

Permissions to “Cease to meet”

The District Leading Team (DLT) have received four requests for churches to cease to meet since the Synod meeting on 20 April 2024.

Silkstone Common Methodist Chapel has been exploring its future actively since 2007 if not long before that. There have been several serious efforts to move things forward. An architect was appointed in 2019 to produce sketches following a project brief to improve the building for users. Post pandemic it was proposed to set up a management group for the chapel.

None of this work was successful and in January 2023 the members of the church council agreed with the chapel members request to have a year to transfer, with a closing service in April 2023. The membership has all moved to Dodworth Methodist Chapel.

At the Barnsley North West Church Council (NWCC) held on 30th January 2024 the meeting accepted the proposal that ‘following the exploration of the feasibility of running Silkstone Common, the NWCC request that the Circuit take the necessary steps to dispose of the building.’ The Proposal was accepted with 23 votes For, none Against, and 1 Abstention.

This was passed to the Circuit Meeting & the decision made in March 2024 to close & sell the building.

The DLT meeting on 9 July agreed that the chapel should cease to meet but felt that at the moment it does not meet the criteria to be sold. The chapel is very much a village hub and other options should be explored before permission to sell would be given.

Gleadless Valley Methodist Church Council met on June 7th, 2024. The membership numbers are well below 12, with all the responsibilities falling on one person, which is unfair and unsustainable.

After the Covid19 pandemic they had been working hard to provide café church services twice a month for a new community gathered through the work of the food bank. However, due to the circumstances of the people coming to the services, they were constantly operating at a loss.

Their hope would be that in ceasing to meet and handing the church back into circuit trusteeship, the way would be open for new partnerships to be formed with other groups working in the community and a new way of working together for Gleadless Valley could be explored.

The vote at the church council for ceasing to meet was unanimous.

This has been a sad and painful decision, with much regret. However, we gave thanks for the life of the church over the last 60+ years and recognised all the work and mission and faith surrounding Gleadless Valley Methodist Church.

The Sheffield Circuit Meeting on 24th June agreed to the cessation of Gleadless Valley Methodist Church and recommends to the District Leading Team that permission be given by the Synod.

The Circuit Meeting also agreed to the transfer of the buildings and assets into Circuit trusteeship, and to consider alternative use of the building so that other work of God might be allowed to flourish in that place.

The DLT on 9 July, noting that this is a sad and poignant moment, agreed that the chapel should cease to meet.

Apperknowle Methodist Church membership has been below twelve for the last four successive quarters, so under Standing Order 605 (1) it ceases to be entitled to be recognised as a Local Church. The church has relied on members of other local churches to fulfil key roles such as Church Council Secretary and Safeguarding Officer.

The congregation have come to this request to cease meeting for worship through a period of discernment which has included several meetings. These conversations have taken place within the wider context of the request from the Sheffield Circuit Meeting for all Local Churches to prayerfully reflect on the future of local worship while being aware of the missional and pastoral needs and opportunities across the whole Circuit.

There is potential opportunity of continued community mission and service through the use of the chapel building for funeral services working with local undertakers and the natural burial ground. Going forward, the Local Church also recognises the need for the Circuit to further discern the missional, community and financial potential of the chapel building.

The Church Council meeting on 12 August voted unanimously to cease to meet.

The DLT meeting on 3 September agreed to support the request, subject to the Circuit meeting.

The Sheffield Circuit Meeting on 12 September agreed to this request with 61 in favour and 1 abstention.

Pitsmoor Methodist Church membership has been below twelve for the last four successive quarters, so under Standing Order 605 (1) it ceases to be entitled to be recognised as a Local Church. The church was adamant that it was not “seeking permission to cease worship” but felt that it has no choice but to take the decision to cease to meet. The church council meeting accepted this decision with 9 voting for cessation and 1 abstention.

The DLT meeting on 3 September agreed to support the request, subject to the Circuit meeting.

The Sheffield Circuit Meeting on 12 September agreed to this request with 59 in favour, 2 against and 1 abstention.

RESOLUTION:

The Synod gives permission for all the above churches to cease to meet.