

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

Our strategy for resourcing your mission 2020-25

LEADING TEAM PROGRESS UPDATE

4 JANUARY 2023



This paper sets out progress on key items agreed at previous meetings and other key strategy updates. It only touches on the significant pieces of work with implications across the district or for direction or action by District Leading Team. A full copy of our strategy is available at

<https://www.sheffieldmethodist.org/about-us/for-such-a-time-as-this.html>

The first section updates on progress in supporting new Christian communities, with other strategic actions following in the second

NEW CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES UPDATE

Recap – new Christian communities

New Christian communities (Connexionally language is New Places for New People) are new congregations/ churches targeted at people who are not yet part of an existing church. They possess all the essential elements of being church, but may exhibit them in very different ways from our existing congregations.

They are generally considered one of the most effective means of connecting new people, new people groups, and new residents to Christian exploration, community and discipleship. They give us opportunity to engage with people who we are unlikely to reach through our existing churches. Bringing learning from experimental research and development, they identify and strengthen emerging leaders, and help the wider Church renew and reimagine its calling.

For these reasons facilitating the development of a locally shaped NPNP in most circuits is a core component of the Connexional *God for All* strategy for evangelism and growth. *For Such A Time As This* set us a priority of supporting circuits in identifying, developing and releasing the potential of new innovative forms of church.

growing new Christian communities

preparing to launch



beginning, unfolding, becoming fruitful

always listening, praying and pivoting

Current situation

We already have within our district:

- Church at the margins – new worshipping communities taking shape as a result of existing work engaging with economically marginalised communities e.g. Parson Cross Initiative, The Terminus Initiative, Oasis (central Sheffield)
- Worship for young families starting in two Methodist soft play centres
- Metal Methodist – primarily online inclusive church for heavy metal fans
- Replants – new congregations starting in a place where the previous one was ceasing – Hub at Hope, Gleadless Valley
- Our district NPNP Pilot in Derbyshire North East is still in its first year, but seems to be progressing as we had hoped in the planning

Despite the real decline and fragility of many of our longstanding congregations and structures, we already have many shoots of new growth to be thankful for, and to fertilise, water, and protect from frost and predatory birds and slugs. Change movements are often said to reach a tipping point once they encompass 10% of a population, which for us would mean approximately 15 growing new Christian communities across the district.

There are opportunities within each of our circuits for new Christian communities which could be supported by the Connexional NPNP programme, albeit some at very early stages of listening.

District role

The district role is to be a gardener. At district level we cannot direct where these potential new Christian communities will be, or what they will look like. We can only educate, encourage and facilitate support for local visions.

The table below explains how we are doing this. There is a discussion to be had about tweaking the level of grant funding we propose for each project.

District action	Current status	Further actions planned	We are succeeding as gardeners if	Challenges/ concerns	Mitigation
Key messages, purpose and reasons to be hopeful about new Christian communities widely known across the district	Three professional videos being prepared and will be widely distributed. Advice and summary of	Develop further ways to keep telling stories using a range of media	Some people in every church know of and feel affiliation with a Methodist new Christian community	Resentment that longstanding churches are not valued	Need regular equally prominent stories of existing congregations

District action	Current status	Further actions planned	We are succeeding as gardeners if	Challenges/ concerns	Mitigation
	support on our website Mission Forum held in January 2022				
Training, support and coaching available for all pioneers. Includes Methodist Pioneering Pathway, which comes with access to pioneer coach, practitioners network and specialist training (Connexionally funded pioneers expected to participate)	MPP meeting quarterly on a regional basis (currently 6 members from within our district) Neil, Vic and Tom periodically keeping in contact with pioneers. 4 people from our district have attended Church Planting Intensive course at Cliff College	This may involve shift from regional to district MPP gatherings if numbers grow.	MPP community of practice and a coach easily accessible to all pioneers, with most recognising value and actively participating. All current and potential pioneers aware of and have access to CPI/ other relevant training	MPP is facilitated regionally by Rachel MacCallum (Learning Network) but national database and coaching organised by Matt Finch (E&G). Hence risk of people getting lost in the system	Neil to co-ordinate between pioneers, LN and E&G
Provide inspiring conferences/ networking events for new community leadership teams (i.e. not just the lead pioneer). (Reliance on a single individual is a common reason for failure)	First gathering being organised for February		Most teams see value in what we offer, choose to engage and form their own support networks through it.		

District action	Current status	Further actions planned	We are succeeding as gardeners if	Challenges/ concerns	Mitigation
New Christian communities have access to sufficient funding to become fruitful and locally sustainable	District pilot funded for 5 years. Existing communities funded on an ad hoc basis (some may come to district for support)	We have £156k of E&G funding available for not yet started communities. Our current policy is to match this with equivalent district funding, enabling up to £40k funding for 8 communities	Lack of investment funding for the initial growth phase is not a barrier to otherwise viable new Christian communities.	The cost of a half time pioneer for six years is c.£150k. In current financial climate a £40k grant may leave circuits exposed to too great a financial risk. There are three E&G funding deadlines in early April, September, December – missing these introduces delay.	We could increase the value of district grants – see discussion below.
Support new Christian communities to do safeguarding well in new high profile contexts (helping them and protecting wider Methodism) via an annual meeting with district safeguarding officer.			All pioneers willingly engage with safeguarding, developing nimble yet robust safeguarding cultures.		
Support line managers of employed pioneers via an annual meeting with district HR Officer – new Christian communities are highly reliant on effective pioneers with inherently imprecise job descriptions			No new communities fail due to lack of support for line managers.		

District action	Current status	Further actions planned	We are succeeding as gardeners if	Challenges/ concerns	Mitigation
Provide other specialist support where we can		With some pioneers recently having been interviewed on the radio, Sam will offer media training to pioneers (and others) in 2023.			

For discussion – level of grant support for NPNP projects

Funding for a half time pioneer role supported by the E&G NPNP programme might look something like this theoretical example. A less than half time role is unlikely to be impactful. Full time roles attract a wider pool of applicants, but are obviously a much larger commitment during the initial growth phase and then for the new Christian community to sustain. In practice funding for each project would of course be different, with local income being a combination of grants, “tent-making” and giving depending on context.

Increasing the combined value of District and E&G grant to £60k (up to a maximum of 50% of costs) would reduce the circuit proportion in this example to less than a third of the costs in the growth phase until the community is hoped to become self-sustaining.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
£/hr	16						
hours/week	20						
salary	16,640						
pension	998						
NIC	943						
other costs	5,000						
	23,581	24,289	25,017	25,768	26,541	27,337	152,532
Funded by							
Local income		2,000	5,000	10,000	15,000	20,000	52,000
District + E&G	12,000	11,000	10,000	10,000	9,000	8,000	60,000
Circuit	11,581	11,289	10,017	5,768	2,541	-663	40,532
inflation	3%						

This is a higher level of funding than we make for other projects, but these are inherently high risk allied to potential high impact through creating viable new congregations. NPNP funding comes with access to additional support, but also ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Whether the district could afford to make this (or any other) level of funding to new Christian communities in every circuit depends on other assumptions in the district budget. But we are unlikely to receive more than three requests within the NPNP programme in this Connexional year, so are able to monitor future grant budgets and adjust accordingly.

OTHER STRATEGY ACTIONS

PASSIONATE CONTEXTUAL WORSHIP

Action	Led by	Since last meeting	Before next meeting	Longer term plans	Challenges not yet resolved
Pooling of WLP tutoring across the district to benefit students and tutors.	Claire Rawlinson			Aim to have pool of tutors in place for those starting training Sept 2023, subject to agreement from stakeholders. Alongside this to publicise stories about new local preachers across the district	Switching between tutors on training software currently outside our control and can be slow This won't solve the parallel challenge of shortages of mentors
Offer recorded online district prayers at moments of significance across the life of the district	Sam Roberts	District-wide online advent calendar offered, linking to Connexional "There Is Room" resources. Full data not yet available but seems have engaged growing numbers of people through advent		Improved database will allow direct advance liaison with church/ circuit social media editors as to what syndicated content they need.	
Create a hybrid worship community of practice	Neil Harland/ Claire Rawlinson				Whilst there are various hybrid/ digital expressions of worship around the district, most of those involved seem to have multiple commitments, so investing time in next stage of development is hard We (and other parts of Methodism) do not engage with social media platforms now used by young people.

SHARING STORIES

Action	Led by	Since last meeting	Before next meeting	Longer term plans	Challenges not yet resolved
Focus on making testimony normal within congregational life	Neil Harland			To review impact/ current practice (by May) in preparation for proposed focus on reaching out in Sept 2023 synod	
Website baseline support all circuits in having fit for purpose website	Sam Roberts			Development of new websites for Peak and Rotherham & Dearne Valley ongoing. Trinity planned but not yet scheduled	
First Story of the Year print publication distributed around district, to increase non-digital access to district-wide stories	Sam Roberts	1,700 copies have been distributed. Appears to have brought stories of what churches & circuits are doing across the district to people who were not previously aware		Next version to be published to focus on social justice stories from across the district, linking to April 2023 District Gathering	

GROWING DISCIPLES

Action	Led by	Since last meeting	Before next meeting	Longer term plans	Challenges not yet resolved
Focus on nurturing leaders in September 2022 synod	Gill Newton				
Growing young disciples - restarting district-wide high impact events	Vic Loveday	75 young people and leaders from our district attended 3Generate, increased from previous year		District youth day to be repeated in spring, with anticipated higher attendance. Family events to continue to be trialled Increase total 3Generate attendance beyond 75	
Growing young disciples - growing community of practice for CFY leaders	Vic Loveday			Continue & embed monthly community of practice	
Growing young disciples - launching <i>One Programme: District</i> (3 hour internships for 16-23 year olds)	Vic Loveday		Regional training weekend for potential interns to be held in February. Targeted invitations have been made, further publicity to be released early January	First interns to start Sept 2023	
Launch Justice Seekers community of practice	Neil Harland/ Jenny Carpenter/ Erica Dunmow		Publicity for “justice quilt” collaborative art project to be released	To be launched at April 2023 District Gathering	

TRANSFORMING MISSION

Action	Led by	Since last meeting	Before next meeting	Longer term plans	Challenges not yet resolved
Support and encourage locally identified opportunities for new Christian communities , learning from District NPNP Pilot and other opportunities	Neil Harland	See pages 1 - 5			
Provide £500 seed grants to encourage provision of Warm Spaces this winter in response to cost of living crisis (£20k allocated)	Neil Harland	At time of writing 30 grants have been awarded, with a few more expected. Early learning conversations held with 10 warm spaces, key feedback circulated to all.	Informal check in with each warm space	Grant evaluations (March) “what next” workshop to be held at District Gathering	

PROPERTIES FIT FOR MISSION

Action	Led by	Since last meeting	Before next meeting	Longer term plans	Challenges not yet resolved
Property Advisory Panel to support MPE on £100k+/ complex property projects	Tom Rattigan		Panel members to be safely recruited		
Provide 50% grants (max £1,000 each) for carbon footprint reduction reviews of chapels (£50k allocated)	Tom Rattigan	Scheme has been launched and first surveys undertaken. Anticipated total cost likely to be less than £25k		Anticipate at least 50 chapels will be reviewed	Whilst tailored surveys will highlight quick wins, significant carbon savings will require capital investment
Support circuits in exploring Eco Church/ Eco Circuit	Tom Rattigan			Conversation to be had with each circuit about what would be helpful for them	
Launch community of practice for people with property management responsibilities	Tom Rattigan	Engagement continuing to grow.			
Produce simplified guidance for consents website expectations and other common property matters	Tom Rattigan			Guidance/ checklist for post cease-to-meet options to be discussed with superintendents	
Be alert to mechanisms to lift property management burdens from churches/ circuits, particularly for complex properties or where local people are significantly overstretched.	Tom Rattigan			Discussions ongoing about potential solutions for small number of locations.	

SIMPLIFYING PROCEDURES

Action	Led by	Since last meeting	Before next meeting	Longer term plans	Challenges not yet resolved
Upgrade District database to allow targeted information/ requests to most relevant people	Katrin Hackett	Accurate lay point of contact for most churches on database. Working with a sample of churches to efficiently add other roles		To complete adding other key roles relating directly to district activities, to avoid requests to pass on information	
Seek feedback on simplification needs across the district to develop prioritised action plan	Neil Harland			Focussed conversations to be held to identify common needs (for March meeting)	

We are currently pushing Connexional Team officers to improve responsiveness of reporting from and access to the TheologyX platform used for safeguarding and WLP training, but this is not entirely straightforward.