

Sheffield Methodist District

Notes from a Circuit Stewards' gathering on Zoom, 10th May 2023

Present: Rev Gill Newton, Chair of District; Rev Margaret Mwailu, Synod Secretary; Neil Harland, Mission Enabler; DNE: June Cope, Gill Daly, Roger Jones; Trinity: Keith Abel, Hilary Bennett, Spen Welchman; Barnsley: Heather Hague, Alan Hollands; Sheffield: David Burton, Sue Dilks, Ann Lyons, Jo Webster, Joyce Wiles; Doncaster: Kathryn Harris, Hazel Hepworth, Alan Mendum; Peak: Joan Carr, Aline Danks, Tom Donoghue, Malcolm Letts, Heather Thomas, Sheila Travis; RDV: Janet Hampshire, Vic Loveday, David Ryan.

Welcome and Introductions

Opening devotions.

Gill Newton led with a reading from Colossians 1, some reflections on servant leadership, and the importance of praying for each other, especially those in leadership. Followed by prayers.

Sharing "Good News" Stories.

Peak: unanimous agreement for latest proposals regarding 'The Wesley Way.'

RDV: Fruitful schools' work, and the work of a team creating 'prayer spaces' in schools.

Barnsley: The completion of a new manse building, and the work of Deacon Alison, starting with prayer walks.

DNE: Anticipating the work of Godfrey Chikaviro, a student from the Queens Foundation Circuit Based Learning Pathway, over 2 years in the Circuit.

Doncaster: Schools' work over Easter. The 'baby basics' project going from strength to strength.

Sharing 'challenges.'

Peak: The challenge of a lot of meetings. A drastic reduction in pastoral leaders at Bakewell (with 3 new volunteers following a heartfelt plea.)

Trinity: A widespread reduction in people fulfilling roles, particularly treasurers.

Sheffield: What to prioritise if roles are held at Church and Circuit levels. (The importance of holding things in tension, supporting the appropriate trustee body, discernment, prioritising, laying something down)

Circuit Staffing.

- Stationing.
- Stationing process questionnaires. Ann Lyons is on the Connexional Stationing Review Group, and reported briefly on the first meeting in December. A root and branch review of the Stationing process is being undertaken. Stage 1 involves gathering information across the Connexion, with a questionnaire, with particular sections for presbyters, deacons, Superintendents and Circuit Stewards. This is imminent, and all Circuit Stewards are encouraged to complete and submit the relevant section. The next steps will be based on this feedback, with recommendations brought to Conference 2024.
- Stationing Forum. All Circuit Superintendents (deputies) and at least 1 steward from each Circuit are invited to attend. Tuesday 18th July at 7pm, venue to be confirmed.

- Unconscious Bias Training. All new members of Circuit Invitation Committees to have completed this training before they start the stationing process, with a refresher every 4 years.
- Lay Employees.
Any Circuit involved in recruiting a lay employee must go through Andrew Crawford, District HR Officer, who will provide help and advice from the beginning. A reminder that a Church role needs the permission of the Circuit, and a Circuit role the permission of the District.

There are examples around Connexion where the Circuit will handle the payroll for Church employees, and where the Circuit takes responsibility for Church employees.

EDI Training

This training is mandatory for some office holders, including Church and Circuit Stewards and must be completed by the end of this calendar year. The training is accessible online, link through the Methodist Church website. Teams of people are encouraged to complete the course together. Each Circuit needs to maintain records. Further work is being undertaken on alternative methods of completion. Some people will need to do both EDI and Unconscious Bias training.

Ministerial Development Review.

This process has lapsed a little as Connexion has undertaken a review. It is now being relaunched. There is a clearer focus on ministers looking at one aspect of their ministry each year. It is part of ministerial discipline, and every minister needs to have an ordained and lay contributor. Circuits need to look at how to recruit lay contributors. Those who have undertaken this role before could possibly pick up the revised process, but anyone new to the role will need training. Details are under the ministries section on the methodist church website.

Simplifying Procedures (Neil Harland)

This is strand of the District Mission Strategy. When things are over complicated, they can squash those things that really make a difference with mission. Small things have been done on this strand so far. A good example is the District grant form for the Warm Spaces initiative. The July DLT will look at the next steps and priorities for this. It seeks to be informed by feedback from Circuits on what would or would not make a difference. Neil gave 3 headings for Circuits to consider feedback. 1. Successes: has a way been found to make something run more smoothly? 2. Concerns: is there a procedure / process that takes up time / is stressful, that could be done a better way? 3. Challenge: are some procedures unnecessary? Can this be discussed at the next Circuit Stewards meeting in every Circuit, with feedback to Neil by email.

NPNP / New Christian Communities (Neil Harland)

A reminder of the importance of starting new Christian communities/ New Places for New People, to engage with new people that our existing churches would be unlikely to be able to reach. Starting a new community from scratch forces an outward looking focus, so we often learn missional lessons that benefit our existing churches too.

We are starting to see progress in some of the new Christian communities within the district https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-XPpJod_i6cgr4nWrOq8wa8lyajrhqmz

Nurturing a new congregation until it becomes fully self-sustaining is a multi-year process, so Circuit Stewards have a role to play in holding this local contextual vision as ordained ministers come and go.

District can provide support through access to specialist advice, coaching, training, and district officers. District has match funded Connexional funding, meaning that funding of £60k over five years (eg £12k each year for five years) is available towards up to eight new part time pioneer roles. This is a higher level of funding than available for most other roles, because of their importance and time needed. We will achieve most impact if these pioneers are distributed across all of our circuits. Circuit Stewards, please raise this with your CLT.

(More information at <https://www.sheffieldmethodist.org/what-we-do/new-christian-communities.html>)

DLT membership

A new constitution for DLT was agreed at Synod. DLT is looking for new members: a young person 16-23; someone who is part of a NPNP project/ with pioneering experience; a children and youth worker; 2 people elected from Synod. These roles will be advertised, and Circuit Stewards are encouraged to consider appropriate people within each Circuit who could be approached.

District Celebration/ Ordinand's Testimony Service.

Sunday 11th June, 3pm, at the Crossing, Worksop. Testimonies from Deacon Emily Hoe-Crook, Trinity Circuit, Rev Michelle Deans, Sheffield Circuit, and from Rev Claude Kimpinde, Sheffield Circuit, who will be received into full connexion at Conference.

Cover during Gill Newton's Presidential Year.

Trinity Circuit has graciously enabled Rev Julie Coates, Deputy Chair of District, to take on a lot of this cover. A supernumerary minister will do 2 days per week in Trinity Circuit, funded by Connexion. There will also be support from the District Staff Team, and the 2 District Chairs in the Yorkshire Plus Region. Picking up on the theme of the opening devotions, Gill Newton said how much she will value prayer in undertaking the role of President of Conference.

Next Meeting – November 2023.

A doodle poll will be issued to set the date, when Julie Coates, Deputy Chair of District, is back from sabbatical in August.

Closing prayer led by Rev Gill Newton.