

# PASSIONATE CONTEXTUAL WORSHIP

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES DISCUSSION

9 SEPTEMBER 2021

Leading Team will this year focus on one strand of our strategy in each meeting. From this we will set related targets and actions for the following 12 months. Our September meeting will focus on passionate contextual worship.

Our five year strategic aims agreed back in January are:



Our aim	What we will do	What we expect to see
Share best practice <i>our acts of worship must always be occasions when congregations expect to encounter the presence of God</i>	Use District gatherings to be occasions celebrating God's presence. Provide infrequent large inspirational worship celebrations for adults and young people.  Support circuits in fostering cultures that actively anticipate and confidently promote public worship.  Create opportunities for people with particular expertise to support circuits and churches in developing their worship, and in developing a culture of excellence and continual learning amongst those responsible for leading worship.  Initiate conversations about resources needed to enhance worship which are not locally known of or available, and ensure that these are easily accessible.	Increased participation in District celebrations.  Stories of increased engagement in worship from congregations supported
Online worship keeps growing <i>lockdown becomes the start of an era of complementary dispersed and gathered worship</i>	Create a team advising on and producing high quality impactful online worship resources with a contextually local flavour.  Support and advise churches and circuits as they explore and create new sustainable blends of inclusive contextually relevant online/ remote and gathered worship.	Growth in people engaging with online and blended worship.

## NEW ACTIONS TO DATE

- Online district worship was provided in January, alongside our strategy launch, and at Easter. Both of these were well received, with the January service in particular engaging large numbers of people (c.300 direct youtube views) in a lockdown context.
- Hybrid worship webinar hosted with Learning Network in autumn 2020 was well received and well attended.
- District Facebook group for leaders of online worship has had limited engagement, and we have been wary of duplicating the work of other resource-sharing tools, e.g. The Vine
- Occasional video and text pastoral messages have been shared by Gill and Sean at key moments during the pandemic

## POSSIBLE PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

Some suggested priorities are provided below. Members of the leading team are equally welcome to make other suggestions. If possible, please share additional potential priorities with Gill and Neil in advance of the meeting so time can be allowed for discussion.

### WORSHIP AND PREACHING OFFICER

Following the unexpected death of Jen Mullis, we are currently without a worship and preaching officer. This a role required by CPD, and also one which could bring important expertise and enthusiasm for enabling passionate contextual worship across the district.

In our governance review we agreed that we would openly advertise for roles, and that two representatives of the district would meet with candidates who expressed an interest prior to an appointment being confirmed, in this case by the leading team.

I have drafted up a draft role description (see separate document), drawing from our previous 2017 version (which linked to our former mission action plan), our recent governance review and the template at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/local-preachers-and-worship-leaders/local-preachers/local-preacher-secretaries/>

As part of the governance review we said that roles such as this would have a nominated Leading Team member to provide a point of contact and support, for which we will need a volunteer.

DLT suggestions are sought for improvements to the role description, suitable people to approach and who is to respond to expressions of interest on our behalf.

## **OCCASIONAL LARGE WORSHIP CELEBRATIONS**

Having provided two well received and widely used recorded services during lockdown, what should district-wide worship play over the coming 12 months?

Are we yet sufficiently certain about covid outlook to set plans for a large worship gathering?

Are there particular seasons or occasions we should be investigating for high impact inspirational events?

## **DISTRICT-WIDE LOCAL PREACHER TRAINING**

Sean has begun exploring whether local preacher tutoring could be shared on a cross-circuit basis, such that each tutor would only need to be responsible for a smaller number of modules, which they would deliver to a larger number of trainee preachers and worship leaders.

This has the advantages of:

- reducing the time commitment for students
- utilising tutors with specialist expertise
- reducing repetition of teaching
- giving students access to a wider pool of teachers and peers

It would require:

- students and tutors to be comfortable with remote learning
- circuits to be comfortable with tuition from outside their circuit
- co-ordination

Is this something we would be happy to encourage and pursue?

## ONLINE WORSHIP RESOURCES

During the pandemic, most circuits have been providing short midweek online broadcast devotional resources. In some cases maintaining these is proving increasingly challenging as gathered activities resume.

These have provided a tool for individual prayer and worship beyond Sunday, particularly of benefit for people who are unable to gather due to health concerns or other circumstances.

In addition to this there are many recorded, streamed and Zoom interactive Sunday services, distributions of printed worship at home service sheets such (eg The Vine) and newsletters.

Circuit	Midweek online devotional
Sheffield	Various churches have provided recorded and live chat resources, including on a seasonal basis
Derbyshire North East	Daily youtube reflection to a weekly pattern (Testimony Tuesday etc), 10-40 views
The Peak	
Doncaster	Daily youtube reflection, 30 – 50 views, ended August
Barnsley	Midweek Zoom prayer meeting. Advertised online but not streamed
Rotherham & Dearne Valley	Weekly youtube reflection of varying length & format, 15-80 views, may continue
Trinity	Daily email, now twice per week

Could district facilitate a weekly online resource? Such as a short weekly youtube scripture, reflection and prayer to be shared via our weekly mailing and social media? Reasons for doing this include:

- Promoting prayer and worship through the week *“we will pray daily”, “we will worship with others regularly”*
- Creating something that feels local and connecting, but is not placing burden on a single church or circuit
- Doing at district level gives access to a wider pool of expertise
- Modelling good practice in online worship
- Inviting people to pray for the work of our district
- Building district identity, complimentary to church & circuit
- A reason for people to opt in to district communications
- Creating syndicated content for local church/ circuit social media

To do this well we would need:

- A team of contributors
- Agreed format and style
- Thematic plan
- Technical editor(s) and co-ordinator(s)

We would need to be mindful of:

- Numbers of people engaging (could monitor)
- Level of work involved to sustain (could monitor)
- Repeating work already done locally (consult and adapt)
- Need for co-ordinator & team

It is worth noting that this would likely primarily be facilitation of prayer and worship for current disciples, rather than creating an online new place for new people, although we could regularly encourage our people to comment and share onward through their social media as part of their personal digital evangelism.

## **HYBRID WORSHIP COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE**

Having urgently shared emergent practice at the start of the pandemic, several of our churches have now settled into their own patterns of regular hybrid Sunday worship, and others are moving towards this.

Is there value in creating occasional structured gatherings (a community of practice) for people involved in the shaping, leading and technical delivery of online worship across the district?

This could include sharing of what churches are learning, building networks to troubleshoot problems, teaching from internal or external experts, creating partnerships to “visit” and provide feedback.

To do this well we would need to consider:

- One community or three?
- How and when to meet?
- How often to meet?
- Who would co-ordinate?