



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

Reports to Synod

April 2026

The **Methodist** Church 

Chair's Introduction

There is a quiet thread running through these reports.

At first glance, they offer updates, statistics, and reflections on a year of activity across the District. Yet, as we read more attentively, what begins to emerge are signs of life.

We see this in the work of Action for Children, where children and young people are finding safety, stability, and the opportunity to flourish. We see it in the energy and creativity of our children and youth work, where young people are discovering their voice, their faith, and their place within the life of the Church. We see it in communities reimagining buildings, land, and local partnerships, finding new ways to express the Gospel in their context.

Alongside these encouraging signs, the reports also speak honestly of challenge and change. We read of churches closing or reshaping, of teams navigating transition, and of areas where hopes have not yet been realised. These realities are not hidden, nor should they be. They are part of our shared life.

And yet, even here, there is still life.

Taken together, these reports do more than describe what has happened; they offer a picture of a District learning how to be the Church in a changing landscape. A Church that is listening more carefully, experimenting more courageously, letting go where it needs to, and holding fast to what matters.

What stands out most clearly is this: we are at our most alive when we are close to people, especially those on the edges. Whether through work with children and families, engagement with those experiencing poverty or isolation, rural ministry, or new expressions of church, there is a consistent movement towards welcome, inclusion, and deeper connection.

As we begin this Synod, the invitation is not simply to receive these reports, but to reflect on what they reveal. Where do we notice signs of life in our own contexts? Where might God already be at work, inviting us to join in? And what might we need to release, so that something new can grow?

The story of this District is still unfolding, in conversations, in risks taken, in small acts of faithfulness, and in the courage to keep going.

As we gather, we give thanks for all that has been, we pay attention to what is emerging, and we remain open to what God is doing next.

In faith and friendship

Vicky

Contents

Action for Children	2
Archivist.....	4
Children & Youth Work	5
Communications.....	6
District Leading Team	7
Ecumenical Report – Derbyshire North East	9
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	9
Fairtrade Report to Spring Synod 2026.....	10
Fund for Human Need.....	11
Lay Employment	12
Manses.....	13
Memorials to Conference.....	13
Methodist Women in Britain	14
Mission Development.....	15
Peak Park Rural Development.....	15
Persian Ministries.....	25
Presbyteral Synod.....	26
Property.....	28
Sabbaticals	28
Safeguarding	28
Stationing.....	30
Treasurer.....	31
Worship and Preaching.....	32

Action for Children



This report comes with warm greetings and heartfelt thanks from all of us at Action for Children. Your support year in year out means so much to us. Childhood is precious. We don't have long to get it right. That's why every action you take is so vital. Every bake sale. Every carol concert. Every person you tell about our work. Every faith-filled Action for Children Sunday service. With every pound, every prayer, every raised voice – you really do help change the lives of children and young people. Thank you!

We'd like to thank the Methodist Conference President, Revd Richard Andrew, and Vice President, Matthew Forsyth for visiting our services, where they saw firsthand the impact of your generosity. Matthew visited Northampton Short Breaks service which gives children and young people with disabilities a safe, fun place to make friends, grow in confidence and build independence. Revd Andrew visited Spring Leam Lane in Gateshead, where he learned how our nurseries help children thrive and support families, especially where early years provision has been reduced. We are grateful for their support and prayers.

How we're making an impact with your support

Children and young people are at the heart of everything we do, and this year, we are doing even more to make sure they have what they need to thrive. Thanks to your sensational support, we're working to create safer, more stable homes; building spaces where disabled children can fulfil their potential; and being there for children who are struggling with their mental health and wellbeing.

Every child deserves stability, care and the chance to stay close to their communities and the people they love. Sadly, more children than ever need safe, loving and specialist homes. So, we're creating even more places where children can thrive across the UK. Last year, we opened eight new homes across the UK to support children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, disabilities and neurodiversity. This year we'll open four new ones between April and October 2026 in Swansea, Warwickshire, Flintshire and Northumberland.

In England, we are growing our network of specialised, accessible homes so more disabled children have safety, comfort and the chance to flourish in a stable and nurturing home. Rouncil Lane in Warwickshire and Acorn House in Northumberland are being transformed into three-bed homes for disabled young people, fully furnished and upgraded thanks to supporter donations. Silverton Home in Hamilton is being redeveloped into a long-term, nurturing home for two disabled children. In Edinburgh, we opened Al Rahman House, a bespoke home providing 24/7 specialist care for a young person with highly complex needs.

Thanks to our supporters' generosity, we're upgrading the sensory rooms, playgrounds and facilities at Camden and Islington Short Breaks, creating a

welcoming space where disabled children can relax, play and thrive for years to come. A generous donation from longstanding supporters has enabled us to install specialist outdoor play equipment at Renfrewshire Short Breaks, Kilbarchan, and Castlelaw near Edinburgh, transforming the experience for the children who use these services.

As mental health challenges among young people rise, we're strengthening our support, so they don't face them alone. We offer one-to-one emotional wellbeing support, counselling and guided self-help to help them understand and manage their feelings.

We know more needs to be done. Everything we learn along the way helps us influence the Government to make lasting, meaningful change, so children and young people across the UK can live safe and happy lives. We're using the current focus on those not in education, employment or training to show how our work can help them into meaningful jobs. We're also sharing new research on the barriers care leavers face when looking for work, thanks to funding from the John Lewis Partnership.

In Scotland, we're committed to reducing child poverty and improving access to family support. Ahead of the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections, we launched our Investing in Scotland's children manifesto, which calls for safer, happier childhoods. Key recommendations include a national strategy on child criminal exploitation and an increase to the Scottish Child Payment.

There is so much incredible work underway, and our ambitious plans for children and young people are only possible because of supporters like you. We are truly grateful for your support and are looking forward to everything we'll achieve together in the months ahead.

Helping us communicate and support you better

We truly value our relationship with the Methodist Church, so we asked how we can communicate and support you better. Your thoughtful insights shared through focus groups and a survey will guide us going forward. Thank you to everyone who took part.

You told us your support is rooted in Christian values, authentic stories and our shared commitment to giving every child a safe, happy childhood. You also said you would like us to be more visible in your communities. Our online Faith Space offers updates directly from frontline staff, young ambassadors and fundraisers.

You told us that practical resources—such as posters, leaflets and real-life impact stories—are the most useful for fundraising, so we're working to make more of these available. Guest speakers and videos also remain powerful tools for inspiring giving. We've created a new inspirational video featuring Revd Helen Cameron and Christopher, a young person we've supported: <https://youtu.be/aCsofBliNdc>

Many of you highlighted the challenges of smaller congregations and reduced local contact—but we were encouraged to hear how churches are finding creative ways to fundraise, from coffee mornings to seasonal events.

The feedback is already helping shape how we communicate with and support you in the year ahead.

Upcoming fundraising activities

Your tireless fundraising continues to contribute thousands of pounds to our work. Thank you to everyone who donates and joyfully organises events and Home Collection Boxes. Your commitment and creativity are truly inspiring.

We love **Action for Children Sunday** - a powerful reminder and celebration of what we achieve together. It is an important opportunity to highlight the challenges children face today and raise vital funds. Please celebrate with us on 12 July (or on any convenient date). The theme 'Everyone's welcome' shines a light on the life-changing impact of our fostering work. An all-age service booklet with worship ideas, stories, videos and crafts will be available in April at www.actionforchildren.uk/faithFR .

Whether you host a service, a lunch, a bake sale, or something wonderfully unique to your church family, every effort—big or small— helps transform the lives of children who need us most.

With brighter weather ahead, we invite you to take part in **Step Out for Children**, our sponsored walk supporting children without safe and loving homes. A new guide to help churches and faith groups plan will be shared soon through District newsletters.

For more fundraising ideas or support with your plans contact your local fundraiser at actionforchildren.uk/your-local-fundraiser.

Once again. THANK YOU from all of us on behalf of the children and families we support. I wish you an enjoyable time at Synod

*Report by Karis Kolawole, Faith Partnerships Lead,
karis.kolawole@actionforchildren.org.uk*

Archivist

De Cluttering

We are at that time of the year when traditionally we looked at the places we live in a new light——a bright new light.

Spring cleaning is on everybody's agenda or at least a new look at everyday things.

We do not seem to be quite concerned at applying this to the contents of chapel cupboards or safes, circuit safes and offices. Not to mention Manses. In reality unless you have silver prior to 1835 there is little that needs to be in the safe unless you use it for safeguarding records.

Stewards get your Minister or at least get the safe key and have a detailed assessment and appraisal of the contents. Baptism records not in use need to be moved on. Marriage Registers are no longer our concern. We appear to be very slow in moving on church council records, possibly this is because we no longer use large ledgers which eventually come to an end.

I will be delighted to be overwhelmed with your material for archiving. I look forward to hearing from you. Please do not let me down.

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

Children & Youth Work

This past year has seen me work directly on the ground with several projects in the District. This has meant in a much more practical way I've not be as available to others. This being said we have made good foundations over the past 4 years that have enable the community of volunteers and workers to support one another and bring prayer support and resource sharing too. This year going forward we'll be offering more opportunities for networking, prayer breakfast and quiet days, plus lots of training opportunity including First Aid and Joined Up conferences.

At the end of March we held our fifth District Youth Day at Hesley Woods with over 80 young people, plus leaders. This year we explored 'Our Story, Our Song' looking at different journeys in the bible of people who shared their story/song in different ways. We enjoyed a subway lunch before moving on to on-site activities including climbing tower, cube, zip-line, archery, axe throwing and inflatable bungee run. We then hosted 20 young people for a residential for our Rising Leaders weekend – a weekend to look at leadership, fellowship and of course have fun too. They shared some great ideas around what issues the church are facing, reporting back in any media they wished such as podcast, website, leaflet, newspaper article. We also shared in worship together. It was a fantastic day.

We are hoping to find new interns for this year and 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 2 October – 4 October 2026 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
cy@sheffieldmethodist.org

T: 07483 100 864

Communications

The world of communications continues to evolve at pace, and over the last 12 months we've embraced new opportunities to connect, share stories, and reach people where they are.

Growing Our Digital Presence

Our social media channels have continued to develop, helping us reach more people across the district:

Channel	Followers	Reach
Facebook	725 (increase of 47)	15,000 people (data only available for the last 6 months)
Instagram	225 (increase of 0)	1,000 people
Youtube	133 (increase of 6)	1800 views in the last year.
Whatsapp	30	

Facebook remains our best performing social media channel as this is where we find most of our audience prefers to interact online.

District Magazine

Our twice-yearly printed magazine continues to be a valued resource, with more than 1,500 copies distributed across circuits and churches.

Even in an increasingly digital world, printed materials remain essential for those who prefer reading on paper or who aren't online. We continue to print on recycled, uncoated paper so the magazine can be easily recycled after use.

Each edition reflects the themes of our District Gatherings, so that even those who cannot attend in person can still share in the learning and conversations.

Faith, Hope and The Journey – District Podcast

Our podcast, *Faith, Hope and The Journey*, continues to grow as a space for inspiring conversations - open to everyone, whether they have a faith or not.

Series 3 is currently being recorded and released. You can listen on Soundcloud, Spotify, Amazon Music, iTunes, or directly via our website:

sheffieldmethodist.org/podcast

New WhatsApp Channel

We've launched a new WhatsApp channel to make district news and events even easier to access and share. Within just a few weeks, it has already gained 30

followers, and messages can be forwarded quickly within WhatsApp groups and chats. (Scan the QR code to find and follow us).

Canva – A Growing Design Tool Across the District

Canva has become an increasingly popular design platform across our circuits and churches. It offers simple tools for creating social media graphics, posters, videos, presentations, and much more. One of its biggest advantages is that it's free to use – and charities can access a Pro account at no cost by registering with their charity number, making it an excellent resource for communications.

More churches are signing up and discovering how Canva can support their storytelling and outreach. If you'd like to explore Canva further or would benefit from training, please contact District Communications Officer Sam Roberts at comms@sheffieldmethodist.org.

Media Training

We have continued to invest in media training with support from Connexional colleagues. Superintendents, district staff, Presbyters, Deacons, and lay employees have taken part in either full-day in-person sessions or half-day online courses.

The focus is about helping people share stories confidently, safely, and effectively. More training opportunities are planned as we continue to build communication skills across the district.

Communications Support

District Communications Officer Sam Roberts is available to support all circuits and churches with communications needs, from social media to storytelling.

You can follow us on social media:

- Facebook @sheffieldmethodist
- WhatsApp Channel:
- Instagram @sheffieldmethodist
- Youtube @SheffieldMethodistDistrict



There is a also weekly email which you can subscribe to:
sheffieldmethodist.org/news/newsletters

Sam Roberts - District Communications Officer
comms@sheffieldmethodist.org

T: 07483 176 872

District Leading Team

The District Leading Team (DLT) has met seven times since the last Synod report. Meetings have been a mix of being held over Zoom and face-to-face.

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 2025/26 and subsequent years, and the Treasurer's report sets out the decisions reached.

Lay Authorisations

Four applications for renewal of lay authorisations to preside at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper were received this year.

- Nick Waterfield – Sheffield Circuit
- Keith Mears – Doncaster Circuit
- Christine Ogley – Doncaster Circuit
- Elizabeth Worsley – Doncaster Circuit

These have been approved and sent to the Authorisation Committee for final approval and authorisation by the Methodist Conference

In addition one new application for three years was approved:

- Sean Worsley – Doncaster Circuit

Cease to meet

The DLT received two notices of intent to cease to worship in an existing form.

Sheffield

- Hatfield House Lane sought permission, under S0943, to cease worship in their current building and will continue as a Society worshipping from the URC building nearby. The church building will come under managing trusteeship to the Circuit.

Barnsley

- Pogmoor - A statement from Barnsley North West Methodist Church, was received in January, confirming that the fellowship group which had continued to meet following the closure and subsequent sale of the building in July 2022, were now ceasing to meet. Conversations with the members will be undertaken to discern how they wish their membership to be handled going forward.

Grants

District funding is available to support Transforming Mission, Properties Fit For Mission and New Places for New People projects. Full details of our current scheme and what we have said we will prioritise are available at

<https://www.sheffieldmethodist.org/what-we-do/finance-fundraising.html>

Katrin Hackett - District Administrator

Ecumenical Report – Derbyshire North East

I am glad to say that the now-established Ash Wednesday Memorial Walk at Markham Vale took place in fine weather. We walked among the 150 statues, listened to accounts of the 2 worst disasters as we paused in the gloom under the M1 and again at the point where the old Pithead had been. Then walked back to our cars, parked in the cul de sac where some former miners still live. Just along from the redundant church where some graves are also neglected. A sobering experience.

Do come along next year, again on Ash Wednesday and not in Half Term again

Paul King kpaul5539@gmail5539

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

I continue to work nationally evaluating the implementation of the Justice Dignity & Solidarity (JDS) Strategy across the Methodist Church nationally and sitting on the District Leading Team to raise EDI perspectives on agenda items.

With the change in District Chair over the summer a proper review of the role of District EDI Officer has not yet taken place. Also, the task of encouraging Circuits to each appoint an EDI Officer is not yet completed. Likewise, work in partnership with UTU to establish a group to support people with disabilities within the District has not taken off as hoped – partly because of the poorer than expected health of the prospective participants. However, a group that is doing well is the We Who Worship Group. It is an inclusive group that is especially welcoming for neurodiverse and LGBTQI++ people. They lead worship at District Synod a year ago, and have decided to link to the Methodist Church more formally. They are available to lead worship in local churches.

I have occasional enquiries from people across the District. I am awaiting guidance from the Connexional Team about the church's approach to transwomen as participants in women's groups. This is obviously a complex issue of welcome, inclusion and safespace.

Other matters of EDI are more straightforward however, and I look forward to hearing from you how you are making changes to worship and your church premises to ensure that we are living out our national aspiration to be an inclusive church, welcoming of all.

*Erica Dunmow, Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Officer,
EDI@sheffieldmethodist.org*

Fairtrade Report to Spring Synod 2026

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



Fairtrade activity at District level has not been very visible over the last few years, partly because we haven't had a Fairtrade launch event since the pandemic. Plus, it is no longer possible to apply to be a Fairtrade District /Circuit - the Fairtrade Foundation only recognise individual places of worship as Fairtrade. However, a commitment to promote Fairtrade across the District /Circuit is still supported by the District Justice Seekers group, so it has not been forgotten!

And I do recognise that many individual churches are still enthusiastically committed to standing with the poor and oppressed and living out the values of the Kingdom of God by supporting Fairtrade, so it is probably better that folks promote Fairtrade within their community rather than try to organise a city centre event.

It is perhaps worth a reminder that **Fairtrade Fortnight** is no longer during Lent (so Fairtrade chocolate and cakes are back on the agenda!) and this year will run from **September 2026 to 5th October**. This puts it within the Season of Creation which means that churches can incorporate Fairtrade within a more general theme of caring for God's creation. It is worth a gentle reminder to all FT churches that one of the criteria for Fairtrade status is that churches do commit to promoting Fairtrade in worship, so we hope that you will be able to weave Fairtrade into any Season of creation /harvest themed services that are planned. I will be circulating any worship resources that the FT foundation produce closer to the date.

The Fairtrade foundation have developed a Fairtrade places of worship online platform where they are encouraging churches to either re-commit to Fairtrade status or sign up for the first time; the link is here <https://www.tfaforms.com/4822880>

This should make it much easier to either update your details or sign up for the first time and I do strongly urge churches do this. There is also a dedicated email address for any queries faiths@fairtrade.org.uk

Can I just say a big 'Thank you' to all the churches and individuals still enthusiastically promoting Fairtrade - your commitment to justice and living out true worship in your daily lives is truly humbling

In the words of Amos (Chapter 4 vs 23 & 24) Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Alison Trezise - Fairtrade Advocate for the Sheffield Methodist District
jandatrezise@virginmedia.com

T:0114 236 5938

Fund for Human Need

How we help

Set up 66 years ago by a group of Methodists "to relieve and remove hunger and poverty in all parts of the world," since the 1990's the Fund's focus has been on the needs of destitute and desperate people in the UK. One-off payments are made irrespective of faith, ethnic origin or social group to help those facing particularly challenging financial circumstances. The Fund seeks to offer not only money but also love and the means for those struggling to find hope and self-confidence. **Our**

Supporters

We are grateful to all who have contributed to the Fund in the past connexional year. Personal donations and churches' fundraising enabled FHN to make 776 grant payments totalling £79,330.

We express our thanks to the Cupalt Foundation for their generous commitment to fund our administrative, fundraising and governance costs from September 2025. This generous funding means that **100%** of donations made by individuals and churches is now going directly to help people in need.

FHN has become a member of the *Charities and Networks in Association of Churches Together in England* and it is expected that this ecumenical link will lead to an increased awareness of the Fund's work.

Own Arrangement Service

We have now produced a full order of service with suggested hymns, prayers, readings and an address, together with links to a video that can be downloaded, which churches may find useful in preparing a local arrangement service. For further information and more resource material contact our administrator and see our website:

Ways to help

- arranging a fund-raising event or making a special collection at your church
- donating regularly by standing order
- adding 25p to each £1 given by gift-aiding your donation, if a tax-payer
- including FHN as a bequest in your will

Further information

Mrs G. Mason, Administrator, Fund for Human Need,
6 Newlands Road, Darlington, DL3 9JL. Phone 07561 717230
email fundhumanneed@gmail.com website <https://fundforhumanneed.org.uk>

Lay Employment

Strategic change

2025 wasn't the most straightforward for employing bodies in the Sheffield District.

A number of you took steps to adapt and align to what was and what continues to be 'necessary change'. This resulted in many difficult conversations and from these some tough decisions were taken.

We know that the human element of any organisation is not static and we respect that change and transition are different concepts. So in order to create teams that are agile there will be the need for other employing bodies to look at their strategic workforce planning. I am here to help.

Updates in law

By the end of this calendar year further changes to employment law will be live. And, with more updates scheduled for 2027, this area continues to evolve at pace.

Whilst The Employment Rights Act 2025 (formerly the Employment Rights Bill) is challenging for any business, it is complex to navigate in the Methodist Church as every circuit and many of their churches operate as stand-alone employing bodies.

Levels of engagement vary considerably across the District and this is concerning as more than ever before small employers are under the spotlight and what worked for them up until now will be outdated soon.

October 2025 Living wage foundation -
Living Wage Foundation increase to £13.45 per hour ('NB this is not law, the Methodist Church is a member of the Living Wage Foundation and agrees to this')



December 2025 Early conciliation -
The Acas Early Conciliation period was extended from 6 to 12 weeks to ease pressure on the tribunal system



April 2026 Family leave -
Paternity and unpaid parental leave no longer require minimum service (previously 26 weeks and 1 year)




April 2026 Sick pay -
Waiting period (3 days) abolished; Lower Earnings Limit removed. SSP is payable from Day 1 for eligible workers. New value for 2026 is £123.25 or 80% of average weekly earnings



April 2026 Whistleblowing -
Disclosing sexual harassment becomes a 'qualifying disclosure' and has whistleblowing protections in law



April 2026 Bereaved partners paternity leave -
Eligible fathers or partners can take up to 52 weeks of unpaid leave if the child's mother or primary adopter dies within the first year of the child's life or adoption



October 2026 Third party harassment -
Employers must take 'all reasonable steps' to prevent harassment by users and visitors to premises creating a proactive legal duty for workplace safety



October 2026 Tribunal claim limits -
Limit for most tribunal claims increases from 3 to 6 months creating a longer legal exposure for a claim



January 2027 Unfair dismissal -
The qualifying period drops from 2 years to 6 months



January 2027 Tribunal awards -
The statutory cap on compensatory awards for unfair dismissal will be abolished and awards will be based on an employees financial loss



TBC 2027 Zero-hours -
New right for workers to be offered guaranteed hours based on their actual average hours worked



TBC 2027 Family rights -
Enhanced (up to 6 months) dismissal protections for pregnant workers and those returning from mat leave



TBC 2027 Bereavement leave -
Introduction of a new statutory right to Bereavement Leave (including for pregnancy loss)



www.sheffieldmethodist.org

Be in touch

I am here to support employing bodies to develop safe, supportive and inclusive workplaces that remain fit for purpose. Do be in touch. .

Andrew Crawford HR Officer
hr@sheffieldmethodist.org

T: 07525 337500

Manses

Manse visits were carried out on the two manses in Barnsley and the manse in Hathersage as part of the Outgoing Ministers Charter. All were found to be in a satisfactory condition, based on the length of occupancy.

The District is very grateful to our two Manse Visitors, Tim & Cathy Crome, for undertaking this work. If you would like to be part of this valuable team, we would welcome expressions of interest. More information about the role can be found on the District Website.

Memorials to Conference

The following Memorial to Conference has been received

Sheffield Circuit

The Sheffield Circuit Meeting proposes that the Methodist Church should explore becoming a Denomination of Sanctuary.

The national City of Sanctuary network has grown from a simple initiative in the ministry of former Methodist president Revd. Inderjit Bhogal in the Sheffield District, and has spread across Britain and Ireland as a vision of welcome, hospitality and sanctuary in our challenging times. It is being taken up by many organisations including universities, schools, libraries and theatres.

A Church of Sanctuary commits to the basic criteria of intentionally growing a culture of learning, embedding welcome, and sharing good practice.

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland has invited Revd. Inderjit Bhogal to assist churches in prioritising the development and promotion of this concept which is being taken up by congregations across all denominations. To this end the book *Hospitality and Sanctuary for All*, by Inderjit Bhogal has been published and released by CTBI as a guide for congregations.

Conference commits to exploring the idea of the Methodist Church in Britain becoming a Denomination of Sanctuary. In practice this means Conference

- expresses support for the City of Sanctuary movement
- encourages all congregations in the connexion to explore being Churches of Sanctuary
- directs them to supporting resources.

- directs the Connexional Council to explore the idea further and to bring to Conference 2027 a report with recommendations for ways ahead, including the resources required for implementation.

Proposer: Dr. Jenny Bywaters

Seconder: Revd. Jonathan Haigh

Number of members at the Circuit Meeting or Synod

number present and eligible to vote: 69

number voting in favour of memorial: 68

number voting against memorial: 0

number not voting (abstaining): 1

The result of this memorial will be reported to the Autumn Gathering/Synod

Methodist Women in Britain

Our Sheffield District MWiB Re-dedication Service was held on 16th October 2025 at Clifton Methodist Church. Rev Louise Makin led our morning worship. After a sandwich lunch that was augmented by soup cooked in an Eternal Flame Eco cookbag we heard an extremely interesting talk, from Dr. Ken Dunn MBE, all about the charity he has established called 'Africa's Gift'. We agreed to Have 'Africa's Gift' as the District MWiB's project for the next two years.

The charity works in

Lesotho, Uganda and South Africa and these cookbags are making an enormous difference to the people They have recently been endorsed by the king of Lesotho. We heard that not only are these bags increasing safer food cooking and increasing nutritional value of the food but here in England they are possibly going to be used for transporting organs. It is hoped that Ken will be able to come to a Circuit meeting and inform you all of the benefits of the bags and explain the work the charity provides.

This year our Christmas Carol Sing and lunch was hosted in Mosborough Methodist. Everyone enjoyed the time of fellowship and their Fish and chips followed by trifle. We had to change the day this was held from a Friday and this was possibly why we had a smaller attendance. No matter how many times we tell people that any woman who is a member of the Methodist Church is automatically a member of MWiB we still struggle to get people to come to our events. Men are also welcome at many of the events.

An Afternoon Tea with stalls, held at Bents Green Methodist, was very well attended and enjoyed by all. Dr. Ken Dunn MBE attended and give more information (with a video) about his ongoing work in Lesotho, Uganda and South Africa. A cheque for £1,000 was presented to him, being monies raised since September 2025 by the District MWiB.



Six members are attending the Annual Conference at Swanwick, April 10-12th 2026. The keynote speaker will be Caroline Godfrey (ex Vice-President of the Methodist Conference). The theme of the weekend is **“Where power meets purpose: small acts that change the world”**.

Green Moor Church are to host our Quiet Day on 20th May. Deacon Annabel Terry will be leading this day so I am sure it will be a good day, please feel free to join us. Please bring your own lunch. Drinks provided. 10am for 10.30am start. Finishing 3.00pm approx.

We shall be holding our District Day at Birdwell and Hoyland Methodist Church on 17th July from 10.30am-3.00pm. Our speaker will be the Connexional Co-chair Olive Ruzvidzo. Do come and share with us.

Our aim is that all women will be empowered, encouraged, enabled and equipped to live a life free of injustice and inequality; surely that is something for which you wish.

Carol Wignell (Sec)
MWiB Sheffield District

Mission Development

See the back page for a snap-shot overview of how the District hopes to support churches and circuits in understanding and developing their mission and purpose.

Neil Harland – District Mission Enabler
mission@sheffieldmethodist.org



T: 07483 308008

Peak Park Rural Development

A final report from Deacon Lorraine Brown looking back on all that has been achieved in her time as Peak Park Rural Development Enabler.

The Peak Park Rural Development Enabler (PPRDE) role was established in 2012 in response to the closure and sale of numerous rural chapels before alternative uses or ways of being church had been considered. This concern stemmed from the Methodist Churches of Sheffield, Nottingham and Derby, Manchester and Stockport Districts, all of which had rural chapels within Peak Park.

Developed in collaboration with Sheffield's Learning and Development team, the PPRDE role secured a Connexional grant and was jointly funded by the three districts for five years. Initially, the appointed PPRDE adopted a consultancy approach, presenting potential for individual chapels to congregations. However, feedback showed this style was not well received, so it prompted a shift in strategy. After two years, the first PPRDE resigned, the role was redesigned, and a new PPRDE was appointed for the remaining three years of the project.

The approach had transitioned into a hands-on model, with the PPRDE actively walking alongside congregations to explore potential uses. This new approach fostered greater engagement from the chapels, leading to the development of projects. At the conclusion of three years, it was unanimously agreed by all three districts to extend the project. However, they were unable to finance it entirely independently at this stage. Consequently, a further application to Connexional funding was approved, and support was extended for an additional five years. This extended timeframe allowed the project to become fully embedded within the Methodist circuits within Peak Park, leading to some exciting outcomes. The project was further extended five years later with financial support from Districts and Circuits that benefited from the role. This report documents the projects alongside learning and developments supported by the Peak Park Rural Development Enabler throughout the existence of the post.

Ecumenical meetings/working/sharing

Ecumenism was embedded from the start. It was not the easiest of tasks due to the workloads and priorities of most clergy, irrespective of denomination. Personality appears to have a major influence on the possibility of joint working. Some local clergy are keen to find ways of joint working, whilst others express a firm decision not to work together.

Some frustrating difficulties can arise when local priests and their immediate colleagues are keen to work together, but the bishops they answer to are not interested in joint working. This proved to be a very frustrating factor in two projects as mentioned below.

- A. A small village where Messy Church had been set up by the Methodist chapel and could have been better supported and expanded by working together with the parish church (both churches were failing). However, the first incumbent made a point-blank refusal to work together as "it has never proved worthwhile" in his experience. Following his departure from post, prior to a new incumbent, a new Bishop was appointed and working to change the status of several parish churches, including this village, into festival churches or chapels of ease, and sadly ecumenical work was not on the agenda.
- B. A fresh expressions/New People New Places project that was being developed by the PPRDE and an Anglican Priest included all local churches

and local clergy in conversation from the beginning. The then Rural Dean was excited by the project, attended many meetings, and encouraged further development. However, as potential funding was being identified, the project was escalated to the then Suffragan Bishop, who sadly said they were “unable to support it as it may not be what the new Bishop would support,” and indeed the new Bishop didn’t want to support this ecumenical project.

On both occasions, the projects went ahead to be successful but supported financially through Methodism and/or the third sector. In the second example, the Methodist church employed the Anglican Priest to develop ‘The Hub’ as a Pioneer Minister.

There were also some very good experiences in ecumenical practice.

In the case of The Hub, a local Anglican Church gave a £500 donation towards the set up of the project.

Whenever possible, all projects or developments have been shared with colleagues of other denominations, and many have joined in on a local level.

The PPRDE has been a speaker at Rural Ecumenical Conferences and early on played a significant role in supporting the Churches Tourism Group (which was headed by the Anglican denomination with ecumenical presence).

The PPRDE has spoken at the Arthur Rank Centre (ARC) Rural Ministries Course on several occasions.

Getting to know local clergy resulted in the PPRDE being asked to lead harvest festivals in both Methodist and Anglican churches, take part in well-blessing (where Anglicans have not worked with any other denomination for many years), support a CofE village school with collective worship, prayer space, and pastoral care for staff and families, support Anglican and URC worship, support the work of a joint URC, Anglican, and Methodist working party to explore how best to work together in their village.

Meeting and working closely with two Area Deans and one Arch Deacon who were very keen to work together was instrumental in the developments mentioned.

There were various enthusiasm levels for ecumenical working; however, it can lead to the sharing of knowledge through local groups, invitations to speak and share on a wider basis.

The PPRDE was able to act as a bridge between denominations on a local level.

Learning gained

Success is more dependent on the personalities of those working together, their keenness and enthusiasm for a project rather than the ‘hierarchical’ support.

Keeping the door open and taking the opportunities available rather than being frustrated by hoped-for outcomes that then don't happen can make the role less frustrating and easier to sustain.

Keep looking; there are colleagues who genuinely wish to work together.

Sometimes a slight tweak to the plan can still achieve a successful outcome even if conversations with others initially appear to stall the plan.

Joint funding can be a means to make a post affordable.

Monitoring the post with timely reports and encouragement to 'tell a story' across the Connexion can inform others of potential ways to move forward.

Pilgrimage

One of the role requirements for the PPRDE Role was to create rural practice that could be transferable to other areas.

The PPRDE, an enthusiastic pilgrim herself, used her experiences to create the Tissington Pilgrimage. It was developed in conjunction with village and chapel members who had challenged the PPRDE with the question "How do we tell the gospel story when the chapel is open but we are not here?" The idea was workshopped with meetings in the chapel, sharing what life was like in the village and suggestions of routes along with the facilities to be used. The pilgrimage was to start at the Methodist Chapel and follow a circular route around the village, stopping to reflect and pray at various places of interest. In the Tissington Pilgrimage, the village wells provide the places for reflection. Tissington is well known for starting the Derbyshire Well Dressing tradition on Ascension Day each year. The route was to be developed as accessible as possible for walkers, car drivers, mobility scooters, and baby buggies. Suggestions to not name the local shops and craft stalls as they may close were taken on board. The pilgrimage itself can take as little as one and a half hours or several hours, depending on the amount of time given to reflection at each stop. The pilgrimage book was developed eleven years ago and remains available and used today. Several reprints have been required. Copies are available within the Methodist chapel at Tissington.

The Tissington Pilgrimage was used to produce a similar exercise in Malham, creating a pilgrimage that starts at the chapel, walks to Malham Cove, and ends back at the chapel.

There are several positive comments in the Tissington chapel visitors' book. One writer identifies herself as a minister in Lincolnshire and says "I have been inspired to share this with my church and to write a pilgrimage around our own village."

The PPRDE promoted the two peak pilgrimages written by The Venerable Bob Jackson of Eyam and has worked alongside Cliff College staff to lead students on

them. Pilgrimage proved a good medium to introduce students to a variety of aspects of rural ministry.

A weekend of pilgrimage, workshops, and discovery was led by now ex-vice-president of conference Gill Baker, it was held at Cliff College. The PPRDE ran two pilgrimage workshops and led two short pilgrimages during this weekend.

A brave pilgrimage project was embarked on by the leadership team in one circuit. Supported by the PPRDE and the District Mission Enabler, they created a pilgrimage known as 'The Peak Wesley Way' linking the rural chapels and providing comfortable overnight accommodation within the chapels themselves at a reasonable cost. The PPRDE enabled and advised in its early development and wrote the pilgrimage book for The Peak Wesley Way, whilst the District Mission Enabler took oversight of the working groups throughout the project. There is potential for this model to be duplicated in other parts of the Connexion linking chapels and sharing the Jesus story through the local history and the story of Methodism.

Learning gained

Pilgrimage can be used in many different ways from introductions to a rural way of life to personal development, to sustain rural ministry, to sustain or grow or even introduce faith.

Pilgrimage doesn't only transfer across districts but could be used to promote cross-district working.

Rural England has many paths initially used by packhorses and sellers, jiggers and drovers, travellers, farmers, preachers, and pilgrims. Why not use something that is already there?

The old adage of "Team work makes the dream work" is proven right when a group of people catch the same vision and, sustained by the Holy Spirit, use their many and varied skills to change a dream into reality.

Pilgrimage helps us tell the gospel story in today's world. It calls on us to share the knowledge and experience we have and draws us to each other.

It makes use of the buildings we have, it encourages us to be good stewards of those buildings. Volunteers' roles are sometimes filled by locals who take on the important business of welcoming people to the village. This brings added value to the local people as well as bringing the non-churched into contact with the church today.

Pilgrimage boosts the local economy - pay local cleaners and direct to eateries, shops, etc. Some local stores and pubs offer pilgrim discounts.

Care Farming

The PPRDE had significant experience in care farming, having previously served as director of the Amelia (Methodist) Trust Farm and served as chair of Care Farming UK. (Leading it into joint working with a gardens charity to become today's Social Farms and Gardens.)

A Christian farmer was exploring the idea of using the family farm to work with young people. Both the farmer and PPRDE had youth work and teaching experience, and varying degrees of farming, management, and charity experience. Together, they planned and developed ways to enable a care farm to develop. Drawing in others to catch the vision on the way and forming a management group. Volunteers were recruited from families and local church members, enabling the project to develop into the independent charity known today as “Lowberdale Farm” <https://lowberdalefarm.org.uk>. The charity works with local young people who are having difficulties in life and often unable to sustain full-time education for many reasons. A home school group is also served by this project.

The PPRDE held the Chair of the Management Group until it reached registered charitable status. It is wonderful to know today this farm is gathering new volunteers as time goes by who bring their own commitment, skills, and talents to enable further growth and ideas that will hopefully change the lives of young people who, for many different reasons, struggle to fit into mainstream education systems.

Learning

The use of local resources and local Christians as an outworking of faith can provide the means to create a project to serve others.

In this instance, the realisation of the skills and facilities available and the identified needs of young people in the area led to the care farm serving young people. However, the medium of ‘Care Farming’ can be used to serve other needs. For example, mental well-being, return to work, support of ex-service personnel, retirees, elderly farmers, and so on. All depending on the needs and local skills identified.

Community Garden

Community Gardens work along a similar line to Care Farming. Providing a medium for people to get involved and create a sense of belonging. Some members of a chapel which owned a small field behind, thought of using the space as a community garden. The PPRDE was able to put them in touch with the organisations Thrive and Social Farms and Gardens. A plan for the garden was drawn up, and a committee set up. The land remained in the trust of the chapel, but the community was able to have a say in what is grown and what groups may be interested in working on the project, or any activities that could possibly be held. The PPRDE was involved in the exploration, the development, specifically governance, including the need for safeguarding protocols, etc. The PPRDE was

then able to take a step back, allowing space for the church to manage the project and bring forward skills from the neighbourhood. Today, the community project provides a space for families, adults, and children to work and learn alongside each other, for the church to hold services, for reflective prayer walks, for uniformed organisations and others to hold award ceremonies, for schools to run projects and meet curriculum requirements, and a group bringing together older people who felt isolated and lonely. Local people previously unknown to the church have come forward to offer help. Some now attend on a Sunday, some attended for the harvest festival. The management group has made contact with the local food bank and now provides fresh veg to the bank when able. What was a grassy field with limited use is now an active community garden providing fulfilment in many different ways to many different people.

Learning

Much of the learning from this project is as Care Farming above.

There is a governance complication when seeking to offer a community project and only being able to offer a limited role of governance; for example, the property remains the property of the church, so church councils have the final say, not the community groups.

Specific and directive safeguarding must be put in place. Not all groups may have safeguarding policies. It is crucial to maintain the Methodist Church standards even though it may bring conflict from those who want to be in the community garden but insist on not having church links.

As a community group gets stronger and more sustainable, it may wish for further control of the garden. The church needs to be clear on whether purchase of/management of the ground is possible or if this control will always be in the church.

Disagreements will arise regarding fund management. Is funding raised by the garden community theirs, and if so, should they have their own treasurer? How much is in the church's control? Some will object to any funds being held by the church to ensure recording and transparency but kept as allocated funds by the church for specific use on the garden.

Edale redevelopment and ongoing mission

A small Methodist chapel in Barber Booth, Edale, over 200 years old, attracted few worshippers and was in a very poor state of repair. Despite its sorry state, it had a wonderful spiritual presence with views of the Noe Valley and Mam Tor. Footpaths to Mam Tor were to the front of the building, whilst behind the church lie paths up Jacob's Ladder and ways to Kinder and Hayfield. The PPRDE held meetings and workshops with worshippers, locals, and circuit staff to explore what opportunities there were for using the chapel if the fabric of the building was addressed and repaired. When many were identified and some folks keen to save the building, a

project began. A local structural engineer presented plans at a meeting at the chapel, and costings were sorted. Then came the great fundraising, a buildings project declared and divided into phases, visits from architects, Connexional Heritage and Conservation Officers. Led by one person from the village, but supported by others, the chapel has transformed into a fresh, warm building with heating and water and a toilet whilst still maintaining its original peaceful ambience.

Due to many difficulties with the building, and of course including the Covid lockdown, the project was to take many years and require a lot of fundraising. However, meetings continued inside when possible and outside when not. The worship was sustained throughout the project in quite creative ways. Others began to come, some bringing their children. The curious visited. Passers by joined worship, some stayed for all some just joined in a hymn. Today, our building at Edale retains its original features and honours its history, yet offers a usable facility fit for mission and fit for community use.

Mission Plans exist and use has begun for worship, concerts, displays, exhibitions, retreats, community gardening, and many plans to expand further mission ideas too.

Learning

When we started the project, we were not expecting the side wall to have a rotten beam as its footings!

You can never underestimate what you will discover, so your starting price is unlikely to be the end price. Thus, more grants and re-writing grants become necessary.

It is important to have plenty of site meetings and keep communication channels flowing between project manager, chapel, builders, heritage conservation, and planning officers.

We seriously underestimated the potential for the project itself as a tool for mission. We have been more than pleasantly surprised by the number of folks joining in and offering support; these are locals that either didn't have connections or only had tentative connections to the chapel.

Plenty of funding is available, but it is hard work to access it. It requires dedicated time and skill. Keeping a 'bank' of chosen words for funds means there is some cut and paste potential; however, no two forms are the same.

Unfortunately, some challenges will be hard, and the need to be tough-skinned is required. The chapel neighbour who previously rented space from the chapel, but we now believe had hoped to buy the old chapel as a workshop when it was closed for worship, was not at all pleased about the development and unfortunately caused some difficulties by sending in many complaints and concerns about the

project both with locals and the council planning team. Fortunately, the planning team highly recommended the project, but it is a small village and these upsets take some skill to navigate when the church has no interest in upsetting folks but seeks to bring unity.

It is so worth it! Today Barber Booth chapel is a warm, welcoming building with a story to tell and facilities appropriate for today but retains its history. People attending are enthusiastic to welcome visitors and they carry less chapel stress. Now it is all about the mission plan and encouraging use of the building by the locals.

Positively Rural

During lockdown, a conversation between the PPRDE and a Presbyterian in a rural area explored ideas to support rural ministry. A joint interest in sharing each other's successes and challenges led to setting up an hour-and-a-half seminar session by zoom that would share practice in a positive manner to encourage rural ministry and ministers ordained or lay, paid or voluntary, in the development of their work. We called this online seminar Positively Rural. We contacted the learning department for some support and wisdom, which proved very helpful. A district administrator was able to support the videoing of the session and the promotion of each event. We meet to plan around three sessions at a time with three to four sessions being offered each year. We intended this as a lockdown project to encourage the morale amongst the rural workers.

Learning

Due to popularity, Positively Rural continues today. Attracting anything from 15 to 50 participants.

Expanding the organising group and bringing in an ecumenical aspect has brought many mixed skills from people actively involved in rural ministry.

Attendees encouraged to nominate subjects, speakers etc. Are more likely to stay engaged, and this enables us to offer relevant issues today with experiences shared by those in the midst of the subject.

We seriously underestimated the potential longevity of the project.

Keeping the session to no more than 90 mins and no travelling involved appeals to many.

Having identified many expressing a desire to join in, this local project is now open for anyone across the nation to join in.

The more subjects we cover, the more folks share, and the more knowledge we gain.

We have discovered a slick system that works. We have several people with mixed skills on the planning team. We share out the planning and delivery for each

session. Thus, minimal time is required to enable the development of each session. The joy of serving this way to develop an effective tool without too much pressure on one individual is that we are never short of volunteers for tasks. So far, we haven't struggled for subject matter either.

Messy church? /Baptisms

In a small village with a population of 300 and a school population now at 40 pupils (where both chapel and church are failing), the PPRDE was asked to help kickstart a Messy Church. Although one was currently in operation, it was poorly attended and poorly organised. Meetings were erratic and held on a day and time when many potential attendees were already committed elsewhere. One mum was tasked to find out what clubs happened in the village and when. Having been informed that the school has an after-school club on every day except Friday. It was agreed to change Messy Church day to Fridays and to meet immediately after school on every second Friday of the month. The school agreed to promote it through parents' WhatsApp. Some women offered to take care of the food each time, and the PPRDE organised the activities, liaising with the presbyter who would provide a short video on the relevant Jesus story for the theme. The group began to grow and included outdoor activities and forest church. Through the presence of Messy Church, we have baptised four children.

Today, up to 20 young people and 10 parents/guardians attend. Together, that's 10% of the village population and 50% of the children in the school. A good turnout for a village with a small population.

Unfortunately, although Messy Church is very popular, and parents help at the event, none of them are prepared to take on any organising to continue, making Messy Church still very vulnerable. Three people from the circuit leadership team and a presbyter have agreed to run Messy Church for six months and at the same time consider the state of the chapel as the fabric is in poor condition. They will draw a conclusion at the end of the six months.

Messy Church is the most vulnerable of the work undertaken by the PPRDE because, despite many attempts to withdraw, there is very limited support in the village to make it sustainable.

Other notable pieces of work.

During the time of appointment, the PPRDE has both attended and delivered within district learning days. The PPRDE has completed the Pioneer Ministers Course and attended Caleb training evenings.

Worked alongside Cliff College to introduce students to rural ministry and promoted rural ministry on numerous platforms, including district newsletters, district synods in workshops, and through Arthur Rank Country Way magazine. Via opportunities within the Diaconate and by attending diaconate meetings of all three area groups

where possible. By leading acts of worship both near and far to promote the role of the PPRDE and promote rural ministry.

The PPRDE represented the Methodist Church at the World Conference of Churches in Arusha, Tanzania, where rural ministry was significant to the theme of Ministry from the Margins.

Other initiatives have been offered, such as a Holy Week art display, an interactive Christmas Eve Nativity, a monthly reflective worship, and a work and pray day.

The PPRDE sits on the Connexional Safeguarding Group.

Conclusion and learning from the post by PPRDE

The post was created as a specific piece of work to address a specific area with a specific rural identity. This pinpointing enabled a clear role to develop without inhibiting the opportunity for creativity.

Walking alongside is a powerful tool for mission. It builds confidence and offers security. Especially if the person walking alongside can either 'walk their talk' or admit, 'this is new to me' so that a learning together role can be established rather than an unhealthy alternative that assumes one person knows it all.

Establishing a management team that was keen to support the role, was knowledgeable on rural ministry, was practitioners in rural ministry, and able to offer connections and contacts to the PPRDE was to prove invaluable. The team were accessible and approachable, responded well on email, phone, or to meetings. They provided line management and were happy to debate everything from potential PPRDE projects, ideas on time divisions for each project, time off and holidays, manse accommodation, and management of family and health situations.

It has been an honour to serve in this post. To share with enthusiastic and hard-working volunteers serious about their faith across the wide and varied Peak Park villages and hamlets. The opportunity for creativity has enabled the trying of many different expressions and provided the freedom to try or to fail.

We thank Lorraine for all her work and wish her every blessing in her retirement

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:

We had two baptism services of 3 people each in March and September 2025. Although people get relocated by the Home office or move away on their own, we keep welcoming new asylum seekers into the congregation. Arman continues to integrate the new believers into the life of the church by providing continuous pastoral support and discipleship training. Harry and Malcolm (names have been changed) who got baptized in March are now being trained and equipped to teach new comers and new believers.

**National gathering in Manchester in June:**

We had a national day for all of our delegates from Hull, Sheffield, Manchester, etc. We also had church leaders who are serving within the Farsi speakers communities nationwide. About 40 people attended the event where we shared about how God is working amongst Iranian, listening to what others had to say about their needs and how we could meet those needs within the UK Methodism.

Sheffield:

The Bible studies continue to be productive and encouraging. 2 new comers joined us in November 2024 and are being prepared for baptism. Maria is being trained in order to be able to lead the baptism preparation course in future. They all continue to be thought by Arman on how to grow in their faith and be a good witness of Jesus Christ.

**Baptism course:**

Arman has now finished recording his baptism course. This is now available on request for the Farsi speakers within the UK Methodist Churches nationwide. The goal is to help Churches where there is a need to reach out to Iranians with the Gospel in their own language.

Arman Ghamari - Persian Ministry Development Enabler
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Presbyteral Synod

Presbyters from across the Sheffield District met on 17 March at Castleton Methodist Church in the Peak Circuit for their annual Presbyteral Synod, chaired this year for the first time by the Revd Vicky Atkins.

Under the awe-inspiring Mam Tor and surrounding mountain ranges, set in the Hope Valley, in the Peak District, and on a beautiful Spring morning, forty-six presbyters attended in person, with another ten joining online, as the Synod gathered in prayer and fellowship. The Revd Tim Morris, Superintendent of the

Peak Circuit, offered a warm welcome to Castleton Methodist Church, also known as the Peveril Centre.

A keynote session explored “Healing Ministry and Neurodiversity”, led by the Revd Jo Rand (Minister without appointment / studying at Cliff College) and Mrs Rachel Amos (member at Killamarsh Methodist Church on the Sheffield Circuit / retired educational psychologist). Basing their input on last Conference’s Report on Healing Ministry and Neurodiversity they facilitated thoughtful reflection on how churches can engage more deeply with neurodiversity in prayer, in ministry and in pastoral care.

The Synod marked significant moments of transition. The Revd Ian Lucraft and the Revd Gill Sharp sought permission to “sit down” at this year’s Conference as supernumerary ministers. Both shared reflections on their ministries, and the Synod expressed heartfelt gratitude for their service.

Members also paused to remember those who have died, including the Revd John Young and the Revd Alan Saxby, giving thanks for their lives and witness. Prayers were also offered with gratitude for Revd May Gladwin, whose funeral took place on the same day as we were meeting. Synod was also brought the news of the very recent death of Deacon Con Taylor of the Barnsley Circuit.

The Synod noted a number of ministers moving to new appointments this summer and assured them of prayers and expressed thanks for their contributions to the District.

Former President of the Conference, Revd Inderjit Bhogal spoke about the City of Sanctuary vision that had started in Sheffield 20 years ago and has grown immeasurably over the two decades since. He has a vision for the Methodist Church in Britain to become a Church of Sanctuary and we’ll hear more about this at the Representative session of Synod on 18 April 2026.

Revd Dr Andrew Stobart, Principal of nearby Cliff College, spoke briefly about some developments, courses and opportunities coming up at Cliff in the months to come, including the annual Cliff Festival in late May.

The gathering concluded with the Service of Rededication and Holy Communion, led by our Chair, Vicky Atkins, and at which presbyters reaffirmed their ongoing commitment to the doctrines and discipline of the Methodist Church.

Our time concluded with an invitation from Revd. Julie Coates, our Deputy Chair and Superintendent of the Trinity Circuit, to the next Presbyteral Synod which will be held on 9 March 2027 at The Grove Methodist Church, Trinity Circuit.

Revd Sean Adair – Synod Secretary
synod@sheffieldmethodist.org

Property

The role of Missional Property Enabler is currently vacant following the resignation last year of Tom Rattigan. The District are very grateful to Tom for all his work in this area and wish him all the best in his role in the Sheffield Circuit. There have been attempts to recruit to the existing job description and the District Leading Team are continuing to look at the remit of this role.

We thank Neil Harland, Richard Deaden and the property team for looking after the essential governance during this time.

If you have any questions about property issues, please contact the District Office in the first instance.

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.

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 would welcome more people joining this group. Contact the District office for more information.

Revd Liz Wills

District Sabbaticals Officer

Safeguarding

Last August, all DSO roles moved from District to Connexional employment, while remaining aligned with our original Districts. As part of this transition, we were each assigned a Champion role, allowing us to focus on a specific area of work and share learning with colleagues through relevant meetings and networks. I welcomed this development, as it enables me to concentrate my efforts on a defined area rather than operating as a generalist.

I asked for and was given the role of Safeguarding champion for NPNP projects.

The title is a little misleading as it has a wider brief than just NPNP. The working definition we have agreed is:

All New Places for New People (NPNP) projects—including Churches at the Margins initiatives, Faith-Rooted Community projects, and those that do not naturally align with a churches or circuit’s traditional outreach. This may be due to a range of factors, such as (but not limited to):

- **Partnership arrangements** involving other denominations, organisations, or community groups.
- **Location of activity**, where the work is not based on Methodist premises—for example, street ministry, community venues, or online platforms.
- **The nature or vulnerability of participants**, particularly where the project engages marginalised individuals or minority groups.

I am appreciating the opportunity to deepen my understanding of how we can develop effective new approaches to sharing the Good News with people who may have had no previous connection with church. I have also benefited from the insight and experience of established outreach groups within the Sheffield District, including Mannor Church and Community Project in the Sheffield Circuit and Tickhill Methodist Outreach Team in the Doncaster Circuit, to name but a few.

The foundation of this work is grounded in the Sheffield District’s Mission Plan, particularly its commitment to **Simplifying Procedures**. I recognise that churches and projects are being asked to complete more paperwork than ever, and that many people involved in NPNP-related work are already balancing multiple responsibilities within the life of the church.

My aim in this Champion role is to develop simpler and more consistent ways of working that reduce the burden on individuals. It has never seemed efficient for safeguarding officers to work in isolation, each completing the same tasks independently. By creating shared policies and templates that circuits and churches can adopt if they wish, we can replace the duplicated efforts of many with the focused work of one—saving time, energy, and resources across the District.

I will continue to use the weekly District newsletter, issued each Tuesday, to share updates and developments. In time, I hope to engage directly with all NPNP-related projects to better understand your needs, concerns, and priorities. Until then, please feel free to contact me if you think I can be of any assistance:

hilla@methodistchurch.org.uk

Alison Hill

Regional Officer for Safeguarding, Aligned with the Sheffield District.

Stationing

In May '25 I began my role as Lay Stationing Representative (LSR) and was immediately into the 2026 Invitation and Stationing process. My first 'job' was to assist Rev. Gill Newton with training for all our circuits, followed by preparation meetings with presbyters and deacons who were involved in stationing.

Representatives from all circuits attended the District Stationing Forum in July. They shared their plans and thoughts for the future of their circuits which gave us a better indication of which circuits might be entering stationing for a minister for September '26. (whether it be a presbyter, probationer diaconal, or Minister from other Churches and Conferences).

At the beginning of this 2026 stationing round, there were six presbyters across three circuits and three deacons from two of our circuits prayerfully seeking to discern God's calling upon their ministry. As time progressed, one indicated a desire to sit down, four were re-invited, and four entered stationing.

In August I met with our new chair Vicky and as we were both new to this process, we had long conversations and discussions as to how we were going to fulfil this role.

In October '25, it was time to have conversations in relation to circuit profiles, with the two presbyters entering stationing. (Our deacons now being under the Diaconal order for further conversations). In addition, there was a meeting with two circuits entering stationing to consider possible matches from the presbyteral profiles submitted.

The Station Matching Group met in November and as it was my first year as a LSR I was invited to go along to this four day process to see what happens. I am so grateful for that time with this group as it enabled me to experience the love and grace that was shown between the district chairs as together they discerned what/who was right for the circuits involved.

Since those meetings I think it is fair to say that our district has had a rollercoaster of a ride, with not everything going as we had hoped. And as I write this now, we are still in the final stages of stationing. We go forward trusting in the process and praying that all will be well.

I am however pleased to say that subject to the Methodist Conference adopting the stations, the two presbyters seeking circuits have been successful. And both Barnsley and Sheffield look forward to welcoming new ministers in September '26. Soon it will be May and yes, the whole process will begin again for September '27.

Circuits will already be prayerfully considering their local situations including staffing, ministerial and lay, in relation to Circuit Mission Plans and Circuit Invitation groups will have been appointed in March.

And so we go forward asking for your continued prayers for the process and for all those who will be involved.

Dawn Webster

Lay Stationing Representative

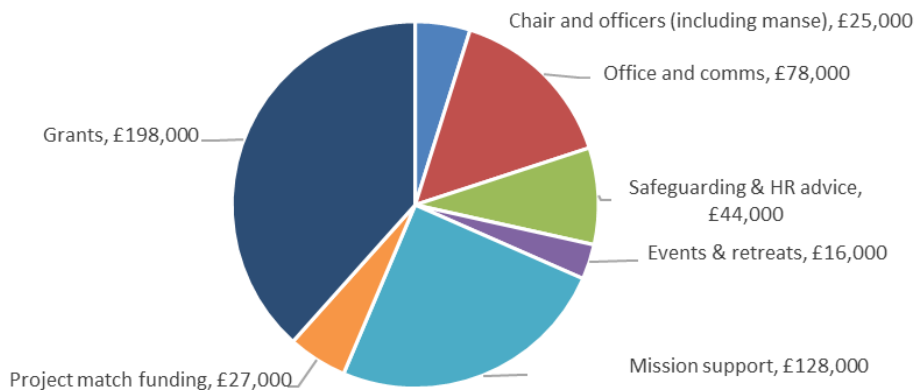
Treasurer

Full statutory District accounts for 2024/25 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:

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
INCOME					
Unrestricted	172	163	171	148	130
Restricted	132	129	149	230	154
District Advance Fund	477	446	296	256	176
Total Income	781	738	616	634	460
EXPENDITURE					
Unrestricted	198	166	160	142	112
Restricted	172	132	190	328	180
District Advance Fund	324	148	173	142	45
Total expenditure	694	446	523	612	337
SURPLUS/ (DEFICIT)					
Unrestricted	(26)	(3)	11	6	18
Restricted	(40)	(3)	(41)	(98)	(26)
District Advance Fund	153	298	123	114	131
Total surplus/ (deficit)	87	292	93	22	123

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 £153,000 during the year, with distributions from property sales across the UK again being higher than anticipated. As part of our refreshed strategy for resourcing mission, the scale and range of district grants will increase and funds will be invested in new ways of generating sustainable income, which is expected to result in the uncommitted balance in the advance fund returning to more normal levels.

UNRESTRICTED AND ADVANCE FUND SPEND



FUNDS HELD AND OUTLOOK	31-Aug-25	31-Aug-24	31-Aug-23	31-Aug-22	31-Aug-21
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
CLOSING FUNDS					
Unrestricted funds	263	292	297	289	286
District Advance Fund	735	606	330	232	160
Restricted funds	60	73	52	65	118
Total funds	1,058	971	679	586	564

Months expenditure held as liquid funds	4	6	6	6	8
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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, 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 and are exploring new sources of sustainable income for the district to supplement assessments.

Neil Harland - District Treasurer

Worship and Preaching

The role of Worship and Preaching Officer is currently vacant. If you think you might be interested in finding out more about this role, please contact the District Office in the first instance.

We are delighted to welcome the following as accredited Local Preachers: Alison Trezise (Sheffield); David Channon (Sheffield)

Local Preachers (LP) who have passed away since last year:

Sheffield

- ❖ Rosemary Ashburner (1968) died 8 May 2025
- ❖ Maureen Owen (1992) died 16 January 2025
- ❖ Lily Pickles (1983) died 20 Feb 2025

Derbyshire North East

- ❖ Ray Biggin (1953)
- ❖ Rita Sawyer (1953)

The Peak

- ❖ None reported

Doncaster

- ❖ None reported

Rotherham and Dearne Valley

- ❖ Eric Frost (1994) died Sept 2025
- ❖ Clive Taylor (1993) died April 2025

Barnsley

- ❖ None reported

Trinity

- ❖ None reported

Helping you be a growing, inclusive, evangelistic, justice seeking church...

Understanding "what next" begins with listening

Targeted support for churches with differing needs

Underpinned by

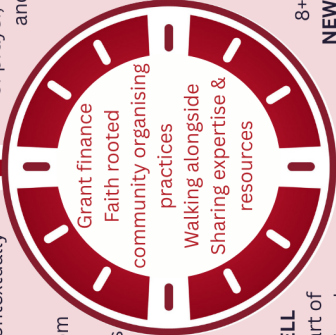
LISTENING TO OUR OWN STORIES
 A sense of unfamiliarity & exile
 Living in an in-between moment
 Seeking spiritual renewal
 Intentional but flexible
 Being people of resilient hope
 Honest lament and grief
 Church after Christendom

From a position of brokenness, risk all we still have to **LEARN, CHANGE** and **JOIN IN**

LISTENING TO OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS
 Social isolation
 Insecure work/ unemployment
 Poverty wider & deeper
 Ageing population
 Loss of faith in democracy
 Scapegoating of minorities
 Poor public transport
 New housing

REVITALISED CHURCHES
 Supporting desire to try new ways
 Becoming contextually relevant
 Learning from small experiments

20+ significantly grown FLOURISHING CHURCHES
 Permission-giving culture of prayer, discipleship and innovation
 Planning for growth



ENDING WELL
 A natural part of our Connexional ecosystem - not "failing"
 Premises are re-used wisely

8+ pioneer-led NEW CHURCHES
 Inspiring volunteer-led fresh expressions
 Places of creative learning

GROWING LEADERS
 Nurturing emerging leaders of all ages
 Cross-circuit networks
 Youth internships
 Supporting theological study

NET ZERO
 18 Silver Eco Churches
 Simple creation-care steps

DIVERSIFIED INCOME
 Growing new sources of income, including from new housing

SIMPLIFIED PROCEDURES
 making governance and administration easier



...for such a time as this