

# **SALE OF PREMISES QUESTIONS BECOMING A GROWING, INCLUSIVE, EVANGELISTIC, JUSTICE SEEKING DISTRICT...**

**...FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS**



## **OUR ENDING WELL VISION: where it is necessary and appropriate for work to end, it ends well and enables re-creation**

When a church in its current form appears to be coming to an end and the congregation discern that it is time to end well, this will be recognised as a natural part of the ecosystem of a Connexional church and not a failure.

Chapels which have previously been used by congregations which are Ending Well will always be thoroughly evaluated to discern their future based on their missional, community and financial potential.

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## **BACKGROUND & USE OF THIS DOCUMENT**

This document is written to help circuits understand the information that is likely to be required before district consent is given for a property sale. It is a guide to help circuit officers and others facilitate productive dialogue, and not an exhaustive checklist. At the time of drafting, we are recruiting a Missional Property Enabler, and so with their expertise it is likely that this document will be further improved or replaced.

We recognise that managing properties and finance can be stress-inducing or distracting. And that our ultimate security is neither banked sale proceeds nor bricks & mortar, but our living saviour.

But we are called to be stewards of Methodist assets, making wise strategic choices which will empower the church of the future, in a time of uncertainty and rapid change.

This document addresses decisions about whether to sell or re-purpose premises, a separate question from whether an existing congregation decides it is time to end well by “ceasing to meet”.

Please start dialogue with district early in your discernment, rather than after you think you have reached a conclusion. This is key to district being able to support you, which is its purpose [mpe@sheffieldmethodist.org.uk](mailto:mpe@sheffieldmethodist.org.uk)

Plan your timetable to allow for sufficient listening, dreaming, discerning and engaging with all necessary stakeholders before final conclusions are reached.

It is important that you keep a record on the property consents web portal of not just your final decision, but how you have reached it and the factors and alternatives you considered. This will make managing stakeholders (including district) easier, provide clarity for those who succeed you as circuit officers, and help you learn from whether your predictions align with what happens in practice as you implement your plan.

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## **STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT**

- Do you have an up to date circuit mission/ growth plan that is widely understood and supported?
- Does this mission/ growth plan give unambiguous strategic guidance about what to do with the premises under consideration? Have you followed this guidance?

## **TEAM**

- Who are the members of the team responsible for discerning and presenting proposals for this building?
- What skills and experience do they bring? Does your team include people with expertise in both buildings and mission planning? How were they appointed?
- When and how have updates and proposals been presented to Circuit Meeting and other stakeholders? How does your circuit meeting need information to be presented to facilitate making informed decisions?
- Who has been praying about what to do with these premises?

## **LISTENING TO CONTEXT**

- What have you learned about the current and future unmet needs of this neighbourhood?
- Which local people beyond the church have you spoken with about community needs? What have you heard from them? How are you making listening an iterative dialogue rather than a one-off exercise?
- Are you encountering people who could become part of the team that implements a new vision for this building?
- Are there other churches within walking distance? What perspectives do they have on the future of your premises?
- How might being a justice seeking church impact decisions about this building? Is it in a place of economic marginalisation? Do people who live nearby easily travel to other places to access support?
- What particular features about this building or its location which make it valuable or relevant for particular uses?

## **DARE TO DREAM**

- Don't assume that sale is the only viable option. There are many flourishing missionally repurposed Methodist and other church buildings
- What possibilities have you considered?

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- How did you create space for these to emerge? How did you learn about how other circuits have creatively responded in similar circumstances?
- How could these premises be a suitable base from which to start a New Church, possibly unlike other churches in your circuit, or shaped to make sense to a particular group of people? See guidance at <https://www.sheffieldmethodist.org/what-we-do/new-christian-communities.html> Replanting new churches into existing buildings is emerging as a [focused stream](#) within the Connexional New Places for New People programme.
- As a district, we are seeking locations on which to build new homes, meeting community housing needs and generating a new source of income for Methodist mission. Might this site be suitable?
- How you could repurpose these premises to create a new source of regular income for your circuit?
- Which organisations you could partner with to meet local needs in new ways?

### DISCERN

- Which possibilities most excite you? What might stop you from exploring these? What support is available to overcome these barriers? (e.g. grants for redevelopment or running costs, district expertise or staff time to implement new ideas)
- If circuit finances feel a limiting factor, what is your greatest need – a one-off injection of sale proceeds, or a regular income stream? How do the financial implications of your options for this building compare to your financial needs?
- What support do you need to test out possibilities or undertake feasibility studies before reaching a final decision?
- How will your decision about this building be a step towards being a growing and increasingly inclusive, evangelistic and justice seeking circuit?
- Are you being placed under pressure by individuals or organisations outside of Methodism to follow a particular course of action? How are you confident that you are making a decision based solely on the purposes and values of the Methodist Church?

### PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

- Decision to sell, undertake significant redevelopments, or commit to a lease requires appropriate professional advice. Please get in touch if you are struggling to find suitable advisors.
- Using solicitors from the TMCP recommended panel will likely make working with TMCP easier for you

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## **WHAT IS DISTRICT CONSENT?**

District consent for property projects (including sales) is ultimately defined by S.O. 932 as needing to “be satisfied that:

*(i) the church court which constitutes the managing trustees or is their parent body has adopted a mission policy statement with which the project accords;*

*(ii) the plans take into account any guidance supplied by the Connexional Team or the district officers;*

*(iii) the trustees will have sufficient funds at their disposal to meet the cost of the project as it proceeds and any loans will be repaid”*

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