

## **Circuit Stewards Gathering**

**1 May 2024**

Present

- Sheffield – Ann Lyons, David Burton (also involvement in Trinity), John Dilks, Sue Dilks, Joyce Wiles (had to leave early), Matt Irons, Mark Sharples, Katrin Hackett
- Derbyshire North East – Gill Daly, Roger Jones
- Peak – Malcolm Letts, Heather Thomas, Sheila Travis, Malcolm Letts
- Doncaster - Kathryn Harris, Chris Raper
- Barnsley – Heather Hague, Alan Hollands, Ellie Peet
- Rotherham & Dearne Valley – David Ryan, Janet Hampshire
- Trinity – Spen Welchman, Hilary Bennett
- District – Andrew Crawford (HR Advisor), Rev Julie Coates (Deputy Chair)

Apologies from Margaret Mwailu (Synod Secretary),  
other apologies also received from Dawn Webster, Graham Hudson, Jenny Bywater,  
Mary Reason, Tom Donoghue

Welcome and opening worship  
Julie opened with prayer

Introductions  
All to introduce themselves to the meeting.

News from around the Circuits

Peak Wesley Way has hosted its first pilgrims who were very positive about the experience, one was a radio presenter (on Radio 4, farming programme) and did an interview with Julie Letts and Lorraine Brown – hopefully we will be told if/when it is broadcast. It is also on the Methodist Church website. Please do continue to help publicise this 42 mile walk, over 5 days, camping in the churches on route. This is a new venture exploring ways to keep church buildings used. 4 bookings so far, some from word of mouth from those on the walk.

Trinity Circuit have just completed the renovations of Grove Street church and is now open. There will be a District Celebration in June, do come and see what has been done. They now employ a Volunteers Co-Ordinator and a Facilities and Community Manager which are proving very successful.

Derbyshire North East are still working through the Stationing process with no match, please hold this situation in your prayers.

Conversation with Andrew about line management and topics such as staff sickness — any questions

Andrew introduced himself, here to answer any questions (no presentation), and any support that he can give. A reminder that he is here to help and support with any employment issues.

- When lay employees are off sick, should they inform Andrew? This isn't a requirement, but it does help with consistency, so he can get in touch to check on returns to work etc to offer support etc.
- The church is a challenging institution to work for. The structure doesn't seem to lend itself as to who is in charge, tensions can result from this. It should be

down to the Circuit about how this should be managed. Andrew can intercede if necessary and help with guidance. This might be an issue with a particular circuit, there should be clear line management/supervision. It might depend on the specific circumstances.

- Statutory Sick Pay, custom and practice may differ in circuits, some will follow guidance, others may be more compassionate (generous) which can backfire if not handled carefully. It is advisable to identify SSP, it should be noted on payslips (doesn't always seem to be), to help follow the process.
- It is becoming more common to seek, for example, an employee to do the main work (eg booking) but there should still be a church member who overseas/signs off on reports. This is a challenge, fitting it into the church perspective. At the end of the day it is still the responsibility of the managing trustees/circuit stewards.
- Having resource teams may be a way forward, less onerous when on one person. Peak Circuit are grateful for the support from Barnsley, working on their experiences in merging chapels into one church council, especially with regard to merging finances.
- Line Management-can there be more signposting to where the policies are around, eg how to manage sick leave, with time line. Andrew will share this with the group after the meeting
- The Methodist Church have regular Line Management training sessions, which is highly recommended. Andrew is involved in developing the training. There is also a new handbook available. This is also a work in progress, building on experience to make this better. There are differences between "secular" and "church" employment
- Sheffield Circuit have now got their own Lay Employment Group, which will also look at local church employees, to make sure things are done properly, efficiently and sensitively.

Andrew was thanked to coming to the meeting.

The District is here to support. Neil can also offer advice and support as Treasurer, Tom Rattigan on Property, Do ask if it would be helpful for them to attend one of these gatherings.

Other news — new Chair, District Celebration, promoting the District Gatherings

In case you missed it, Revd Vicky Atkins as been nominated to the role of Chair of District from September 2025. She will be shadowing Gill Newton over the next year. The District Celebration will be on 9 June at 4pm. Do come and join in this! District Gatherings, please do consider coming to these, and encourage others to attend as well. The next one is on 14 September at The Crossing, Worksop. It is another opportunity to celebrate and encourage each other.

Date of next meeting

KH will circulate possible dates in November. We will continue to meet on Zoom

Closing prayer

Julie shared a prayer of blessing.

The meeting ended at 8:34