Mindfulness in Sprotbrough.

Page 16 gives you an insight into the difference that district grants are making to the work in the various church and circuit projects. I have first-hand experience of this from the Trinity Circuit. You can catch up with the changes within the Learning Network on page 17 and then show everyone the back cover with its advertisement for the Peak Wesley Way. This is an exciting project in the Peak Circuit where you can experience a spiritual journey walking through some the stunning Peak Park and explore and stay the night in some of our chapels.

The theme of 'Stepping out' reminds me of a story by Margaret Silf of someone crossing a river over stepping stones and learning to wait and trust as God reveals just one stepping stone at a time. Thank you to everyone who has shared something of the journey that they are undertaking at this time – may these stories help us to prayerfully discern our next steps.

*Julie Coates  
Deputy Chair*





# Gill on Tour District Chair is President of the Methodist Conference

Our District Chair Gill Newton was elected President of the Methodist Conference in June. She will spend the next year travelling around the Methodist Connexion in the UK and the wider world, visiting churches, circuits, projects and finding “hidden treasures” of God at work. The Vice-President is Deacon Kerry Scarlett from the Birmingham District and she is working alongside Gill as they lead the Methodist Church for the next year. The role of President and Vice-President is to follow in the footsteps of John Wesley, the first Methodist President, to travel the length and breadth of Great

Britain, preaching, offering encouragement and sharing insights. In Gill’s first Conference address, she reflected on her theme for the year, calling on all Methodists to look for ‘Hidden Treasures’. She said: “It’s my hope that during this year I will discover hidden treasures as I spend time with the Methodist people across the Connexion and that I might encourage others to discover the treasure that God has hidden for them.” You can follow Gill’s year as President via the District newsletter, District website and social media channels.



## What is the Methodist Conference

Katrin Hackett, District Administrator, has been attending since 2014 and she still finds it difficult to adequately express what it is about, she said: “You can read the agenda and reports on the Methodist Church website, but the Conference is so much more than business. So here is why I love to attend! **The opening of the Representative Session:** “A sense of awe as former Presidents and Vice-Presidents lead the Conference procession, and the hall fills with the unaccompanied singing of the hymn “And are we yet alive?” - the first of many hymns which will be sung during the week. **Reception into Full Connexion and Ordinations:** “A joy to be presented with the Presbyters and Deacons as part of the Sunday Morning worship, to recognise the journey they have been on, and will be continuing to travel. A privilege this year to be asked to assist with

communion during the ordination service at Coventry Cathedral. **Conferring:** “It is not possible here to mention all that was discussed, but some key moments for me: • Walking with Micah report showing how much we are trying to be a justice-seeking church, it was encouraging to hear so many speaking in support of this report and its resolutions; • Reconciliation and Mediation - hearing how successful the pilot project has been such that it will now be rolled out across the Church to help resolve disputes in church communities; • a Methodist Way of Life workshop – sharing experiences and practical ideas on how this model can help people to grow in faith and confidence; • Bible study – half an hour each day devoted

to exploration of the “Hidden Treasures” theme. **The fellowship:** “Meeting old friends and making new ones, recognising that we are all connected through Methodism.”



## How do we Embed Evangelism in our Daily Lives?

We have a wealth of expertise in the Sheffield District and Methodist Connexion that we can learn from and grow as disciples of Jesus. Evangelism is a key pillar of Our Calling and a Methodist Way of Life. For some of us perhaps the least comfortable or familiar. Putting aside images of televangelists, sales pitches and specialist orators, we all have opportunities to tell of our experiences of the love of God, live in ways that draw people to Jesus, and encourage others to explore what life truly means for them. We may not all be “Evangelists”, but all share the good news as we interact with the world and people around us. How might we each do this to the best of our ability using our unique skills, relationships and opportunities? How do we each embed evangelism in our daily lives? To help us in this thinking we called upon a panel of experts in different fields who appeared at the District Gathering to explore the interactions between their different perspectives on everyday evangelism.

## Meet the Panel

**Rev. Dr. Simon Cartwright** I’m Simon Cartwright and I’m passionate about prayer, mission and social justice. I have 30 years’ experience in the inner city - starting in regeneration and then in leadership in the Anglican church. I am now the Chief Officer at Transforming Notts Together working to inspire, equip and connect the church to issues of poverty and injustice.



**Rev. Dr. Jeff Conklin-Miller** I’m Jeff Conklin-Miller and serve at Cliff College as the Vice-Principal (Mission) and the Learning Lead and Tutor in Evangelism and Missiology. I served as a youth minister and senior pastor in United Methodist churches in Southern California, then I finished my doctoral work and taught at Duke Divinity School for over a decade.



**Jonathan Hood** I’m Jonathan and I am the Community Pioneer in the Derbyshire North and East Circuit and a Local Preacher. Evangelism is something I have been passionate about for a long time and I have had the privilege of evangelism becoming my work too in recent years. I am also involved with the Community of Evangelists in the Methodist Church where we share stories and learning around Evangelism.



**Rachel Lampard** I’m Rachel Lampard and I’ve worked for the Methodist Church for a number of years, leading the Joint Public Issues Team, and helping churches ecumenically to speak and act on issues of justice and peace. Over the last couple of years, I’ve helped lead a project called Walking with Micah, which encouraged all Methodists to reflect on the call in Micah 6:8 to “Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God”. I am also a former Vice-President of the Methodist Conference.



**Ali Johnson** I’m Ali Johnson and I’m passionate about helping churches harness the power of digital platforms. In today’s digital world, it’s essential for churches to adapt and effectively engage their congregations using technology. My background is in working with churches to grow their online presences from just being an internal tool to being something can help us reach out within our community. I have worked for and with churches, charities, business and ran digital projects. The world has changed around us and revolution is well under way. Can you think of area that has yet to be digitalised? It’s hard isn’t it.







# Chaplaincy Everywhere

**B**arnsley Circuit has been exploring what it means to be a Chaplain. When Deacon Alison McCauley arrived in the town she knew it was the right time to introduce a Chaplaincy Everywhere course to explore and seek God.

She said: "I love the gospel stories of Jesus 'wandering' around the villages, cities and in the synagogues. Stories of his life giving encounters outside the walls of the established 'church'.

"In my ministry I have been blessed to work as chaplain in town centres, market places, with the Boys and Girls Brigades, with specific groups of people alongside them in their work and with high profile people, supporting them in their demanding roles. I've often wondered how and why I fell into this ministry. What skills could I possibly have? I'm just me. I just listen to them and often feel like I'm just loitering. I'm a bit of a wandering soul, often found sitting drinking coffee but intentionally listening and watching for the person who needs an ear or a cheery 'hello'.

"As I explored my new circuit, people asked me how they could engage with the folk who used their buildings. How could they share their faith? How could they move outside the walls of the church in a way which was realistic and 'do-able'.

"These were Christian people who were already talking to others and just 'being

themselves'. They were already being chaplains without realising it. It seemed a good idea to name this ministry and share our hopes, dreams and ideas together, supporting one another and exploring where God is leading us.

"So I set up a 'Chaplaincy Everywhere' course, to explore and seek God. I had no idea if anyone would come, or who would come if they did. We have lay workers, members of different congregations, those who feel called to something but not sure what, those who can use this in their work, those who are exploring. It is a wonderful mixed group who are trusting each other in a safe space, where we share and learn.

The course is very Bible based and the conversation is sometimes intense, revealing or even funny. We drink tea, eat biscuits and make new friends. God is very much in the room.

We have no idea if anything will come of this. But it will help us engage with others inside and outside our churches. In my dreams, I'd love to see a town centre chaplaincy start up, but that's long term.

Peter White, Community Link Worker in the circuit said: "Recently I've been thinking about where God might want me to go after funding is up in my current role as a community link worker. I do love my job as it gives me lots of opportunities to talk and befriend people

“There’s a chaplain in all of us. Step out and wander. You’re in good company.”

outside of the church. Often the people I meet have ongoing issues and can feel desperate, lonely and isolated. I'd never thought about Chaplaincy or knew exactly what the role was? But over the last few months the topic of chaplaincy keeps popping up in conversation. A couple of weeks, ago a post appeared on Facebook from Alison asking if anyone would like to explore what chaplaincy is. After enrolling on the sessions and doing some research online I was surprised to find that what I've doing in my current role providing a listening ear, giving emotional support and hope to those I've encountered are all skills that fit into the role of a chaplain. I'm really excited to learn more and see where God takes me next."

"There's a chaplain in all of us. Step out and wander. You're in good company."

# Exploring Chaplaincy

Andrea Wootton from Barnsley shares her journey of faith and how being of service to God and helping people is supporting her through a challenging time in her life.

**I** was diagnosed with breast cancer in October 2021 and as soon as I left the consulting room, I had an overwhelming feeling that I wanted to do something to help people. I felt so calm and matter of fact about my diagnosis. I strongly believe that God was with me at the time and my decision to be of help to others in the future, I believe, was the Holy Spirit at work.

"Through my treatment plan, the Holy Spirit gave me the focus I needed so that I could prepare for any caring opportunities that may present themselves to me.

"I have been looking for opportunities within church and in the community to be of service to God in whatever way He was leading me. I have been following God's prompts and attending prayer meetings and bible studies to better understand His plans for me and last year became a pastoral carer in my local chapel. I have had a yearning more recently for more and could hardly believe it when I received details about the Chaplaincy Everywhere course through a church newsletter. I feel it was meant to be as the course happened to be arranged for my only evening off in my busy schedule.

"I have always enjoyed fellowship with individuals and small groups and I enjoy getting to meet new people. I was, for many years an introvert and totally lacked confidence to say much to anyone about my faith or feelings and was quite scared of talking to people I didn't know. I have gained in confidence and now I believe that I do not need to shout from the rooftops about my faith, but I think that having faith makes me better placed to be in the moment with others of faith or no faith. People need people to care, be kind, compassionate and loving. I believe that chaplaincy may

give me an opportunity to develop into an empathetic, caring and considerate human being.

"I feel blessed that this chaplaincy course is giving me an opportunity to develop my need to care and support others, by just being there as a Christian presence in a situation where someone may need to just talk.

"I hope that at the end of this chaplaincy course I can discern if I am right for chaplaincy just as I hope chaplaincy is right for me. God will be my guide and I have a lot to thank Him for."

“I felt so calm and matter of fact about my diagnosis. I strongly believe that God was with me at the time. My decision to be of help to others in the future, I believe, was the Holy Spirit at work.”







“We are attending to the One who is always with us, whose presence makes our presence to each other possible, and our listening becomes a gift of healing to others.”



## Sharing Christ's Invitation to those who have Suffered Abuse

**D**istrict Safeguarding Officer, Alison Hill, explains how we can share Christ's invitation to those who have suffered abuse.

The Methodist Church seeks to create communities that are safe and inclusive, and where those who have experienced abuse can share their accounts in the knowledge they will be heard and acknowledged.

### How should we respond?

Everyone is unique and reacts in a different way. An initial response to someone who discloses abuse, either past or present, should be a sincere expression of sorrow that the person has had to endure it. The individual may simply want their experiences to be heard and for someone to “walk alongside them”, or they may need more specialised help. If we listen attentively, the particular difficulties and needs of the individual will emerge and enable the appropriate support to be put in place.

### What helps?

Listening and attending in a non-judgemental way is the first step towards helping someone. Good listening validates a person's experience and is about giving our

full attention to another person. It is not to stand in authority, rationalise or patronise. Neither is it to change the individual. Rather it is to take the person, their experience and their pain seriously. We hear their feelings, see their facial expression, are sensitive to the things that are both said and unsaid, and offer an acceptance of low feelings as normal and appropriate. In this way, we are attending to the One who is always with us, whose presence makes our presence to each other possible, and our listening becomes a gift of healing to others.

### Domestic Abuse Seminar – 25th November 2023

If you would like to know more then I invite you to join the District Safeguarding seminar, via Zoom, which aims to increase our understanding about Domestic Abuse and how we can proactively work to help those affected and to offer them a warm welcome in our churches. Please look on the District website for more information, including how to register for this free event.

If you would like to speak to me, in confidence, then please call **07483 362 735** or email [safeguarding@sheffieldmethodist.org](mailto:safeguarding@sheffieldmethodist.org)

## Mental Health Co-ordinator

**S**heffield Circuit understands the importance of equipping our churches with mental health training so they can support people in their local communities better.

Over the past two years, 65 people from 26 Churches across Sheffield Circuit have engaged with mental health training and the circuit now aim to train 250 people in mental health first aid thanks to a new Mental Health Co-ordinator, Tim Jansen.

Tim's role is to promote and develop mental health expertise as well as providing support and advice in time of mental health related crisis.

The aim is to have two people in each church congregation trained in mental health first aid and to create mental health support groups which would support community groups who use our church buildings too.

Tim said: “In my role for the Sheffield Circuit there is a very strong drive on training

staff and church members in mental health first aid and both adult and youth courses. What I find particularly encouraging is that we work together with other churches and organisations as I am strong advocate for ecumenism.

“Part of my role revolves around supporting staff and church members with their mental health or mental health related situations. Often, I find that a little encouragement and having someone at your back with experience and knowledge can be very helpful.

“I also think it is important to share that I find that the Christian life can be an enormous source of wisdom and support when someone is struggling with their mental health when this is done with kindness and some knowledge.

“For the coming three years together with the support team we will be doing our best to help those around us with their mental health, I am looking forward to see what this adventure has to offer.



“I also think it is important to share that I find that the Christian life can be an enormous source of wisdom and support when someone is struggling with their mental health when this is done with kindness and some knowledge.”

## Hesley Woods Activity Day

**F**ifty young people from around the district descended on Hesley Woods Scout activity centre in Sheffield to explore new life and new possibilities in their faith and for our churches, as well as have loads of fun.

Young people aged 8-16 years old were invited to attend the action packed day in March. Kids from Sheffield, Rotherham, Barnsley, Doncaster, Chesterfield joined youth leaders from their circuits and in the district to enjoy empowering workshops and physical activities.

Workshops included looking at Power, Peace and Environment. Everyone explored how we can be agents of change and have the power to make a difference. For the older young people, they looked at how to be a peacemaker in the 21st Century and justice issues and finally the younger children looked at what the Bible says about the environment and how we can help.

Physical activities all promoted team work and included a 70m zipline through the trees, archery, crate stacking, an inflatable assault

course and an escape room type activity called The Cube.

Vic Loveday, District Children's, Youth and Family Co-ordinator, said: “It was a wonderful day to share with the young people across the district with lots of new faces. It is great to share a time of worship together and to build and strengthen relationships.

“In the sessions we asked them what their ideal church would be like and we heard how they'd like to see more dancing and singing, more food, more people, more faith-based fun activities, and it's important to them to make sure everyone is invited and included and being eco-friendly is a priority.

“Using this time to hear the voices of the young people is invaluable, they have such a refreshing and different perspective on life that we can all learn from.”

The young people can look forward to 3Generate in October and plans are already underway for another trip to Hesley Woods in March 2024.



“Using this time to hear the voices of the young people is invaluable, they have such a refreshing and different perspective on life that we can all learn from.”



## ONE Opportunity Programme

**W**e welcome our new interns to the first Sheffield District ONE Opportunity programme.

Developed within our district, the ONE Opportunity programme is designed to encourage and recognise the importance of young people in our Church's life and mission. The programme is for young people aged 16-23 years and gives them the opportunity to be involved on a part-time basis in the development of the mission and ministry of their church. It offers a salaried position of three hours per week, on a one-year project shaped around the gifts and passions of the young person.

The ONE Opportunity Programme has a

focus on discipleship and relationship building. It aims to encourage the development of the interns, and to influence the wider church community who come alongside them.

Vic Loveday, District Children's, Youth and Family Co-ordinator, said: “We are excited to have this chance to allow young people to make a real difference in their churches. The projects they have selected are going to have a big impact and will help set them up for future working success.

“We ask that you pray for our interns and their mentors as they embark on this year and that God will use their skills to benefit our district.”



“We are excited to have this chance to allow young people to make a real difference in their churches. The projects they have selected are going to have a big impact and will help set them up for future working success.”



# New Christian communities

Written by Neil Harland, District Mission Enabler

## Why? stepping out

In chapters nine and ten of Luke's gospel there are two accounts of Jesus' disciples stepping out, or more accurately being sent out by Jesus. These are book-ended by stories of Jesus preaching to growing, and to shrinking, crowds. Two thousand years ago some people were willing to come to the great teacher – drawn by combination of preaching, entertainment, free food, healing and intellectual stimulation. But others were not. So Jesus sent out disciples in small groups: instructed to bring as little baggage as possible, to set up camp where they were made welcome by strangers. And rely on what they had experienced, to act as adequate imitators of their wandering Christ.

And so today, people from across our district are responding to promptings to step out from pre-existing churches to start new Christian communities.

## What? contextual vision

I'm always slightly wary of telling the story so far of Sam's Space soft play centre in Firth Park. Because they have such a wonderful team, powerful hospitality, tasty food, a beautiful sense of community and playful worship. One comes away tempted to copy and paste what they are doing into every neighbourhood. At their belated official opening we were, however, powerfully retold the genesis of their story. Wondering what to do with a redundant vast pewed sanctuary, local Methodists listened intently and deliberately to what residents said their neighbourhood needed. It was out of this rooted wisdom that the vision for an affordable play facility was forged and refined.

I had a similar experience in Rossington. A Methodist local preacher felt called, whilst prayer dog walking, to start a new type of Christian community in the place where he lived. As a school governor, he arranged for me to listen to a group of parents and school staff about their perspectives on the neighbourhood. Unprompted, they explained challenges of isolation, mental health difficulties and lack of safe places for young people in the village. We discussed how this correlated with what Methodists and others were already researching, and the vision for NPNP Rossington began to coalesce.

In our New Places for New People Pilot we met with as many people as possible, understanding what was already happening, what the community needed, and who might partner with us. Prayer walking the village of Barrow Hill and the collection of estates in Chesterfield's Rother ward was also a significant enlightening experience for our team. These gave us the insights to map out our vision for what a network of flourishing gatherings of new Christians might look like in these communities, and the core values by which we would work with people of piece to birth these. Only once we had done this did we feel ready to bring our conversations with circuit, district and national Evangelism & Growth Team officers to conclusions and appoint a community pioneer.

## How? related not reproduced

Very rarely will we encounter a queue of new people who already know they are looking for a church to sign up to. Much more likely we will need to begin with unconditionally loving and serving – being the good news that we feel called to share in

a particular time and space. I am reminded of this when I visit the Methodist pioneer team on the Gleadless Valley estate. Our meetings are invariably interrupted. Someone will have been walking past, seen the door was open, and known that this is a place where the kettle is always on for a brew and their concerns will be heard attentively. A donation is being dropped off by someone who once used the foodbank. An urgent phone call must be made to the council because a vulnerable person is being denied the support they need.

In recent years the Gleadless Valley congregation had shrunk to a tiny remnant, no longer able to meet for worship, a flickering candle that could easily have disappeared completely. But from this faintest of sparks, flames of new faith and life are taking hold – like a phoenix arising from a heap of ash. There remains a strong continuity with the community focus and refusal to write people off that had always been the heart of Gleadless Valley Methodism, but expressed in fresh accessible ways for today. Regular worship has restarted for new people, but highly informal and centred around conversation and food.

As Gill Newton observed in her President's address to Methodist Conference "Every generation looks and behaves differently from the one before. And so, with the Church! The next generation of Methodist communities need to look different from the existing ones, yet still carry our DNA." In Barrow Hill, after a year of joining in with those already serving, co-hosting community events, making friendships, and gradually earning trust, the possible shape of this new generation Christian community is just starting to emerge. The village was without any functioning community venue

for people to meet and spend time together. Jonathan, our community pioneer, helped the local community trust to reopen The Haven, a small council-owned building – a big breakthrough. When the community trust wrote a leaflet explaining to the village what would be offered in their new venue, Jonathan queried what was meant by the "Sunday gathering" it mentioned. He was told that they wanted him to start a church and that they would be coming. People did indeed come, through personal invitation, to our first informal worship at Easter, and the small venue was almost full with 26 people for Pizza & Pentecost. Jonathan and Tim (the circuit youth pastor) have been open about why as Methodists we are present in the village, and then prompted people around us to ask for themselves what comes next rather than announcing what we want church to look like.

Gill Newton again said : "Midwives are good listeners, not necessarily making quick judgements, but listening and looking carefully for signs of activity or concern that are not yet visible. It's an attentive rather than a directive approach. The Church would do well to do the same. Listen carefully to our people and our communities and tune in to what is going on beneath the surface, becoming aware of what needs bringing into the light and recognising treasure when we find it!"

Midway through writing this article I took a pause to visit Outdoors Church for the first time. A small group of families had noticed how much they gained spiritually from being in the fresh air together. With gentle support and encouragement from Totley Rise Methodists and Cliff College, they have developed a liturgy (laminated in case of rain!), pattern of meeting and ways of

exploring scripture together that helps them and the growing body of family and friends they are confident to invite to tune into God together. Individuals and organisations acting as midwives to bring a new Christian community into being.

## Who? a grassroots movement

There is space on these pages for just a few brief stories. But across our district and up and down the country a grassroots movement of new Christian communities are starting to emerge. Our district has secured funding to support six more employed pioneers for places where the locally shaped vision requires and could, in years to come, find ways to sustain a paid community leader. If more places need this seed funding we will go looking for some more.

But not all new communities need to fit this pattern. The Methodist movement, maybe even the chapel you now worship in, spread through individuals and small teams using what spare time and energy they had to step out, to take their message of hope to new people in new places. Meeting in homes, barns, public meeting rooms, business premises, outdoors, or wherever they were made welcome. Like you, they were supported by the focused energies, training and resources of a national discipleship movement shaped for mission and committed to "spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land".

Do you have a vision to go to new people to recreate church in a way that will make sense for them? Or does someone you know need your encouragement to act on a wondering to do similar? There is a growing network of people ready to step out with you.

“

Very rarely will we encounter a queue of new people who already know they are looking for a church to sign up to. Much more likely we will need to begin with unconditionally loving and serving - being the good news that we feel called to share in a particular time and space.”





## Next Steps in... Growing Good

Lead by Revd. Dr. Simon Cartwright

Transforming Notts is an organisation that seeks to inspire, equip and connect churches as they help people break free from poverty.

Simon Cartwright is Chief Officer of Transforming Notts, and also a church leader. He reflects on how often the church has struggled with the relationship between social action, church growth and discipleship, we only need to look at Acts 6, when the apostles decided to appoint deacons saying, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables!"

But take a look at the familiar story of the feeding of the 5,000 (plus all the women and children):

- When the people arrived how did he respond? He had compassion for them.
- What did he do to meet their need? He sat down and taught them.
- But how would they feed 5,000+ people? He used it as an opportunity to disciple his followers.

Jesus' example is that social action helps build relationships which can initiate people's faith journeys and volunteering supports discipleship. How can our

churches follow his example? A report prepared in 2020 by Theos and the Church Urban Fund identified five ways:

- Churches need to be **present**: visible and active in giving to the community.
- Churches need **perseverance**: growth occurs after years of focused activity.
- **Hospitality** and **generosity** are significant: churches need to be willing to engage.
- Church leaders and congregations need to be **adaptable**: to cultivate meaningful relationships.
- **Participation** in social action helps people explore faith and grow in following Jesus.

The research behind this report has been shaped into the "Growing Good" Toolkit – a FREE six session course that helps churches explore the connection between social action, discipleship and growth. Through six flexible, interactive small group sessions, you can explore how your church can be faithful and fruitful in your community.

For more information check out [www.growing-good.org.uk](http://www.growing-good.org.uk) or please email: [transformingnotts@gmail.com](mailto:transformingnotts@gmail.com)



## Next Steps in... Connecting Evangelism and Discipleship

Lead by Revd. Dr. Jeff Conklin-Miller.

A theologian once suggested that the relationship of evangelism and discipleship might be considered like "two sides of one coin." But does that go far enough? It's difficult to determine where "evangelism" ends and where "discipleship" begins, especially when formation in discipleship leads to evangelism!

To consider evangelism and discipleship together is especially important in this contemporary moment. As more people identify as having no or religious identity or commitment (sometimes referred to as the "nones"), we know that the practices of evangelism and discipleship formation require intentionality and focus. If we know that people do not just simply become Christians on their own, then we have ask: how do we practice evangelism and discipleship, Christian invitation and Christian formation?

In the earliest church, becoming a Christian required commitment to a series of practices that shaped one's faith and life. As part of the Wesleyan tradition, we recognise that same commitment in our own origin story, as a People called Methodist, bound by our common commitment to the General Rules and the practice of Christian life in a community of accountability and

support.

While we can't just turn the clock back, we can call upon the same practical wisdom that launched a movement that has changed the Church and the world. A Christian way of life, a Methodist way of life, requires attention to the practices that give shape to that kind of living.

The renewed focus on intentional frameworks or pathways for discipleship formation embodies that heritage today. All congregations are called to determine how to vision, structure, and pursue the practices of Christian living appropriate for their context. An excellent example here is the development of "A Methodist Way of Life." (You can learn more about this at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/>).

This leads to some important questions:

- What does following Jesus require where you are?
- What practices stand out as most important?
- How is this way of life to be learned?
- What are the entry points? How will others be invited to walk the pathway?
- How will you continue to listen to the Spirit and go where God leads you?



## Your Next Steps in... being an authentic Christian online

Lead by Ali Johnson

Lasting positive change is born of vision, determination, and a clear plan of action - not platitudes, social-media posts and wishful thinking. And increasingly, it is advanced through the application of the right technology, in the right places, for the right reasons. Digital offers us the ability to make real, lasting and positive change. It can feel overwhelming and confusing but it doesn't need to be scary.

One of the biggest mistakes I see in digital is that we become risk averse and miss the boat. The world has changed around us and revolution is well under way. Can you think of an area that has yet to be digitalised? It's hard isn't it. We need to play and test out the digital spaces.

The digital landscape can offer us so many opportunities to connect more deeply with others, hear more from our community, and reach out to people who have not yet heard of Jesus.



Does your church have a strategy for digital?

How would someone who wants to join your church experience your digital footprint?

How can you as a church or circuit utilise the tools of digital to become more efficient?

Dave Adamson in his book entitled 'MetaChurch' said "In a world of smartphones, smart homes, smartwatches, smart lights and smart cars, the Church has found itself outsmarted." We need to recognise that digital is now a part of our lives and we need to assess how we can utilise it to communicate well, deepen community and reach new people.

Join me on this exciting journey of embracing the digital revolution and empowering your church to thrive in the 21st century. Together, let's make a lasting impact in the lives of your members and the broader community by leveraging the power of technology to further God's kingdom.

## Your Next Steps in... 'Easy Evangelism' - Is there such a thing?

Lead by Jonathan Hood

Sitting with a lovely lady in her late 80's, telling me stories of how God had been good to her throughout her life. Her regret was that she felt she had never done any evangelism. I turned, smiled and said to her 'you just have'.

Evangelism is a word that people can be afraid of and a calling that is so often avoided. It is perceived to be too difficult or uncomfortable. It is also seen as something to be "done" by the Minister or those employed by the Church. We think that we don't know our bible enough, or we aren't good at speaking or we don't want to look weird!

It is my aim to dispel some of these myths by trying to help people see that evangelism can be a normal, straight forward, every day action we can take, and with our shrinking churches and circuits, it is a calling from Christ (Mark 16:15, Acts 1:8) that is very much needed in our generation.

Evangelism begins with a loving attitude, grows into conversation and relationship,

hopefully ending with an invitation. You don't have to be a preacher, or know your bible inside out, but being prepared to love people, talk to people, listen, pray and explore what you and the other person believes is the real heart of evangelism.

We can ask people about what is happening in their life, listen to their stories, offer prayer, there or later, if appropriate. We can have conversations with people. Not every conversation has to be about God but making people aware of our faith is important. That then helps to have conversations about what each other believes and current affairs where we can offer the good news. We can also share our story of God's work in our lives, like the lovely lady in her 80's.

We don't have to have all the answers, just a willing spirit to love, listen and talk. God is with us in this, can we join him in sharing his love with others?



## Next Steps in... being a Justice Seeking Church

Lead by Rachel Lampard

Methodist churches and people are already active in seeking justice in our communities and world in our response to God's love in Christ.

Rachel Lampard who leads the Joint Public Issues Team JPIT said, "We do this because we believe that God longs for a world where everyone, and all creation, experiences life in all its fullness. But in a changing world and church with many challenges, what does it mean for us today to be justice-seeking?"

"This summer, the Methodist Conference adopted the report, "A Justice-Seeking Church". This report recommits us to seek justice in an unjust world. It offers a framework for Methodists, local churches and circuits, as well as the wider connexion and Methodist family of organisations to help us all to focus more effectively on **why** we do justice (Principles), **what** we do (Priorities) and **how** we do it (Practices).

"My hope is that churches will feel affirmed in what they are doing for a just world, encouraged to pray and explore how they can deepen their understanding, and inspired to ask "what is ours to do, in this place and at this time?"

- What do we believe about God's justice that underpins how we act and the choices we make?
- Which of the priorities for justice agreed by the Conference - poverty, refugees, the environment, discrimination and peace - is important for your context? What would you like to see happen?
- What might be the next steps in exploring what justice-seeking means in the life of your church and circuit?





A Mile with Jesus

When Deacon Alison McCauley arrived in Barnsley earlier this year to begin her exciting new posting she wanted to find out as much about the area as possible so she organised a series of prayer walks.

Alison explains why it's important to get out, step out and go beyond the walls of our churches.

"Being new to Barnsley, I decided the best way to find out about the area was to set out and walk. Walk with those who know the area and listen to their stories.

"The idea originally came from

NeighbourhoodPrayer.net about seven years ago when I was in Salford. They published a booklet entitled 'A mile with Jesus...' encouraging people to get outside the walls of their churches and pray, looking at the types of housing, the locality and looking with fresh eyes. I started a series of prayer walks around my previous circuits, looking at the places with (hopefully) the eyes of Jesus and praying for the communities.

"It seemed an ideal way to learn what makes Barnsley 'tick' and what the concerns, hopes and dreams were of the people here. Inviting

anyone who wanted to join, we walked and talked, prayed and laughed. On some walks we heard about the history of the place, some revealed painful stories of loss, pit disasters, broken families, changed places and altered communities. We walked in all weathers. All were a blessing. We literally walked a mile with Jesus. But every time I was asked where we were going to go, we let ourselves be Spirit led. I thoroughly recommend it. Get out, step out and go beyond the walls of your churches. You may be surprised by what you see."



Contemporary Exploration

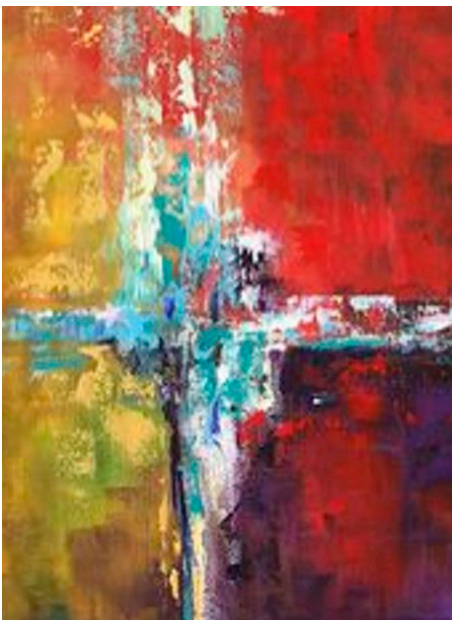
Central Methodist Church in Chesterfield has been exploring how contemporary forms of worship, from poetry and art to music and drama can be incorporated to the life of a vibrant community of faith.

Revd. Mark Carrick explains: "Contemporary Exploration was set up back in 2022 for people to meet once a month. The space was never intended to be a service, but rather an exploration of what may attract those on the fringes of church and, more importantly, those with no church background, to engage with the gospel in a relevant way.

"The aim was to create a space that would appeal to all ages, but we readily accepted some sessions would draw those interested in the specific subject matter. We have held spaces to engage with poetry, contemporary worship songs, art, storytelling, and Godly Play, but to name a few. We have encouraged those attending to engage wider than our own

church programmes, by visiting Cliff Festival or other churches, as we seek to expand our understanding of God's presence in the neighbourhoods where we are being sent and planted. We closed our most recent program with a Guest Service, led by our Youth Group; an event we hope to repeat in the next round of Contemporary Exploration.

"Plans for the autumn program include further invitational events as we look at how contemporary music speaks into a world of faith, the portrayal of God in movies, and offering a space for critical analysis of faithful foundations. We continue to hope these spaces attract those with questions and an interest to know more about Christianity. We also hope the explorations will deepen our own walk of faith and strengthen our discipleship as we learn together, discovering God in all aspects of life."



Little Boat Club

Rotherham and Dearne Valley Circuit is putting evangelism into action with parents and toddlers at the Little Boat Club (LBC).

Running at three churches, Central, Broom and St John's Methodist Church, it's making it accessible for all as no one has to travel very far. The group is run in an intentionally Christian way with time to play, a story from the bible and songs to introduce a Christian message to the toddlers and parents. There is a boat at each session and the first song to be sung is always "Row, row, row your boat" Stories featured so far include Creation, Christmas, the Easter story, and Noah's Ark, the Lost Sheep and there are regular visits from live animals that brings a different dimension to the session.

As important as the sessions are for the children to play and learn, it is an opportunity for their adults to gather and talk to others in a similar situation and for the church to come alongside them and share in their journey. The Little Boat

Club team have prayed with parents, signposted them to help and provided much needed support in a time of crisis as well as sharing in their times of joy and happiness.

Pastor Ed said: "As a member of the Methodist Church we are called to worship, to learn, to care and to serve and our Little Boat Club (LBC) enables all of this weekly with the community from outside our church in a simple way that meets a need. It is not always easy to know what hits the mark, but we must be doing something right as we see some families attend a different location that week if they are going to miss their local LBC. We also have seen some cross over into other activities and events in the life of our circuit where attending LBC has been the first step through our church doors. It is great to share each week a message in this way seeing children and adults arrive with a smile on their face and leave with one too."



Christian Mindfulness

Spotbrough Methodist Church (SMC) in Doncaster offers Christian Mindfulness once a fortnight. It's a calming reflective space where participants are led through faith-based mindfulness exercises designed to help get closer to God whilst reducing anxiety and depression.

Jack Key, Local Preacher and Prison Chaplain runs the course and explains why it's important to be aware of mental health. "For the last nine months I have been leading a Christian mindfulness group. In each session we spend around 45 minutes going through a variety of exercises which engage different senses and focus on improving mental health whilst developing our relationship with God. At the end of each session we spend a couple of minutes discussing what we enjoyed or struggled with, and what we felt the Holy Spirit doing within us during the exercises.

"We may smell lavender and remind ourselves of how we smell sweeter to God than this lavender does to us. We may wash our hands in a bowl of water in reflection of forgiveness and being cleansed. We regularly engage with imagery such as looking at the Lord's Prayer in images, or reflect on paintings by Yongsung Kim. There are around 37 different exercises that I've used so far, each one with its own unique focus.

"This group came into existence whilst studying my Masters Degree at Cliff College. For my dissertation I explored what an effective fresh expression may look like in a prison context, and my conclusion was a Christian mindfulness community. I realised that, once tweaked, this could easily be applied in a church space. I pray that more communities like these can grow across the country as we continue to be aware of our mental health."

All are welcome to attend.



"I pray that more communities like these can grow across the country as we continue to be aware of our mental health."

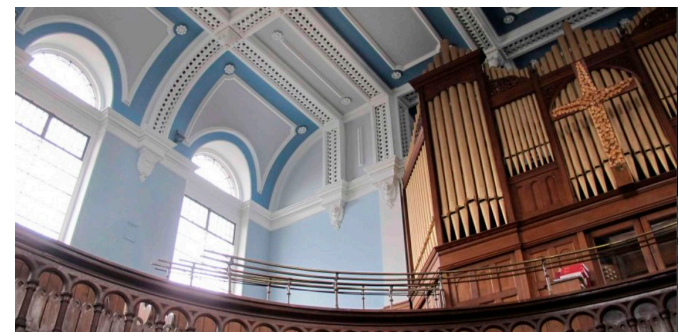




# Stepping out through grants

One of the ways our district supports churches and circuits to step out into new forms of mission and ministry is through grants towards start-up costs of transformational mission and making properties fit for mission.

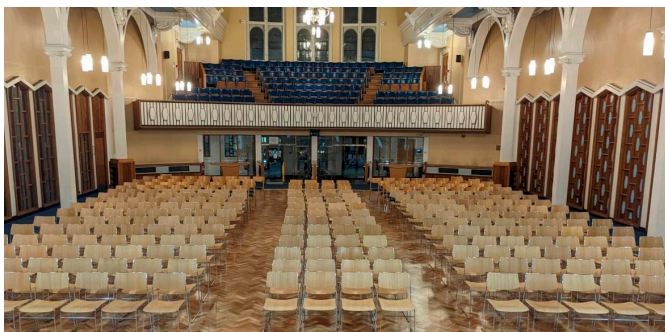
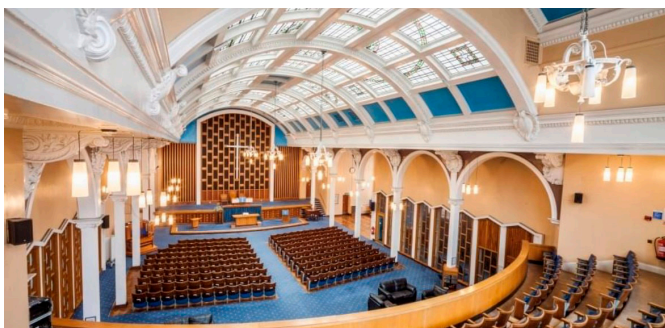
**Growth of the Grove**  
For seven long years falling masonry closed off the large sanctuary at The Grove in Retford. The building was split into two disconnected parts. It would have been easy to assume that the ceiling would never be repaired and the church eventually be forced to retreat from their town centre site entirely. The Church though had other ideas and with a growing sense of mission and an exciting future ahead the Church secured a grant to restore the ceiling. The congregation developed further their mission planning activity and 'The Growth of the Grove' became the project aim and working title. The Church felt a call to be a people of God with a story to share, operating from a multi-purpose sacred space dedicated to God. To fully implement this mission they needed to complete the modernisation of their historic premises and an ambitious fundraising programme began. With support from many organisations, including a £20,000 district grant, building works have recently started and it is hoped a Church with a fresh and new focus will be fully open to the wider community in early 2024.



**Manor Church and Community Project**  
This ecumenical charity works in Manor and Castle, the most deprived ward in the city of Sheffield, to bring about social justice by creating an inclusive, welcoming and flexible environment in which community can be built and thrive. Working in and beyond Temple Park Centre the project has for eight years adopted a community development approach to build partnerships to locally tackle essential needs. District and circuit grants have helped the trustees to appoint a new Community Cohesion and Outreach Worker to build on these foundations and begin to develop new forms of church and worship with and for local people.



**Victoria Hall flexible seating**  
Until autumn of 2022 use of the magnificent main hall was constrained by fixed cinema style seating. This affected its use for the Sunday morning congregation who were developing more collaborative and member-led worship, for the Sunday evening Oasis congregation run in partnership with The Salvation Army and Church Army, for the weekly City of Sanctuary multi-agency asylum drop in, for city centre events, conferences and concerts which fund the continued availability of the building for missional activities. Furthermore, the seating – despite being governed by Listed building regulations – was becoming irreparably dangerous. A district grant of £6,900 helped The Foundry Sheffield (the Methodist controlled charity which manages the building) to install flexible seating and restore the wooden floor. If you were at our April District Gathering you will hopefully agree that it is now an inspirational flexible space, and will want to encourage The Foundry Sheffield in their determination to raise new funds to complete the job of making it fully accessible.



**Trinity Circuit – Operations Manager**  
A district grant helped Trinity Circuit to create a new post of Circuit Operations Manager to release circuit staff and members for mission. Over the last two years Richard has played a crucial role in the circuit assisting with the development of a new structure and operating model at The Crossing, Worksop, supporting the project management activity of a building development project at Grove St Church, Retford, and connecting with all churches across the Circuit on a range of property, financial and operational issues. Richard is also leading a wide ranging review of the Circuit's property portfolio to assist with forward planning activity of the Circuit.

Tom Rattigan, District Missional Property Enabler: "Buildings and property have the potential to be powerful instruments for mission and community work, providing spaces where the love of Jesus can be tangibly expressed and experienced. Through intentional design, inclusive engagement, and collaborative partnerships, we can transform these physical structures into dynamic avenues for sharing the transformative love and grace of Christ with a world in need.

"As we respond to Christ's invitation and step out in faith, we have the potential to transform lives, communities, and even church buildings and property across the Sheffield Methodist District. By looking to examples of others who have embraced this call, we can gain insight and inspiration to take bold steps forward."

District grants have also supported other ministries featured in this magazine, including new Christian communities in Barrow Hill and Rossington, Mental Health Matters in Sheffield Circuit and the Peak Wesley Way and Sam's Space Soft Play. To find out more about district grants please visit [www.sheffieldmethodist.org](http://www.sheffieldmethodist.org)

# Stepping Out into Learning

The Methodist Learning Network is changing!

You may already be familiar with the Yorkshire Plus Team, which has been serving our district for the past few years. But from September the Yorkshire Plus Team will be co-joined with the Learning Network North East Team, enabling officers to work more efficiently over a wider area. Districts will still have dedicated officers, and for Sheffield this continues to be Siggie Parratt-Halbert. Siggie is here to support the District and its circuits and churches in all its learning experiences. You will also see her and her colleagues delivering Connexion-wide training and events, such as Circuit Steward training, Positive Working Together, and a suite of courses for lay workers, to name but a few. Keep an eye on the District newsletter for updates. If you aren't already subscribed, why not do so, and never miss a Learning Network event again.



**Rachel McCallam**  
Rachel's work includes safeguarding; line-management; supervision and lay employees training; support for pioneers; Positive Working Together; school chaplaincy; bespoke visioning and mission development within local churches and circuits.



**Siggie Parratt-Halbert**  
Siggie's work includes supporting Forest Church; Appreciative Inquiry; chaplaincy; Positive Working Together; Circuit Stewards; new ways of being church; and mission and evangelism.



**Rev Graham Jones**  
Graham's work includes Worship: Leading & Preaching; candidates for ordained ministry; retreats; safeguarding training; courses for lay workers; and bespoke learning within local churches and circuits.



**Rev Carla Quenet**  
Carla's work includes supporting pioneers; facilitating safeguarding training; Methodist Way of Life; Bible Month; Mental Health First Aid; and bespoke training within local churches and circuits.



**James Ballantyne**  
James' work includes Youth, Community and pioneering work; supporting ministry, lay work and worship. He co-facilitates 'The Last Taboo'; promotes awareness of abuse, trauma and emotional health good practice; and delivers safeguarding training.



**John Boyd**  
John's work includes working with children and young people; community development and sports work; supporting lay employees; equality, diversity and inclusion; Circuit Stewards; Justice, Dignity and Solidarity; Church at the Margins; chaplaincy; and 3Generate.



# For such a time as this

For Such A Time As This is our strategy for resourcing your mission, supporting you to respond to the good news of God's love in Christ using the gifts and talents that God has given you. We know it is easy to be overwhelmed by the challenges before us, to feel powerless or despondent.

But we believe that God has made us who we are, has called each of us by name, and will equip us with as much as we need to live out our vocation. We draw inspiration from the Old Testament story of Esther who risked her own life to use the limited influence she had to save her people from genocide. God does not need someone better than you. There is no need to wait for a more opportune time. God has prepared you and directed your time to be God's agent right here and now: for such a time as this.

Your district is here to support you in this. Right now we are focusing on:

## GROWING DISCIPLES

fostering a restored culture of high-quality small group and personal discipleship, nurturing leaders and bringing access to any training you need

## PASSIONATE CONTEXTUAL WORSHIP

sharing best practice so our acts of worship are occasions when we expect to encounter the presence of God, supporting growth of complementary dispersed and gathered worship

## SHARING STORIES

making testimony normal, sharing stories, making communication easy and creating a culture of invitation to relationship with Christ

## TRANSFORMING MISSION

encouraging and equipping innovators, breaking new ground, asking searching questions and embracing change

## SIMPLIFYING PROCEDURES

to release your time and energy for sharing stories, passionate contextual worship and transforming mission

## PROPERTIES FIT FOR MISSION

making your premises fit for your missional needs and reducing our carbon footprint

# Thank You

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our district gathering, shared stories in this magazine and taken part in the next steps sessions. We hope you found it an inspirational day and this magazine a motivating read.

## Our panel of experts and Next Steps session leaders:

Ali Johnson, Jonathan Hood, Rachel Lampard, Revd. Dr. Jeff Conklin-Miller, Revd. Dr. Simon Cartwright

## Organisations:

Cliff College  
Transforming Notts Together  
Cornerstone Bookshop  
JPIT  
Learning Network

Please pass this magazine onto someone else to read, you can also find digital version by visiting [www.sheffieldmethodist.org](http://www.sheffieldmethodist.org)



# GET SOCIAL

WITH SHEFFIELD METHODIST DISTRICT



@SheffieldMethodist



@SheffieldMethodist



@SheffieldMethodistDistrict



Sign up for our weekly newsletter by visiting:  
[sheffieldmethodist.org](http://sheffieldmethodist.org)



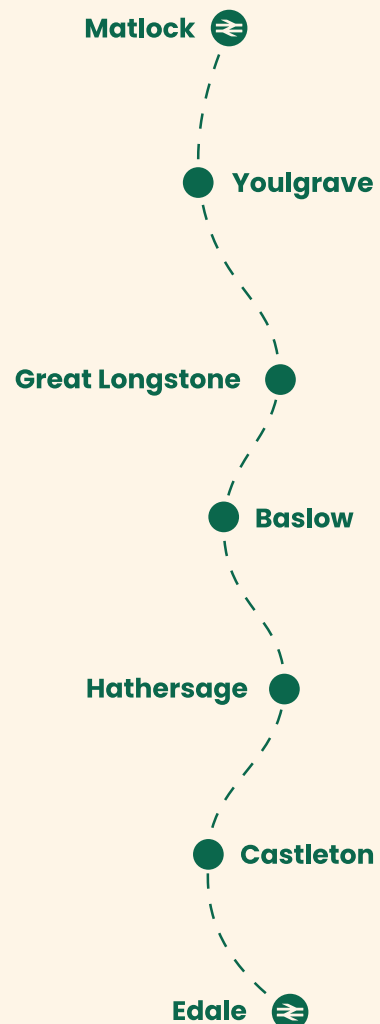
# Fancy a Pilgrimage in the Peaks?

## What is the Peak Wesley Way?

- The Peak Methodist Circuit has created a contemporary opportunity for people to engage with the ancient spiritual practice of pilgrimage with the Peak Park.
- Pilgrims will book their overnight stays in each chapel via an easy-to-use website, and will be provided with information, prayers and reflections for the clearly signed paths (in various formats).
- There will be showers, toilets, kitchens and other facilities in the chapels.
- Pilgrims will have exclusive access to accommodation that is warm and comfortable, inside the chapels. The pilgrimage will be priced to be as affordable as possible.
- For those wishing to purchase food, directions to recommended local pubs/shops will be provided.
- Where possible, walkers will receive a personal welcome, and blessing if they wish, otherwise well-presented information about the chapel and the village will be available.
- The Pilgrimage will start from Matlock and visit chapels in Youlgrave, Great Longstone, Baslow, Hathersage, Castleton and Edale.

## Find Out More

👉 visit [peakwesleyway.com](https://peakwesleyway.com)



## Peak Wesley Way

PRINTED ON  
RECYCLED PAPER



Please pass onto someone else to read

