

Sheffield Methodist District

Notes from a Circuit Stewards' gathering on Zoom, 9th November 2022

Welcome and apologies

Present: Rev Gill Newton, Chair of District; Roger Jones, Derbyshire NE; Gill Daly, Derbyshire NE; Keith Abel, Trinity; Alan Hollands, Barnsley; Joyce Wiles, Sheffield; Kathryn Harris, Doncaster; Dawn Webster, Barnsley; Malcolm Letts, Peak; Ann Lyons, Sheffield; John Dilks, Sheffield; Hazel Hepworth, Doncaster; Sue Dilks, Sheffield; Eleanor Wainwright, RDV; Christine Raper, Doncaster; Janet Hampshire, RDV; Joan Carr, Peak; Hilary Bennett, Trinity; Carol Corbridge, Doncaster; Heather Thomas, Peak; David Ryan, RDV; Heather Hague, Barnsley; Mary Reason, Barnsley; Victoria Loveday, RDV.

Apologies: Rev Julie Coates, Deputy Chair of District

Opening prayers.

Gill Newton led with some reflections on the nature of change, and things that can be hurdles for us moving on in a different way. We are often faced with difficult decisions. Encouragement to hold before God times we might step back or hold back. Reading from Isaiah 43: 'Don't dwell on the past,' 'See, I am doing a new thing.' God brings about the seemingly impossible and makes the way through. Followed by prayers.

Introductions.

Everyone gave a brief introduction to themselves.

Stationing update.

Referred to the summer Stationing Forum where we shared stories of where the Circuits found themselves with staffing and were able to sense needs and priorities across the District. 5 vacancies for ministers: 2 for RDV, superintendent and presbyter; 2 for Barnsley, superintendent and presbyter; 1 superintendent for Doncaster. We asked for 3 to be considered critical, and 1 was ultimately accepted as critical connexionally— RDV superintendent. 4 received a match in the first round of stationing, 1 visit has taken place, 3 visits are imminent. The superintendency in Barnsley was not matched, but we remain hopeful and prayerful as stationing matching continues.

Manses, including energy efficiency.

Connexion is urging Circuits to ensure that manses are as energy efficient as possible, aiming for EPC certificates of level C or above. This is not a directive but there is strong encouragement. This may prove tricky in terms of older manses and Circuit monies available. The meeting discussed this, and several points were raised, including looking at getting rid of manses that are not energy efficient. Barnsley have built a new manse on land where a chapel was demolished. No levy needs to be paid to TMCP if a new manse build is an immediate replacement. Regarding issues of heating costs and insulation, it was noted that installing solar panels is now a more expensive and complicated business.

Lay Employees – cost of living crisis

Connexion took the recent and quick decision to make a one-off payment of £1,000 to presbyters and deacons in the active work, all retired ministers, and Connexional lay employees, in connection with the cost-of-living crisis. Methodist Council is strongly encouraging Districts and Circuits to

consider a one-off payment for lay employees. It is up to Districts and Circuits to decide about this, including any amount to be given. DLT has had some discussion on this regarding District lay employees, and Gill Newton will discuss it with Circuit Superintendents at a meeting at the end of this month. Again, this could prove tricky as Circuits may well be struggling with finances. It is up to each Circuit to consider what is desirable, as well as affordable and possible. The meeting discussed this, with many ideas being shared. The way forward with this would be to have a discussion at CLTs with a recommendation to the Circuit Meeting. The moral side was discussed - 'What is the just and fair thing to do?' - as was the fact that it is not possible to achieve equal treatment from Circuit to Circuit, and beyond. Differing views were expressed about the relative merits of increasing wages, against making a one-off payment. The District Treasurer and HR Officer are working on a paper doing some calculations around making a one-off payment or a rise in salary, which should be ready to share with Superintendents at their meeting at the end of the month.

Lay Employees – real living wage

A request has been made to all Circuits to implement any pay rises for lay employees on the real living wage by 1st December. Changes need to be with payroll by the 15th of the month.

Oversight and Trusteeship

Circuits were asked if they had anything to share about progress being made.

Barnsley - has already gone down the multi-site route

Derbyshire North East – Actively investigating moving to a multi-site arrangement. Churches have been consulted and a summary document is going to December Circuit Meeting, recommending reorganisation by September 2024. This will go back to Church Councils. There is a mixed reaction, with concerns about how it will work in practice.

Peak – conversations within CLT at an early stage. Something will need to happen as there are several small rural churches.

RDV – no great push for this now as churches are in a stable position.

Same sex marriage – registration of buildings

Wherever possible, Circuits to remind local churches to let the District Office know if their building is to be registered for same – sex marriage. There may be occasions when the District Chair might be needed to signpost requests to those churches registered. This issue of registration can be raised again at any point in the future, to register / review / reverse.

Sharing 'Good News' Stories (or challenges!)

Sheffield: Recent experience of being a school pastor was shared, a good reminder of mission work beyond the walls of the Church.

Derbyshire North East: Good news - a report of the NPNP project beginning to take off, with community pioneer work with two communities in deprived areas. Challenge – recruiting new Circuit Stewards, and considering outsourcing some of the functions.

Barnsley: Not selling a chapel that closed, but re-purposing it by leasing it to 2 organisations (boxing club, Store House community led food hub.) Will be holding Circuit Carol Service there. The church members have moved to other chapels.

Trinity: Developments at Grove Steet MC Retford. A large Victorian building that was closed for 6 years as unsafe building. Church funds released alongside funds from a church closure to start a building project, and money now coming in from funding bids. Creating a fit for purpose building and addressing sustainability for the future - a great illustration of the theme of the opening devotions.

Doncaster: A 'hot spot' in a local church in conjunction with the 'Warm Spaces' initiative. A reminder of the £500 District grant for any church doing anything new. Working in partnership with other churches and groups is encouraged.

Other matters.

A group of people from the district are working on provision during Gill Newton's presidential year.

Thanks were given for the work being done by Circuit Stewards.

Dates of future meetings:

Wednesday 10th May 2023, Gill Newton to chair

November 2023 date – Katrin will send out a doodle poll for a date. It is likely either the Deputy Chair of District Julie Coates, or another Superintendent, will chair.

Closing prayer – the words of the grace were shared.