

## Sheffield Methodist District Leading Team

Meeting on Wednesday 8 May 2024 at 7.00 pm via ZOOM

### Present

Julie Coates (JC) (Acting Chair); Sean Adair (SA); John Simms (JS); Neil Harland (NH); Gill Daly (GD); David Burton (DB); Grace Leigh (GL); John Henry (JH)

*Erica Dunmow joined at 19:50*

(non-voting) Katrin Hackett (KH);

### Opening Business

#### 1. Opening worship

JC opened the meeting with a prayer from the EDI training kit.

Julie welcomed the new members and invited them to introduce themselves – Grace Leigh (Youth Rep) and John Henry (Superintendent Rep). The rest of the team introduced themselves to the new members.

#### 2. Apologies for absence

Gill Newton (Presidential duties); Claire Rawlinson (sabbatical); Romeo Pedro ; Margaret Mwailu; Jon Bellfield; Amiee Roddam

#### 3. Minutes of the DLT on 8 March

These had been circulated and were accepted as an accurate record Matters arising from the minutes.

#### 4. Matters arising

- District Vacancies

Lay Stationing Rep – This is still vacant, those approached so far had declined. NH asked about the time commitment – there are busy times in May & October, with training and conversations, although things can come up at any time – eg curtailments. GD would be around to support and be shadowed. Superintendents were again asked to consider who might be possible within their circuit churches. GD was a church steward when she was recruited, nominees don't need to be in a circuit role. There is an ongoing overhaul of the process, planned to come into effect for Stationing 2026.

*Item 4 was taken at this point*

Pioneer Rep – ongoing, NH hopes to have a name for the next meeting

- President's visit – initial plans have been sent in to the Conference office.

#### 5. Decisions made between meetings for recording

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- Ceased to Meet requests  
Litton & Walkely Ebenezer sent formal requests. These were circulated among DLT members and received approval.

### Items For Discussion and Decision

#### 6. Employee Assistance programme

(19:24) A presentation was given by Helena Wall from Westfield Health.

The demand for such a plan is increasing. The Health Cash Plan is designed to help with pinch-points. The plan is paid for by the employer (the church), premiums don't increase with age, but members can increase their own entitlement. Key features: no medical required; not waiting times, no limit to the number of claims (up to agreed level); include pre-existing conditions; children are covered up to age 22. Can also include a scanning service (MRI etc); Claims process gives money back on healthcare bills, direct with Westfield, can be claimed via their App, processed within 2 days and credited into bank account. A paper form version is also available. Claims need to be submitted within 26 weeks.

As well as cashback, there is also access to a health and wellbeing services such as 24 hour advice line; on medical, legal and domestic issues, also has up to 6 structured therapy sessions with the same counsellor, which can be phone, online or in person.

There is a Wisdom App, which gives access to courses, mood trackers, self help

Doctor line – 24 hours access, also covers resident family members.

The counselling element can also include the Doctor line, this can be separated from the Cashplan

There were no questions from DLT about the presentation.

The slides from the presentation will be shared after the meeting.

The brochure for the Assistance programme will be shared after the meeting.

Helena was thanked for her time and left the meeting at 19:42

DB suggested that the cash plan be something offered to employees as something they could add in.

NH as treasurer - the budget was around £6/month for each employee. Lighthouse Homes have signed up to a similar scheme and are using the resources. Space to Breathe had done a report on youth workers, employees can be reluctant to speak to line managers with health concerns in the first instance. The suggestion is that this is trialled with the District employees, to see if this is something to be recommended to circuits (and churches). This is a way of demonstrating that the employees are valued.

Freedom Community Project are also exploring this.

**DLT approve of this proposal to purchase this for the District Lay Employees.**

## **7. Grant Application**

A report has been circulated including some grant evaluations. An application was planned to come from the Terminus Project, but they have decided to wait until they have a fuller financial picture.

There were no questions on the Grants report

## **8. Treasurers' Report**

The report has been circulated.

District Finances seem to have a bit more money than expected, it is hard to predict the amount of money will come into the accounts.

Darlington District are now employing Andrew Crawford for 8 hours a week, through our payroll

Dave Burton will become a signatory on the CAF bank account, following McCauley Key's resignation.

SA offered to also become a signatory as the Synod Secretary. **DLT agreed with this.**

## **9. Communications Officer update**

The report has gone into the Synod Report Book. JC reported her gratitude to Sam for her work, the podcasts and magazines are very positively received. Sam's hours have been temporarily increased from 16 to 24 / week. The proposal is to make this permanent. **DLT agreed with this. KH will confirm with payroll**

## **10. Mission Strategy update**

The report has been circulated.

A steering group has been set up for the Metal Methodists, grant applications are ongoing,

New Beginnings Seed Funding – not had many applications yet, so do keep reminding about this. NH is meeting with Carla Quenet & Martyn Atkins around possible training opportunities.

God for All funding, NH hoping to have a conversation with Eunice Atwood about what this will look like practically but won't be until 2025. NPNP funding needs to be allocated by May 2026 as a requirement of the funding. The District will offer £60,000 over 5 years for projects, of which £20,000 comes from the connexional grant

NH would like some feedback on where the priorities should be for next year. He will approach people on this.

SA would like to note that there is also funding from connexional and Cliff for Heather Major, doing research into NPNP, she is an excellent communicator so could be a resource for the District.

## **11. Property Update**

Tom Rattigan joined the meeting. His report has been circulated.

### **CONFIDENTIAL**

TR raised that there are some concerns around the Barnsley Circuit. There are a number of property issues that need attention, primarily around the use of buildings, in some cases the licences need to include licence to worship, the consent site shows only 11 projects since its inception, there appear to have been letters sent out saying that buildings can be sold at less than market value. Grants have been given to non-methodist organisations (SO 915-917), the circuit have 5 manses, some may be rented out without consents or tenancy agreements. There is a culture within the circuit which seems negative, some of the issues are ingrained. Currently more than 50% of TR workload is taken up with the circuit. TMCP are giving scope to try and resolve this, but this is limited.

The legal issues also have an emotional toll, DLT would want to support TR in his work. There are some sensitivities, it was recognised that they are in a difficult and vulnerable space. TR has not had a chance to start to look at the Manse issues, which may have legal implications.

It is hard to know what the best outcome would be. As a charity, the governance culture seems weak. TMCP are referring to potential breaches of trust, four members of their staff there are working on this.

TR identified two businesses inhabited space with potentially inherited rights; two licenses may need to include the licence to worship, the underselling could be an issue if there were bids and a lower bid was accepted. The worry is that the circuit have been made aware that they have not followed due process, and seem not to be doing anything about it – hence the potential breach of trust. The breadth of work is more than TR can manage on his own.

TR has never been invited to a Barnsley Circuit meeting, so has had difficulty in creating relationships. **DLT agreed to send a letter to the Circuit**, offering District support and requesting an action plan to address these circumstances and some evidence that work has been started. We expect an update in early Autumn, otherwise we may need to invoke SO 512B .

Ideally we would want to have a District representative at Circuit meetings (including CLT and Property) – we would like this invitation to be extended by the Circuit, as a forced presence would not encourage the Circuit to maintain open dialogue. The best outcome would be for the Circuit to understand the importance of and take responsibility for resolving these historic issues. TR can keep TMCP informed, and they will also support writing such a letter. 12 months would be a sensible timescale to see significant progress on outstanding issues.

## **12. Urban Theology Union**

Deferred to the next meeting

## **Other Matters**

### **13. Methodist Council report**

The report has been circulated.

### **14. Peak Park Rural Development Enabler**

The report was included in the Synod book

### **15. Worship and Preaching**

The report was included in the Synod book

### **16. The Foundry**

It is noted that Richard Dearden has been nominated to be the Methodist Trustee for The Foundry

### **17. EDI**

This will be deferred to the next meeting

### **18. AOB**

Dates for DLT meetings 2023/24

- Tuesday 9 July – JC will chair this as part of the hand-over

#### Synod / District Gatherings

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|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| • Autumn Gathering (Synod) | 14 September 2024 | Trinity – The Crossing |
| • Spring Gathering (Synod) | 5 April 2025      | Sheffield              |
| • Autumn Gathering (Synod) | 13 September 2025 | Doncaster              |
| • Spring Gathering (Synod) | 18 April 2026     | Sheffield              |

The meeting closed with prayer at 21:24