

RE: DUCKMANTON METHODIST CHURCH

Duckmanton Methodist Church has been a struggling enterprise for some years. During a Circuit Review over ten years ago, facilitated by the then District Mission Enabler, Rachel McCallum, there was a recognition that the work there was coming to an end. It is a great testimony to the hard work and resilience of the congregation that they have kept going as long as they have. However, our membership has continued to decline due to death of members and the remaining few (six members) increasingly have been struggling to keep the work here alive without significant outside support by fellow Methodists from other churches in the Circuit.

In conversations throughout 2022 it became apparent that we can no longer sustain the life and work of Duckmanton Methodist Church as presently configured. There just is not the capacity within the remaining members to hold the burden of managing trusteeship and leadership of the work here. Out of pastoral concern for the members here we need to relieve them of this responsibility. If we simply close our church here and cease to meet, the village of Duckmanton will be left without a Christian witness in terms of a dedicated church space. The Anglicans ceased their work here over 10 years ago. So, there remains a missional concern for the village, and we deeply desire to not leave it without any witness at all.

This led to explorations with Bolsover Methodist Church in the autumn 2022 where they have expressed a commitment to taking up the responsibility for the work in Duckmanton. They were clear that this was being done for pastoral and missional reasons. Pastoral – in the sense that there is a recognition that the remaining members are unlikely for the most part to worship at another Methodist Church as their identifying with their walk with God and that particular building is deeply connected. Out of pastoral care for the congregation they wanted to offer to take up responsibility for the work in this place. Missional – in the sense that they like the members of Duckmanton did not want to leave the village of Duckmanton without a presence.

The members of Bolsover explored this as the first step toward creating multisite churches in this Circuit. However, some honest reflection led us to see that effectively Bolsover would effectively be taking on responsibility for another site and the work carried out there. Multisite arrangements may be in our future, but this didn't feel like the right place to do it in the first instance. The members of Bolsover also realised that there would be a financial burden to them unless they could make it economically viable and if that were the case they may need to take the difficult decision in the future to completely cease the work on this site and dispose of the property. At this point, mention then should be made of Edge Ministries, based out of our Staveley Methodist Church who are very interested in renting the building from us five days a week to do new missional work in Duckmanton community. This is an exciting opportunity and Bolsover Methodist Church already has much experience and expertise in relating to outside parachurch organisations in mutually beneficial ways (e.g. Freedom Project & Ashgate Hospice). This will make the financial arrangement workable for Bolsover for as long as Edge Ministries wants to do work with us. If in the future the situation becomes untenable, Bolsover would be best placed to make the difficult decision to return to the District Leading Team again in order to seek permission to sell the site.

However, for now, we are asking that DLT will support the decision made by Duckmanton Church Council on Friday 25th November 2022 to cease to meet in their present form in order that the arrangement agreed in principal at the Bolsover Church Council on 17th October might be formalised with your blessing and steps then can be taken to work out the details of this arrangement. We have already agreed that we will offer a monthly afternoon service on the site, resourced by worship leaders from Bolsover and the Circuit's preachers. We have also already made some headway with the discussions with Edge Ministries who may start to make use of the building from start of April 2023.

PROPOSALS:

- (1) THAT DLT SUPPORT THE REQUEST FOR DUCKMANTON METHODIST CHURCH TO CEASE TO MEET AS PRESENTLY CONFIGURED &**
- (2) THAT DLT SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MANAGING TRUSTEESHIP AND THE WORK IN DUCKMANTON VILLAGE BE MOVED TO BOLSOVER METHODIST CHURCH.**