



Serving the Methodist Church  
in South Yorkshire,  
North Nottinghamshire  
and North East Derbyshire

# Reports to Synod

## April 2025

## **Chair's Introduction**

Welcome to this collection of reports which reflect some of the life of the district. So many of the stories told and the work reflected here goes unseen during the year, but we are grateful to those who fulfil roles and inspire us about important matters, for their commitment and for the difference they make to our life together and to the lives of many beyond the church.

We continue to live in challenging times in the church, in our communities and in the wider world. We continue to see worshipping communities making the difficult decisions to let go of their buildings but rejoice that in some places those decisions are leading to new life in other ways as buildings are repurposed or sold to fund other new initiatives. The challenge, though, is for us to ensure that we do not withdraw our Christian presence from communities that are seeing so many other facilities withdrawn from them in these days. Let's remember that we are the church and so our presence and witness in our communities is vital. We are still called to worship, learn, care, serve and tell others about Jesus, with, or without a building.

Despite all these challenges, there is still much to be thankful for and hopeful about, as new Christian communities continue to emerge across the district and as so many of you engage in projects and initiatives in your local churches that really make a difference to the lives of those in your communities. Please do continue to pray for, support and encourage each other as we listen carefully and watch patiently for where the Spirit of God is inviting us to be active and responsive.

Thank you to everyone who serves across this district, whether in the local church, the circuits or the district. All that you offer is greatly appreciated and valued and each contribution is an important part of the mission in which we share. As we join in this District Gathering / Synod may we be inspired again to continue sharing our faith in whatever way we can beyond the walls of the church.

As I prepare to move on from my role in this district, I thank you for all that we have shared over the last eleven years and pray that you will offer my successor, Revd Vicky Atkins, a warm welcome and the same wonderful love and support that you have offered to me.

Gill Newton  
District Chair

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## Action for Children

At Action for Children, we're driven by love to take action to change the childhoods of those who need help to thrive.



We would like to thank you for being a huge part of making this happen throughout the 2024/25 financial year. Churches and supporter groups worked really hard raising over £629,500 so far. Funds raised over Christmas are still pouring in! Your generosity – individually and collectively, gives hope and practical support to thousands of children, young people and families.

### **Paying the Price campaign launched**

On 19 March, we launched a new campaign highlighting the urgent need for the government's child poverty strategy to meet the challenges facing families.

Children across the UK are paying the price of poverty but we are campaigning to change that. The government has promised to lift children out of poverty with a new plan that it is publishing soon. Change is possible - but it will require real investment and a commitment from the government to do what is right.

**Please join our campaign.** We have only got a short time to get our message to government, before it publishes its plan. By taking action today, you can help ensure more children's lives are not defined by poverty. Please sign our open letter and share it with others: <https://actionforchildren.uk/PayingThePrice-Synod>

### **Methodist President and Vice President visit Action for Children**

We were delighted to welcome the Methodist Conference President and Vice President to our services to show them the impact of your support and express our gratitude to the church.

In January, Vice President Carolyn Godfrey took part in a Roots of Empathy session at Merrylee Primary School in Glasgow. She saw first-hand how this programme helps build caring and compassionate people by helping children learn about their emotions and behaviour supported by a baby teacher. President, The Revd Helen Cameron visited Edinburgh Disability Services in February. She talked to staff about how the service supports children with learning disabilities and their families. During a tour, she saw our facilities, such as a sensory room and gardens that support children with their development.

We are grateful for their prayers and keen interest in our work.

### **Action for Children Scotland celebrates Investors in Young People Platinum Award**

We are absolutely thrilled to announce that Action for Children Scotland has retained the prestigious Investors in Young People Platinum Award!

The Investors in Young People (IYYP) report states: "Your passion and commitment to provide young staff with an employment opportunity, especially young people

who may face barriers to work, is inspiring, and sets you apart as an ambassador to develop Scotland's young workforce... You care about your young people, and we know you're ambitious to do even more for them."

This proud achievement follows IYYP Gold Awards in 2015 and 2019, and Platinum in 2022.

### **Royal Patron visit**

Our Patron, the Princess of Wales, visited our Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) at HMP Styal in February. She met staff and service users, shining a light on the important work that ensures babies get the best chance to thrive in a supportive environment. She also spent time with some mums and babies to understand the importance of the service, which is very much aligned to her emphasis on early years development.

### **Count Your Blessings during Lent**

Thanks to everyone who got involved in '[Count Your Blessings](#)', learning about how we support children in care. If you are reading this after Lent, I urge you to still download our calendar to hear young people telling their inspiring stories in the ideos and articles. I hope hearing how you make a difference encourages you.

### **Celebrating Action for Children Sunday, 13 July**

We love hearing about church fundraising activities throughout the year, but Action for Children Sunday is extra special. It is a celebration of our strong partnership with the Methodist Church and affiliated churches. It is also a time to reflect on the issues that affect children and families, pray and take action.

This year, we invite you to explore the theme 'Driven by love, we take action for children'. Worship outlines for adult and children's services will be available to download in April from [actionforchildren.uk/faithFR](https://actionforchildren.uk/faithFR). If you wish to receive a worship booklet and newsletter in the post, please email me to add you to our mailing list.

Traditionally, churches have held their Action for Children Sunday service on the second Sunday in July, close to our birthday, 9 July. However, some choose another Sunday that is more convenient.

We have noticed that after the pandemic, fewer churches indicate that they are holding an Action for Children Sunday service. And we would like your feedback on how we can support your plans and ways we could improve worship resources.

Do reach out to your Relationship Fundraising Executive too for advice and support here: [actionforchildren.uk/your-local-fundraiser](https://actionforchildren.uk/your-local-fundraiser)

### **Honouring our Heritage**

Our Honouring our Heritage campaign is coming back for its second year. This June, help us celebrate Action for Children's heritage and our incredible supporters that enable us to transform the lives of vulnerable children and families in the UK.

You can read last year's bible and prayer reflections here:  
[actionforchildren.org.uk/heritage](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/heritage) (scroll down the page).

Share your views on our plans for this year in this survey:  
<https://forms.office.com/e/OKJhShVbd2>

### **Christian foster carers needed**

We urgently need more foster carers in the UK, particularly from faith communities. We are calling on people with an open heart and a spare room to consider fostering and help spread the word.

Children in care can struggle with their identity. So, it is important to support them to feel confident in their identity, culture, and beliefs by matching them with carers who share similar values, wherever we can.

We know that faith can provide structure, stability, and a supportive community for these vulnerable young people, many of whom have experienced trauma. Find out more: <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/fostering/why-choose-us/faithin-fostering/>

Could you display our poster in your churches?

[https://media.actionforchildren.org.uk/documents/AfC\\_FIF\\_A4Poster.pdf](https://media.actionforchildren.org.uk/documents/AfC_FIF_A4Poster.pdf)

### **Keeping you up to date**

Despite having a smaller fundraising team and fewer church visits post-pandemic, we aim to keep supporters updated on how their contributions are making a difference. Here are some of the ways to stay informed:

- Sign up to our newsletter: [actionforchildren.org.uk/sign-up-toour-newsletter/](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/sign-up-toour-newsletter/)
- Join Faith Space, our online forum:
- <https://forms.office.com/e/y2701CkN5e>
- Watch out for news in your District newsletter and [Methodist news](#).

You can also email me with your stories and photos so I can share with our wider church community.

Thank you. I wish you an enjoyable time at Synod.

Blessings,



Faith Partnerships Lead [karis.kolawole@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:karis.kolawole@actionforchildren.org.uk)

#### **Contacting us**

- Your local fundraiser: [actionforchildren.org.uk/your-local-fundraiser](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/your-local-fundraiser)
- Supporter care: [0300 123 2112](tel:03001232112) (open 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday) or [ask.us@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:ask.us@actionforchildren.org.uk)

## Archivist

By the time you read this one of those vary rare events will have already taken place – An Archivist Conference! This will have been held on March 12th at the Central Library Manchester. This will be the launch of the new **Methodist Archivist Handbook**. It will have also been an opportunity to meet other Archivists from across the Connexion.

**A Question for you all** – What is in your church safe? – Do you know and why are certain things in there? I have been looking at what is normally kept in the church safe.

**Church Deeds** – We were one of the first Districts to have all church and manse deeds registered with the Land Registry in Peterborough. These are now the legal documents. Recently Derbyshire County Council in a discussion of where boundary between road and church were divided would not use the original document and would only use a photocopy obtained from Peterborough. Church deeds and Manse Deeds could be accommodated in the Circuit Safe under the authority of the Circuit Property Management and a detailed record kept.

**Marriage Registers** – these are no longer our concern, and such Registers should have been sent to the Local Registration office by the Minister.

**Silver Communion ware** – Is this communion ware silver or just silver coated?

**Trowels** used at Foundation Services – These are only Silver if they are dated before 1835. After that date they are not silver. Such items are best on show and available to cut the cake at Church Anniversary Teas!

**Baptismal Register** – that's all there is my church safe. These are not legal documents, and it is quite acceptable for them to be kept in a locked cupboard.

**A lot of stuff that no one knows what it is!**

I would suggest that Church Stewards together with the Minister look at what might be in the safe and ascertain what needs to be archived by contacting me.

**One more thought - Is your Safe safe?** – It's worth checking as old safes often contain asbestos and therefore, they should be checked for deterioration.

*John Tranter - District Archivist*  
*trants10@tiscali.co.uk*

## Children & Youth Work

This past year I have been very busy supporting in different ways around the district. I feel we're making good progress in building a fellowship amongst those who work with Children and Young People. I have produced a calendar of events to suit

**Safe and happy childhood**

Action for Children protects and supports children and young people, providing practical and emotional care and support, ensuring their voices are heard, and campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives.



different needs with quiet days, prayer breakfasts, quarterly community of practice drop ins, plus lots of training opportunities including First Aid and Joined Up conferences. Resource sharing is also a key part within my role, practical resources we can use in our setting or linking people together to share knowledge and wisdom.

We'll host our fourth District Youth Day on 12<sup>th</sup> April, at which we hope to have over 70 young people, plus leaders. This year we will be exploring how to be a justice seeking church through our different workshops. We'll then be enjoying a Subway lunch before moving on to on-site activities including climbing tower, cube, zip-line, archery, nerf guns and inflatable penalty shootout. We're really excited for this year's event. You can still book on up until the 9<sup>th</sup> April. Book here [Select tickets - Youth Day @ Hesley Woods - Hesley Woods scout activity centre](#)

In September 2023 we launched our ONE opportunity programme with three interns across the district. This year we have 5 interns from across the district. It's been such a blessing journeying with each of the interns so far this year. We are now looking for our next group of interns to join us from September 2025. So, if you know anyone aged between 16-23, who wants to start a new project within your church or circuit, wants to grow in their faith and test their leadership skills, please get in touch.

We want to encourage as many as possible across the district to attend 3Generate which will be on 3 October – 5 October 2025 at the NEC in Birmingham. Transport will be covered by the district.

Please do get in touch with me if you want to chat about all things children, families, youth or schools work in your setting.

*Victoria Loveday - District Children & Youth Co-ordinator*  
*cy@sheffieldmethodist.org*

*T: 07483 100 864*

## **Communications**

As technology moves on so does the world of communications and it's important that we embrace this.

Over the last 12 months we have continued to grow our social media channels:

Channel	Followers	Reach
Facebook	678 (increase of 54)	Over 20,000 people
Instagram	225 (increase of 18)	344 people
Youtube	127	1337 views in the last year.

Facebook remains our best performing social media channel as this is where we find most of our audience prefers to interact online. We have also started to create Facebook adverts for events and for only a few pence a day we have been able to reach thousands of social media accounts who live close to where we are holding events and might not have heard about it in other ways.

The twice-yearly district magazine continues to be popular with more than 1,500 copies printed and distributed around our circuits and churches. As much as we spend a lot of time in a digital world, it is still important to create printed materials for those who are not digitally savvy or just prefer to read a magazine rather than a screen. We are continuing to print it on recycled paper and leave it uncoated so it can be recycled when everyone has finished reading it. The articles in the magazine are based on the themes of the District Gatherings and include details of the event so people can still join in with the learning even if they can't be there in person.

The district held its first media training sessions, with the help of Connexional colleagues. Superintendents, district staff plus some Presbyters, Deacons and lay employees from each circuit either met for a full day to have intensive in person training or online for a half day course. The aim was to learn how to effectively and confidently share stories in a safe environment. More courses like this are in the pipeline to upskill our people in the district.

**Faith, Hope and The Journey** is the District Podcast where we share our stories with everyone even if they don't have a faith. The conversations are aimed to inspire and help people on their journey through life. We are currently recording and distributing series two and it can be found on Soundcloud, Spotify, Amazon Music, iTunes and on the district website where you can listen to it from our podcast page [sheffieldmethodist.org/podcast](http://sheffieldmethodist.org/podcast)

District Communications Officer Sam Roberts is able to offer help and support to all circuits and churches in the district.

You can follow us on social media:

- Facebook @sheffieldmethodist
- Instagram @sheffieldmethodist
- Youtube @SheffieldMethodistDistrict

And if you haven't already – do sign up for our weekly email:

[sheffieldmethodist.org/news/newsletters](http://sheffieldmethodist.org/news/newsletters)

*Sam Roberts - District Communications Officer*  
[comms@sheffieldmethodist.org](mailto:comms@sheffieldmethodist.org)

T: 07483 176 872

## **District Leading Team**

The District Leading Team (DLT) has met six times since the last Synod report. Meetings continue to be held over Zoom as the most effective use of time and resources.

The Team's regular and continuing work includes setting and monitoring the District's budget, approving grants, and considering requests for authorisations, extensions for On Trial preachers and church closures. During the year the DLT has received a variety of reports about work in the district from all District employees and the main District committees.

The DLT has considered in detail the budget for 2024/25 and subsequent years, and the Treasurer's report sets out the decisions reached.

### **Lay Authorisations**

Four applications for lay authorisations to preside at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper were received this year.

- Nick Waterfield – Sheffield Circuit
- Keith Mears – Doncaster Circuit
- Christine Ogley – Doncaster Circuit
- Elizabeth Worsley – Doncaster Circuit

These have been approved and sent to the Authorisation Committee for final approval and authorisation by the Methodist Conference

In addition two renewals for a third year were approved:

- Sean Worsley – Doncaster Circuit
- Edward Archer-Siddal – Rotherham & Dearne Valley Circuit.

### **Cease to meet**

#### **Sheffield**

Apperknowle - a request to cease to meet was received in September 2024.

The circuit are exploring alternative uses for the building.

Gleadless Valley – a request to cease to meet was received in July 2024. The circuit are exploring alternative uses for the building

Pitsmoor – due to declining membership, the church reluctantly agreed to cease to meet.

#### **Barnsley**

Silkstone Common – This chapel was part of the Barnsley North West Church and a congregation has not met there for over a year. A formal request for cessation of worship was received in July 2024. There are ongoing discussions about the future use of the building.

*These decisions were approved at the September Synod*

We have received two further requests to cease to meet from the Sheffield Circuit which require Synod Approval.

Frecheville – Permission to cease to meet was requested in January 2025. The Circuit Property Development Group are exploring options with regard to the future of the building.

Renishaw – This chapel is part of a multi-site Church. Permission was sought to uncouple the congregation from the building to enable them to become a Class of Trinity Methodist Church. The future of the building will be explored by the Circuit Property Development Group.

### **DLT Membership**

The new constitution was agreed at the April 2023 Synod. Nominations have been received for the additional membership and Synod is asked to approve the following:

New Christian Community/Pioneer representative – Deacon Annabel Terry.

*Revd John Simms has stepped down as one of the Synod Elected Reps to DLT. We thank him for his service and wish him well in the future.*

*Katrin Hackett - District Administrator*

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

During the start of the year, my time was very limited for this role, because I was working nationally evaluating the progress on the implementation of the Justice Dignity & Solidarity (JDS) Strategy which was brought out in 2021 to implement the EDI Policy in all aspects of the life of the Connexion. The main task that I could undertake was to attend the District Leading Team to raise EDI perspectives on agenda items.

I also reviewed the nationally produced job description for the role, that is much more than I can do in two unpaid hours per week, and have raised the fact that if we are to be fully on board with the Strategy then we need to consider a paid role.

In some ways, Sheffield District has been ahead of the curve on EDI issues, but even so the progress across the District on ensuring that all local church office holders have undertaken the Mandatory Unconscious Bias and EDI Training is patchy – I have recently written to all Circuits to check on this. Some have over 90% having taken the training which is great. I will offer facilitated group sessions if Circuits need that, to help us on our discipleship road as an Inclusive Church.

But the greater task that is then before us, is implementing that learning. At the District level we are gradually adopting a mentoring approach to seeking office holders, to help a wider range of people to take that up. Sheffield Circuit has agreed the same approach, but again practice needs to catch up.

We were hoping that a District Justice Seeking Group would be the focal point of this work to help people bed it in to the life of their local church. But that group has not met recently, so instead I am making sure that each Circuit does have it's own EDI Officer, in the same way that we have a safeguarding officer. Once they are all in place, there will be a good body of people to enable to the JDS Strategy to bed in to our Christian life in the District.

I look forward to continuing to work towards a time when all will feel welcome, included and valued in our congregations, that we can better reach out into our local communities and build God's Kingdom together.

*Erica Dunmow, Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Officer,  
[EDI@sheffieldmethodist.org](mailto:EDI@sheffieldmethodist.org)*

## Fund for Human Need

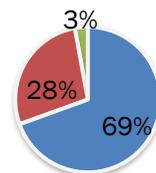
### 1960- 2025

Sixty-five years ago the Revd Donald McNeill and others set up the Fund for Human Need, *"to relieve and remove hunger and poverty in all parts of the world"* Since the 1990's the Fund has concentrated on the needs of destitute and desperate people throughout the UK, making one-off payments to tide them over a difficult time in their lives, offering not only money but also love and hope. FHN is privileged to provide this service in the name of the Methodist Church.



### Thanks

The trustees express thanks to all who have contributed to the Fund in the past connexional year. **Personal donations**, many by standing order of £70,225 (69%) and **church gifts** of almost £28,000 (28%) have been used to give vital support to over 1,500 people, including 473 children.



### Emergency payments

If you know of someone in need, please note that priority is given to those who are destitute, are particularly vulnerable, and where an amount of between £100 and £130 will make a real difference.

Most applications are made through charities, NHS trusts, Citizens Advice offices, local authorities and churches acting on behalf of individuals or families to pay for food, bedding, warm clothing or other essentials. Many of those will have experienced medical or mental health issues, domestic violence or be waiting several weeks before receiving benefit payments.

99.6% of all grants are paid now by bank transfer to the applying organisation or individual, providing a faster response to people who are desperate.

## Ways to help

- Are **you** able to consider making a standing order?
- Could **your church or circuit** have a special fund-raising event?



You can also donate through our Just Giving Page via this QR code.

## Further information

In 2025 look out for us at

- the Methodist Women in Britain Annual Conference, Swanwick, 4 - 6 April
- the Methodist Conference, Telford 26 June - 2 July
- Greenbelt, Kettering, 21 - 24 August

The FHN Newsletter, with stories of how our grants have helped, is sent three times a year by email or post. Contact the administrator to request a copy.

Many districts now have a *FHN Friend* who can supply you with further information and may be available to speak at your church.

Go to the FHN website to access recent years' Annual Report and Accounts.

See our adverts in the Methodist Diary (p 21) and Minutes of the Conference (p40)

For further information contact: Mrs G. Mason (Administrator)

6 Newlands Road, Darlington, DL3 9JL. Phone 07561 717230

email [fundhumanneed@gmail.com](mailto:fundhumanneed@gmail.com) website: <https://fundforhumanneed.org.uk>

## Lay Employment

Thank you for the continued trust and faith you place in me to do my work. I remain humbled by the conversations I have across the district, and I hope that what I offer brings you reassurance when you are faced with a difficult conversation or making a decision that affects another person who you might know personally as well as professionally.

Employment Law continues to evolve and neither you or I can stop it, no matter our opinion. There are a number of changes to legislation that come into effect this year so, if you are having conversations with an employee, or if you are looking to recruit, I encourage you to not just do what you have done before and get in touch.

### What's changing:

- Statutory entitlements: both in terms of value and how they are accessed
- Flexible working requests
- Zero hours (or 'as and when needed') contracts
- Holiday and holiday pay calculation for workers working irregular hours
- A new bill to amend working time for young people
- Sexual harassment in the workplace (Worker Protection Act 2023)
- Bullying and harassment (Worker Protection Act 2023)

- Neonatal care (Neonatal Care Leave and Pay Act 2023)
- Carers leave (Carers Leave Act 2023)
- The right for employees to ‘switch off’ (this wasn’t part of the updates to the employment rights bill this year, but it will be introduced through a statutory code of practice soon)

The Employment Rights Act 1996 protects your church and outlines your obligations toward your employees. As we continue to explore new ways of working, I urge you to not underestimate its far-reaching powers.

With so many changes having come into law late 2024 and more changes to acts, CoPs, and regulations due to be active in 2025, I want to reassure you that I am here to guide; I won’t tell you what to do, instead, together, we can explore how to create a workplace environment where the culture is supportive and inclusive.

*Andrew Crawford HR Officer*  
[hr@sheffieldmethodist.org](mailto:hr@sheffieldmethodist.org)

T: 07525 337500

## **Learning Network**

### **We have changed! Again!**

Those of you who have been around long enough will have seen several reinventions of the Learning Network over the years. It’s a good thing; how can your Learning Network remain useful to you if we don’t move with the ever morphing needs of the Districts? And so it is.

The most recent change to the Network is that whilst every District continues to enjoy the presence of an Aligned Officer (for Sheffield, this is Siggy Parratt-Halbert [parratt-halberts@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:parratt-halberts@methodistchurch.org.uk)), the Network is no longer arranged into teams that each work within a dedicated Region. We now work with your Connexion, whilst still continuing to strengthen our relationships with Districts (and the Circuits and churches within). The good thing about this is that we can help Districts respond proactively to tasks identified by Conference; help Connexional teams connect with Districts directly; and offer development and support to the whole country – bang go those County Lines!

### **Working locally**

Working at District, Circuit and Church levels tend to be by invitation. Everything I do is available to you here in Sheffield District; you just have to ask. The stuff that comes to mind is things like: mission planning; facilitating difficult conversations; and leading awaydays. You might think of something else – get in touch, if you do.

### **Working connexionally**

#### **What we did, what we do, what we’re going to do**

Since last April, we have made a real effort to support those who often find themselves working in silos: Church Stewards; Circuit Stewards; Lay Workers; and most recently District Reconciliation Groups (DRG). There is training for all of these,

and there are support groups too where you can connect with others right across the country. If you've been a Circuit Steward for a long time, you might still find our training useful; the expectations for Circuit Stewards have changed over the years, and then there are the Newbies who would love to learn from you. If you are in a DRG, why not join the Community of Practice? You are not alone!

The Methodist Church is committed to reach Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2030. I can support and help you reduce your church's carbon footprint and live a more environmentally friendly lifestyle (as individuals too!). This is required of us in Scripture, so it's not like we have too much choice in the matter! There is help (and money) available for becoming an EcoChurch; guidelines on ethical consumer choice; and an Eco Community Network where you can meet with likeminded people at regular webinars. A greener way of living and worshipping is also an integral part of being a Justice Seeking Church, so for those of you feeling overwhelmed by expectation, you can address two directives of Conference in one go. What's not to like?

As ever we continue to offer free training, and the opportunities available to you can be found under the Churches/Learning and Development page on the website. The ones that spring to my mind are the three courses under the Positive Working Together banner (learn how to talk and listen to one another and avoid fisticuffs and general horridness); outdoor worship (no, it is not moving your church service into the garden!), also a brilliant way of 'doing mission'; Biblical Literacy (we could all do with a bit of that); Equality Diversity and Inclusion.....o the fun we could have...No, really!

If you want to know more, or you want to book, here's where to go:

### **Sheffield District Aligned Officer**

Siggy Parratt-Halbert [parratt-halberts@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:parratt-halberts@methodistchurch.org.uk)

### **For details on the Learning Network's offer**

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/learning-and-development/learning-and-development-courses/>

### **Communities of Practice and incredibly excellent training:**

For Circuit Stewards; Environmental Community Network; District Reconciliation Groups, and an awful lot of training on an awful lot of stuff, take a look at the Learning Network's Eventbrite page and get booked on. This link <http://bit.ly/3Y2jFDg> will take you to where you need to be. You can also 'follow' the Methodist Learning Network here, and Eventbrite will let you know when there is yet another brilliant opportunity to hone your skills or spend time with folk like you.

## Memorials to Conference

The following Memorials to Conference have been received

### Sheffield Circuit

Proposer: Dr. Jenny Bywaters; Seconder: Mrs. Jenny Carpenter

The Sheffield Circuit Meeting calls upon the Methodist Conference to:

- express its grave concern at the increasing influence of Christian Zionism in modern politics affecting Israel and Palestine, especially in the USA and in some Methodist congregations.
- assert in the words of *Cry for Hope* which Conference 2021 commended for study to the Methodist people that “ support for (*Christian*) Zionism as a theology and an ideology that legitimizes the right of one people to deny the human rights of another is incompatible with the Christian faith and a grave misuse of the Bible.”
- direct the Faith and Order Committee to produce a report for the Conference of 2027 which will guide our members on how best to combat this deviant theology within our church and beyond it.

Number of members at the Circuit meeting

Number present and eligible to vote:	64
Number voting in favour of memorial:	64
Number voting against memorial	0
Number not voting (abstaining)	0

### Doncaster Circuit

We thank Conference for the work it has done/does on the Local Preacher/Worship Leader training pathway.

However, Doncaster Circuit meeting requests that Conference revisit the Local Preacher/Worship training pathway, to make it more inclusive and diverse.

We assert that the existing mode of study pathway is putting off some of those who are considering becoming Local Preachers/Worship Leaders.

#### Background or supporting statement:

Currently, the training available to worship leaders and Local Preachers follows a computer-based pathway. The Circuit Meeting has anecdotal evidence that this has put some people off the completion of their studies; in addition, the Circuit Meeting is aware of others who feel a sense of call but feel unable to engage the required studies through this pathway.

The Circuit is fully aware that a lot of hard work was put into this current pathway and is not undermining this as ‘one way’ into study, the Circuit is simply stating that

this should not be the only way. That there should be something which will help people who find IT difficult to follow a perceived call.

The Circuit believes that there are EDI considerations attached to the spirit of this memorial.

The Circuit is asking Conference to consider re-establishing some different pathways to accreditation, alongside the computer and IT based system; for example, something like 'Faith and Worship' to create a diversity of study pathways.

Number of members at the Circuit Meeting

number present and eligible to vote:	45
number voting in favour of memorial:	45
number voting against memorial:	0
number not voting (abstaining):	0

*The result of these memorials will be reported to the Autumn Gathering/Synod*

## **Methodist Homes (MHA)**

### **Sustaining MHA's Mission in Social Care**

MHA is the UK's largest charity care provider, supporting over 17,000 older people through 75 care homes, 59 retirement living schemes, and 41 MHA Communities.

We offer high-quality residential, nursing, and dementia care, alongside vibrant communities for independent living.

Rooted in Methodist values, we provide compassionate, person-centred care while also advocating for older people and fairer social care policies.



Financial pressures on the social care sector continue, and MHA, like many providers, must navigate these challenges responsibly. As a not-for-profit organisation, we reinvest every penny into improving the lives of older people. However, the increasing costs of care provision, alongside chronic underfunding in the sector, pose significant challenges.

We continue to press the government to recognise the vital role of charities in social care and to ensure fairer funding. As part of this, we are lobbying for charities to be exempt from the employer National Insurance Contributions (eNICs) rise announced in the November 2024 Budget. This increase will cost MHA more than £4 million, adding strain to our ability to provide care. Without government intervention, we will reluctantly have to pass on some of these costs through our fees and service charges.

The rising cost of employer National Insurance Contributions (eNICs) is just one of many financial pressures. Local authorities and health bodies still do not fund care at its true cost, leaving providers like MHA to bridge the gap. Our commitment to

just and fair wages, through the Real Living Wage, reflect our Methodist heritage, where dignity in work and care is central to our mission. However, the funding we receive has not kept pace with this commitment. Combined with rising costs due to inflation and occupancy levels that have not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels, MHA has had to make some difficult decisions.

As well as our 2023 decision to sell ten care homes, with deep regret, we have had to close two further care homes. These homes primarily supported residents funded by local authorities and health bodies. In the past, we have been able to subsidise this shortfall from our surplus, as part of our commitment to providing quality care to the widest demography across the country. However, this is no longer sustainable in some areas, and we have had to make this difficult decision prayerfully, ensuring that residents and colleagues receive the support they need.

In November 2024, following a strategic review, MHA also announced plans to sell 14 of its retirement living schemes. This decision, though difficult, allows us to focus on the areas where we can serve most effectively and ensure our long-term sustainability. As part of our review, we considered the changing needs and aspirations of older people, alongside the role MHA is best placed to play in enabling people to live later life well. We also examined the different lease and rental arrangements across our schemes, with the aim of creating a more consistent and sustainable approach for the future, focusing on a socially affordable rental model.

The 14 schemes that we are placing on the market will enable us to move to a more focused portfolio and make the best use of our resources. These difficult decisions allow us to direct our resources where we can have the greatest impact, ensuring our mission of enabling people to live later life well continues for generations to come.

## **MHA Sunday 2025**

This year, MHA Sunday will take place on 8 June. We will explore the support MHA provides people living with dementia through the story of Irene, one of our residents, and reflect on the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

Irene's story is one of love, resilience, and community. Throughout her life, she has created spaces of warmth and care. Now, as she lives with dementia, she continues to bless those around her. Whether it's greeting the music therapist with enthusiasm, organising domino games, or simply offering a kind word to a fellow resident or carer, Irene reminds us that care is not one-directional—it is something we give and receive together.

The parable of the Good Samaritan challenges us to reconsider who our neighbours are and what it means to love them well. Too often, those living with dementia are seen as passive recipients of care. But, like the Samaritan who stopped to help, we are called to build communities of care, where people of all abilities are valued, included, and given the opportunity to share their gifts.

As a Methodist charity, MHA seeks to do exactly that—ensuring older people are not just cared for but celebrated. By supporting MHA Sunday, churches can play a vital role in this mission, helping us to create environments where everyone, regardless of age or ability, can belong and flourish.

### **Worship Resources**

A full order of service, sermon, and video resources are available to help churches engage with this theme. These can be accessed by scanning the QR code, or visiting <https://mha.org.uk/get-involved/fundraise/mha-sunday>



The parable of the Good Samaritan appears in the lectionary on 13 July 2025. For churches with gaps in their plan, this could be a great opportunity to use our ready-made resources.

For more information, or to request a speaker for your church, please contact: [chaplaincy@mha.org.uk](mailto:chaplaincy@mha.org.uk)

### **MHA Chaplaincy Restructure**

MHA values its strong partnership with the Methodist Church, providing compassionate chaplaincy through our 104 chaplains working across our services. Chaplaincy remains at the heart of our mission, ensuring spiritual care for our residents, their families, our members, and colleagues.

To build its long-term sustainability, we have restructured our chaplaincy support team. A key change is that chaplaincy provision will no longer align with Methodist Districts, but rather our nine care home regions.

Though our alignment with Districts has changed, our Methodist identity and values remain at the heart of MHA chaplaincy. Rooted in Methodist traditions of hospitality and holistic care, we deeply appreciate the church's support and involvement.

We are shaping a renewed vision for chaplaincy that honours our Methodist roots while responding to the evolving needs of older people. This is a key moment to reaffirm our shared commitment to spiritual care, and we invite continued prayer, conversation, and collaboration.

If you would like to explore ways to continue working together, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

### **Final Lap: Equipping Colleagues for Compassionate End-of-Life Care**

At MHA, we believe death and dying should be faced openly, positively, and with compassion. Too often, these conversations are avoided, leaving people unprepared. Final Lap seeks to change this—equipping colleagues with the skills to offer dignified, respectful, and compassionate end-of-life care which supports our spiritual as well as physical wellbeing.

Since launch, over 4,000 colleagues have completed Final Lap training, with 73% feeling better equipped for end-of-life care and 86% finding it highly relevant to their role. One colleague described the training as "priceless," helping them navigate difficult conversations with greater confidence. By removing the mystery around death and dying, Final Lap is transforming care across MHA—empowering colleagues to offer comfort, reassurance, and dignity at life's end.

**Thank you for all your support. In faith and kindness, we are stronger together.**

## **Methodist Women in Britain**

During 2024 we have enjoyed many days at different venues around the district. Quiet days, Quiz evenings, fun days with food and fellowship enjoyed by all who came. Our annual District Day and Rededication Service this year was held at Whittington Moor Methodist Church. Deacon Jackie Wright led worship, after lunch Lucy from Roundabout updated us on the work they do with the 16-25-year-olds and we were able to give her many gifts for Christmas Presents for the young People. This was followed by Jackie telling us about the work done by Street Pastors which is much appreciated by all who are helped in time of need. We are continuing to support both these projects next year. The year finished with our annual Carol Service and alternative Christmas dinner at Frecheville Methodist Church. I encourage you all to come and join us at our future events - all are welcome.

*Pam Meek*

*MWiB Sheffield District President*

## **Mission Development**

It is now five years since we launched (online during lockdown) *For Such A Time As This*, our strategy for resourcing mission. And longer since we started listening and shaping it. *For Such A Time As This* has been a galvanising watchword, and many things which make us mission-ready have started or moved forward during what has been a challenging and unpredictable season for both our churches and the neighbourhoods in which we and they live. Not least work started by new staff we identified we needed and whose contributions are summarised in this booklet.

However the world around us continues to change, and so some of my time this year has been spent in speaking with people from within and beyond the district about what the next few years might look like, and therefore how we might evolve to continue to step into what God is saying to us now and next. There will be plenty more opportunities to be involved in these conversations over the coming months.



## **New Churches**

Supporting emergence of new churches/ Christian communities has continued to be a significant part of my work this year. Our district New Places for New People pilot in Derbyshire North East continues to make encouraging progress, connecting with many people who have no other links to churches and now offering informal worship and opportunities to explore faith. It has been encouraging to see how this has acted as an inspiration and source of learning for Methodists in other “left behind” places across the district. We have continued to hold gatherings for people from across the district involved in leading the rich tapestry of new expressions of church.

## **Mission Readiness**

Another feature of the last year has been supporting circuits and churches to not only name their bold visions, but to create a space where these can be more easily nurtured and added to. This includes both creative reshaping of governance structures and strengthening enabling cultural practices. Working with a group of small chapels within Peak Circuit to adopt a “church in many villages” model and Sheffield Circuit CLT to improve responsiveness, communication and space for prototyping have been two examples of this. We have also launched our New Beginnings seed funding programme – grants towards activities and events that help new people have new beginnings in their faith journey.

## **Podcasting**

Sam Roberts and I have started recording the second series of Faith, Hope and the Journey, our district podcast. A new adventure for us, but one through which we hope to model sharing peoples’ stories, and exploring how God is at work in these. And to do this via digital means, in front of people both within and beyond our congregations. Do give it a listen.

*Neil Harland – District Mission Enabler*  
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## **Peak Park Rural Development**

**Lowberdale** Care Farm has a strong management group with significant experience for guiding the charity. Young people continue to develop skills and gain their self-worth in the farm environment. The management group have now secured a fund raiser to secure more income for further development.

**Community Garden, Chapel-en-le-Frith** gave thanks and recognition to Mary Craner, who led the founders of this successful project and has now stepped back from leadership. The garden continues to work well attracting groups and individuals across all ages and abilities and is used for town events, strawberry teas and celebrations alongside the gardening groups. It offers a Christian presence within the community and scope for further church led development

## **Edale Methodist Chapel, Barber Booth**

The huge renovation project offers greater use for both visitors and local communities whilst keeping the building close to its former design. Work is ongoing to bring the balcony into good order. Outreach and mission to both visitors and locals is happening. The inaccessible over-grown garden has attracted volunteers desiring to develop it. A huge recognition must go to Kate Burnett who continues to inspire the project.

**Tissington** This little (hour and half – two hours) self-lead pilgrimage is still going strong. Yet another reprint was recently required.

**Positively Rural** is a webinar set up in lock down by Rev Andrew Web and Deacon Lorraine Brown to promote positive ministry in a rural settings. The team now includes support from Katrin Hackett as administrator, a learning network input, an Anglican priest and another rural practitioner. This brings a wider view as well as access to other contacts and ideas. The webinar which mainly attracted people from the north now promotes its events nationally and has a close affiliation with ‘Dreaming Beyond’ a similar webinar. We are currently planning our first joint event.

**Caleb project/messy church** in Monyash attracts approx’ 15-20 children plus 6-8 adults each month. The level of involvement of adults is increasing. A small group help with food provision and with prayers to keep sharing the gospel story in the villages.

**Peak Wesley Way (PWW)** was launched in the summer of 2024, this project (*on the next positively rural on 1<sup>st</sup> May – keep a look out in the district mailing to sign up or email Katrin if you miss it*) is a 6 day self-guided pilgrimage through the Peak District, staying overnight in the chapels. It has attracted pilgrims from the beginning with positive feedback. This project took an enormous amount of time, meetings, frustrations, learnings and grace, but a wonderful experience to have been part of this journey. Version two of the guidebook, with tweaks to the first has now been printed.

**Connexional Safeguarding** I continue to be part of this group

**Regional Rural Leaders Group** was set up for a short while by Sarah Hulme to gather rural information, I was able to attend on zoom on occasion to share our stories.

## **Mission Enablers Group**

I attend when possible to hear a sharing of news and achievements.

**High Peak Partnership** did not have a stationing in September 2024. I have supported the Circuit Leadership Team finding a way forward for 1 Presbyter with 12 churches. A Deacon will be joining in September 2025

*Deacon Lorraine Brown*

*Peak Park Rural Development Enabler*

## **Persian Ministries**

*The Persian Ministry Development project started in August 2021, whilst the covid pandemic was still impacting church and other activities. Evolving plans for the project had already been discussed with stakeholders for some time. This report summarises progress to date in Hull, Doncaster and Sheffield against the originally planned programme of activities. It also sets out some suggestions for priorities over the coming year.*

### **Hull:**

We had a baptism of 3 people in January 2024. Although people get relocated by the Home office or move away on their own, we keep welcoming new asylum seekers into the congregation. Arman continues to integrate the new believers into the life of the church by providing continuous pastoral support and discipleship training.



### **Regional gathering in Doncaster in September:**

We had a regional day for all our delegates from Hull, Sheffield, and Leeds. About 50 people came to Doncaster where a well-known preacher from Birmingham preached in Farsi about who Jesus is. A couple who had travelled from Hull gave their heart to Jesus. They have been attending Arman's bible studies in Hull since June 2024 and are now being prepared to be baptized in Hull (Princes Avenue Methodist Church) in March.



### **Sheffield:**

The Bible studies continue to be productive and encouraging. 2 young girls joined us in April and continued with us until October when they were granted Leave to remain and eventually moved away from Sheffield to Leeds and Doncaster. They alongside a man in his mid-twenties from the bible study got baptized in September. They all continue to be taught by Arman on how to grow in their faith and be a good witness of Jesus Christ.

### **Doncaster:**

The fellowship suffered the loss of some new believers due to internal church issues in 2024, however it has now put this difficult time behind them. We are continuing to be a place of welcome to those who are marginalized. Our Iranian outreach nights are attracting a number of families who do not come to church

regularly. We hosted the regional gathering and served 50 people by sharing the good news, welcoming them and offering delicious Iranian food.

2 people have now been trained to lead worship services on regular basis.

### **Baptism course:**

Arman has now finished translating his baptism course into English. This will hopefully be turned into videos for the Farsi speakers within the UK Methodist Churches nationwide. The goal is to help Churches where there is a need to reach out to Iranians with the Gospel in their own language.

*Arman Ghamari - Persian Ministry Development Enabler*  
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## **Presbyteral Synod**

This year's Presbyteral Synod was held on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> March at the excellent facilities of St. John's Methodist Church, Swinton, on the Rotherham & Dearne Valley Circuit. The Chair, Revd Gillian Newton welcomed us to the Synod and Revd Andrew Fox, the local Superintendent minister welcomed us to St. John's. There were 51 presbyters present in person with a further 11 presbyters joining online. Mr David Burton was given permission to attend and provided the technical support required for our annual gathering. After some initial opening remarks, setting the day in context, the Chair led us in an opening prayer. The Synod then held a number of our colleagues and their loved ones in our thoughts and prayers and asked that the Synod Secretary write to them with our greetings.

The Chair welcomed Revd Stephen Normanton from Peer Talk to be our Keynote speaker. The topic he had been invited to address with us was "Wellbeing in a time of challenge". We serve as ministers in challenging times. How do we look after ourselves, and one another? Stephen shared helpful and practical insights from his work in the area of Mental Health.

The Presbyteral Synod is the space in the year and in the life of the Church where ministers seek permission to 'sit down' and become supernumerary. This year we only had one such request and this was from Revd Julie Letts, Superintendent of the Peak Circuit. Julie gave an inspiring testimony of her background, call and experiences of ministry. Synod granted her request. The Chair offered thanks on behalf of Synod, expressing our gratitude to Julie for her ministry and the manner in which she had offered it. The Chair led us in prayer for Julie.

Our annual gathering as presbyters is also a time for us to remember our colleagues who have died during the previous year. Revd Lynn Gregg presented the obituary for Revd Louise Carr. Revd Thomas Read presented the obituary for Revd Keith Lackenby. Revd Romeo Pedro presented the obituary for Revd Chris Tomlinson. Synod agreed the obituaries. The chair offered a prayer of thanks for the life and ministries of Louise, Keith and Chris.

Revd John Simms, supernumerary on the Sheffield Circuit was given permission to attend the Presbyteral Session of Conference at his own expense.

We also gave thanks for those colleagues who will be moving on from our District this summer. We remembered Revd Ashley Cooper who has been given permission to serve in the USA; Revd Julie Letts who we had previously given permission to 'sit down'; Revd Jill Pullan who will move to the York Circuit; and Revd Claire Rawlinson who will move to the North Cheshire Circuit. Finally, we remembered our Chair of District, Revd Gill Newton, who is moving to serve with the Connexional Team as Ministerial Co-ordinator for Oversight of Ordained Ministries. The Chair offered prayers for those moving on from us. The Synod Secretary, Revd Sean Adair, and the Deputy Chair, Revd Julie Coates, expressed gratitude for the Chair's ministry in the Sheffield District over the past 11 years. Synod also noted that Revd Dr Tim Woolley had resigned during the year.

The highlight of the annual Presbyteral Synod is the Service of Rededication and Holy Communion, at which the preacher was the Chair of District. Gill spoke to the theme of 'digging in'. Each minister had the opportunity to renew their commitment to their ministry, affirming their adherence to our Doctrines and the Discipline of the Methodist Church. We shared in Holy Communion presided over by the Chair.

The next gathering of the Presbyteral Synod will be held at Castleton Methodist Church, in the Peak Circuit, on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026. Synod adjourned at 1:30pm. Our thanks to Mr. Edward Siddall (Lay Pastor) and the congregation at St. John's Methodist Church in Swinton for their hosting of the Presbyteral Synod 2025.

*Revd Sean Adair – Synod Secretary*  
*synod@sheffieldmethodist.org*

## **Property**

Over the past year, my work has continued to focus on supporting churches and circuits across the Sheffield District with property matters, governance frameworks, and strategic discernment around sustainability, stewardship, and mission. A notable shift in recent months has been the sharp rise in both the number and complexity of cases coming to light. Many of these more recent situations involve layered challenges – legal, financial, and operational – which are becoming harder for local trustees to navigate without specialist support. This growing pattern highlights the urgent need for more robust structures and greater collaboration across the district.

### **Governance and Managing Trusteeship**

A recurring concern this year has been the fragility of governance in a number of contexts. Many local churches continue to carry heavy responsibilities as managing trustees, often with decreasing numbers and limited capacity. This is particularly evident where buildings are underused or where trustee bodies have reduced in size or expertise.

As a result, the question of how we structure managing trusteeship is becoming more urgent. In line with recent Connexional guidance and building on district-level conversations from previous years, there is growing consensus that a move toward centralised trusteeship – whether at the circuit or district level – represents the most sustainable and responsible path forward for many churches. This model offers consistency, relieves local pressure, and enables greater focus on mission.

### **Areas of Focus**

- **Support for local churches:** I have worked directly with a number of churches to navigate property redevelopment, legal compliance, and building closures or reimaginings. This includes supporting feasibility studies, grant applications, and community listening exercises.
- **Circuit-wide conversations:** I have contributed to several circuit discussions on governance restructuring, offering practical steps, templates, and risk-based approaches to transitioning trusteeship models.
- **Capacity building:** Training has been offered to trustees and church councils on their roles and responsibilities, including property risk management, financial oversight, and safeguarding.
- **Strategic planning:** Several churches have been supported through the early stages of missional property reviews, ensuring that decisions are rooted in prayerful discernment and community insight, while remaining realistic about resources and risk.

### **Emerging Themes**

- **Increased risk:** As governance structures become more strained, the risk of legal or financial exposure is rising. This includes missed quinquennial inspections, unclear title deeds, or irregular management of lettings and contracts.
- **Missional imagination:** While there is some openness to new ways of using church property, these ideas are often stifled by fatigue, uncertainty, or lack of clear leadership.
- **Digital capacity and record-keeping:** In many churches, digital systems are either underused or non-existent, leading to confusion around compliance, ownership, and communication.

### **Looking Ahead**

The road ahead is not easy. While some progress has been made, the underlying reality is that many churches are struggling to maintain even the basics of trusteeship. A growing number are reaching breaking point – administratively, financially, and emotionally. Without intervention, we risk seeing more buildings fall into disrepair, governance failures escalate, and the mission of the Church become increasingly hindered by the weight of its property.

There is still time to act – but the window is narrowing. The movement toward centralised trusteeship offers a possible way forward, but this cannot be achieved without clearer direction, resourcing, and a willingness across circuits and the district to make difficult decisions. Without that, we may continue to see more churches quietly drift into crisis, simply unable to cope with the demands placed on them.

## **Recommendations**

- **Simplify governance** by encouraging a district-wide move toward placing all managing trusteeship with circuits. This would reduce the administrative burden on local churches and allow clearer oversight and accountability.
- **Strengthen property support within circuits** by investing in circuit-level property roles or designated enablers who can provide consistent, informed support across multiple churches.
- **Facilitate resource sharing between circuits**, especially in areas such as legal advice, compliance tools, building management, and community consultation. Collaborative working could help reduce duplication, build resilience, and spread good practice.
- **Provide clear pathways and guidance** for circuits wishing to take on managing trusteeship, including model structures, legal advice, and transitional support.
- **Reinforce missional priorities** by ensuring that governance and property decisions are always tied to a clear theological and community-facing purpose.

This next year must be one of urgent, coordinated action if we are to prevent further decline and ensure that our buildings and governance structures serve, rather than suffocate, the mission of the Church.

*Tom Rattigan - Missional Property Enabler*  
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## **Sabbaticals**

The Methodist Church describes sabbaticals for its ministers as opportunities to ‘re-train, refresh and renew the very base from which future activity may spring’. Many discover it to be a gift which enables them to refocus on God and the priorities for their ministry, as well as appreciating the chance it offers for concentrating on a particular project or theme and spending time with friends and family. The Sheffield District Sabbaticals Advisory Group seeks to help both ministers and churches to receive the greatest benefit possible from this gift.

During this year the DSAG has received and approved reports from Reverends Judith Jessop, Sean Adair, Lisa Quarmbly and Claire Rawlinson. The group has also

considered and approved prospectuses, together with sabbatical timings and arrangements, for Revs Jonathan Haigh, Jill Pullan and Romeo Pedro.

We are grateful to all members of the Local Sabbatical Support Groups (LSSG) in enabling sabbaticals by supporting ministers and their families and ensuring adequate cover during sabbatical periods. These groups have a critical role in helping to explain the purpose and value of sabbaticals to local churches.

As Rev Gill Newton leaves the Sheffield District we would want to express our gratitude for the wisdom and experience she has shared in our group and the clear commitment she has always shown to enabling ministers to gain the most they can from their sabbaticals. My thanks also go to the other members of the District Sabbaticals Advisory Group –, John Lashmar, Agnes Tranter and Rev. David Hunter - for the time and care they give to the process of considering and approving sabbatical prospectuses, giving advice, receiving reports and supporting ministers.

*Revd Liz Wills*

*District Sabbaticals Officer*

## **Stationing**

We started the 2025 stationing round in May of 2024, with meetings with individual presbyters in stationing, and training for Circuits in the process. We held our annual District Stationing Forum on 10th July 2024. All Circuits in the District were invited to attend and share information on their particular circumstances and hopes for the future development of ministry. All superintendents, or their representative, and at least one circuit steward from each circuit, were invited to attend. This did give an early indication of which circuits might be entering stationing for a minister for September 2025. The alternative possibility of seeking a probationer presbyter, diaconal, or MOCC (Ministers of other Churches and Connexions) appointment through their related processes was also considered.

At the beginning of this 2025 stationing round, there were four presbyters across four circuits prayerfully seeking to discern God's calling upon their ministry. As time progressed, one indicated a desire to sit down, one was re-invited, and two entered stationing. In October 2024, conversations took place with the presbyters entering stationing, in relation to circuit profiles. In addition, there was a meeting with three circuits entering stationing to consider possible matches from the presbyteral and diaconal profiles in stationing.

In the event, two circuit profiles were submitted for presbyters, and 1 for a deacon. All three vacancies have been successfully filled. Subject to the calling of the stations at Methodist Conference, in September 2025, the District will welcome Rev Tim Morris to superintendency in The Peak Circuit, Rev Andrew Atkins as presbyter in the Barnsley Circuit, and also in the Barnsley Circuit, Deacon Mark Attwood.

In May 2025, we will be starting the stationing and re-invitation process for September 2026. There will be changes to the process following the Stationing Review. We continue to encourage all Circuits to prayerfully consider their local situations including staffing, ministerial and lay, in relation to Circuit Mission Plans. Circuit Invitation Committees should be appointed this month. Your prayers are invited for the process to be positive and affirming, and for sensitivity and integrity throughout.

*Gill Daly*

*Lay Stationing Representative*

*We thank Gill for her dedication and hard work in this role and wish her all the best as she hands over to our new Lay Stationing Rep*

## **Treasurer**

Full statutory District accounts for 2023/24 have been approved by the District Leadership Team. Copies are available on request and will be made public via the Charity Commission website.

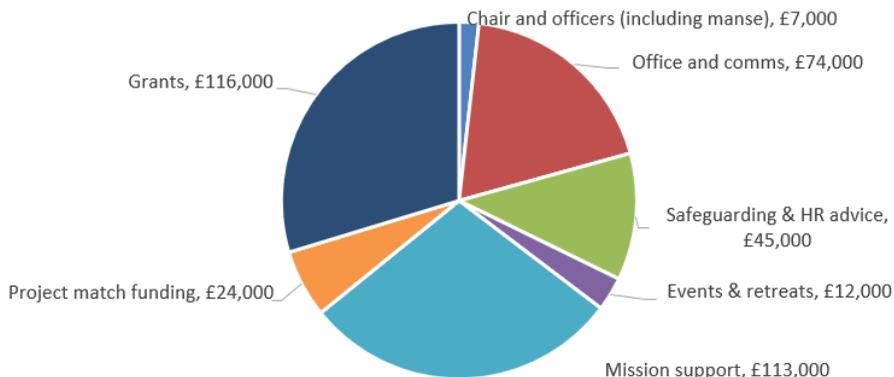
A summary of the District finances is provided here:

<b>INCOME AND EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2019/20</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
<b>INCOME</b>					
Unrestricted	163	171	148	130	119
Restricted	129	149	230	154	205
District Advance Fund	446	296	256	176	178
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>738</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>634</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>502</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>					
Unrestricted	166	160	142	112	108
Restricted	132	190	328	180	263
District Advance Fund	148	173	142	45	116
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>487</b>
<b>SURPLUS/ (DEFICIT)</b>					
Unrestricted	(3)	11	6	18	11
Restricted	(3)	(41)	(98)	(26)	(58)
District Advance Fund	298	123	114	131	62
<b>Total surplus/ (deficit)</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>15</b>

The main source of unrestricted and Advance Fund income continues to be contributions from our circuits and distributions arising from property sales. The uncommitted balance on our Advance Fund increased by £276,000 during the year, with distributions from property sales being higher than anticipated. The balance carried forward in the fund is expected to decrease over the next three

years as circuit plans for new Christian communities, amongst other initiatives, reach a point where committed funding is required.

## UNRESTRICTED AND ADVANCE FUND SPEND



FUNDS HELD AND OUTLOOK	31-Aug-22	31-Aug-22	31-Aug-22	31-Aug-21	31-Aug-20
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<b>CLOSING FUNDS</b>					
Unrestricted funds	292	297	289	286	268
District Advance Fund	606	330	232	160	54
Restricted funds	73	52	65	118	119
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>971</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>586</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>441</b>

Months expenditure held as liquid funds	6	6	6	8	6
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Our reserves policy is to hold between three and six months unrestricted expenditure as liquid funds (i.e. cash and debtors, less creditors). The District Leading Team are aware of the severe financial pressures facing our circuits and churches in an era of high cost inflation, but also of the need to invest in the future of mission and ministry at a time of rapid change for our church. We will continue to manage district finances accordingly.

*Neil Harland - District Treasurer*

## Worship and Preaching

During this year, with the help of Katrin, I have been trying to create the local preachers' pool for tutoring across the district, which has taken longer than anticipated. It has also been a privilege to hear how various local preachers in training are doing and supporting some of them on their journeys, as their tutor.

As I come to the end of my role in this district, I want to encourage all those in training to continue with their hard work and dedication. I would also like to thank

all the local preachers' secretaries for all the work they do, all the local preachers and worship leaders for continuing to serve their churches and circuits, as well as all the tutors and mentors who support and encourage others on their journeys. May God continue to bless you all.

**Local Preachers (LP) who have passed away since last year:**

Sheffield

- ❖ Joan Blears (1992)
- ❖ Peter Holmes (1986)
- ❖ David Humphreys (1975)
- ❖ Lily Pickles (1983)
- ❖ Anne Widdowson (1983)

Derbyshire North East

- ❖ *None* reported

The Peak

- ❖ *None* reported

Doncaster

- ❖ Mirriam Burrell (2000)

Rotherham and Dearne Valley

- ❖ Harry Matthews (1959)
- ❖ Ian Maw (1991)

Barnsley

- ❖ *None* reported

Trinity

- ❖ Judith Goacher (1966)
- ❖ Joan Simpson (2011)

*We thank Claire for her service and wish her all the best in her new appointment*

