

GROWING DISCIPLES for such a time as this

Growing disciples is the first theme of our new strategy for resourcing your mission, launched at the dawn of this new year: *for such a time as this*

On the first day of a third national lockdown it is impossible to say maybe we have been called for such a time as this without opening our eyes and hearts to the world around us, or to our own feelings. If you are struggling today, please do not feel embarrassed to reach out to someone for help. We grow as disciples together – is God prompting you to get in touch with someone today, to offer a word of encouragement and fellowship?

GROWING DISCIPLES lies at the very heart of *for such a time as this*, as a bedrock of supportive accountable, deepening relationship with each other and with Christ.

When first discussing our strategy we spoke of all manner of things that our churches could do. But time and again we found our conversations turning back to who we are and who we are becoming. How to share the good news with new people, but starting from our own relationship with Christ? How to curate public worship where we expect people to enter the presence of God, if we haven't daily exercised the muscles of prayer? Where do sustainable new missions for the transformation of our communities emerge, other than the vocational confluence of knowing ourselves as God knows us and God's love for the people around us? Our life of discipleship requires both breathing in and breathing out God's life-giving spirit.

And so we begin with GROWING DISCIPLES, and with **fostering a restored culture of high-quality small group and personal discipleship**. What could you do, even during lockdown, to strengthen pathways of discipleship in your church? Is there someone you could pray with over the phone each week? Could this be the moment to start a new discipleship group via Zoom?

The Methodist Way of Life is possibly the most important resource our Connexional church has prepared for many years. It is very simple, strips back to the foundations of Methodism, but in a fresh relevant way. [More resources have been published over Christmas, including preachers resources for a 12 week sermon series](#). The way of life is very adaptable and can be used by existing house groups, new groups, in membership classes, youth fellowships etc etc. Please tell me your stories of it works for you, what you see changing in your church, and anything that would make it better suited to your context. Maybe it's something for lockdown, or maybe for your church now is the time to start preparing the way to cherish gathering in small Methodist Way of Life groups after Easter.

As our people grow in discipleship we will expect to need to **nurture leaders – realising visions, not filling roles**. We are starting to plan mentoring and support for leaders, both new and established. With so much of our activity paused, take a moment to consider your church community. Have you seen new leaders emerging during lockdown? People who have done things, not because they had a badge or a title, but because they were the right person, in the right place with the right skills? What can you do to support them and their talents to blossom? Maybe you have yourself started to discover your vocation during the topsy turvey year that was 2020.

We are also standing ready to **equip disciples to serve through local learning – equipping you to meet your contextual needs**. If you have discovered a passion for something but have never done it before and don't know where to start, please do ask. We have expertise on so many specialisms across our churches – there will be someone who can help.

I hope you are able to join us in praying for GROWING DISCIPLES at [1pm on Thursday 7 January](#) or [8pm on Monday 11 January](#).

Neil Harland
Mission Development Support

