



Our strategy for resourcing your mission 2020-25

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Our Calling



The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love

in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

It does this through:

Worship



Evangelism



Learning & caring



Service



OUR DISTRICT MISSION

The calling of Sheffield Methodist District is to equip our circuits, churches and people to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out their discipleship in worship and mission. It does this through:

Learning

helping people become, learn and grow into confident disciples of Jesus

Changing

supporting circuits and local churches as they respond to the transforming work of God's Spirit

Joining in

resourcing circuits and local churches as they join in God's mission both within their own life and the life of the world

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OUR CONVERSATIONS

Our priorities for 2020-25 have been shaped by consultations with people from across our District, including at our Mission and Stationing Forums, circuit and district leadership teams, and groups focussed on specific aspects of our common life and mission.

From these discussions we have heard a desire to recognise ourselves as a Spirit-filled movement, rather than feeling trapped in a religious institution. Many of these consultations were held during a time of lockdown. Each of our congregations, and the society in which we live, find themselves inescapably in an obviously liminal moment. Our present is often painfully different from our recent pasts. We know that our futures will be, and must be, different again. We are in a chapter of waiting, listening, and preparing for an unknown future. Our priorities are informed, but not dominated, by experience of lockdown and a COVID-safe world.

We have heard a call for change through spiritual renewal, not merely through organisational initiatives; keenness to listen, learn and discover our vocation; with ready access to the yokes we need, but free to choose those which fit well; being intentional in our mission but flexible to changing circumstances. We must be people of resilient hope, but not afraid of honest lament and grief.

OUR AMBITIONS

This document intentionally uses words such as growth, flourishing, excellence and confidence. This is not out of ignorance of the trends in membership and other obvious challenges facing our churches, or of the communities in which we reside. It recognises that the coronavirus may have swept aside projects faithfully developed over many years in a flood of chaos and destruction.

Instead it affirms the call of our young people to “Be Courageous”. It reflects the willingness expressed even before coronavirus at many levels of our Connexion to tackle longstanding inertia and take holy risks. It welcomes the premise of the Connexional strategy that “The Methodist Church in Britain is called to be a growing, evangelistic, inclusive Church of Gospel people who speak of, listen for, and live out the goodness of a *God for All*.”

Lacking Christendom privileges, societal influence, financial resources, membership demographics and self-confidence, from a position of brokenness we are called to risk all that we still have to learn, change and join in **for such a time as this**.

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OUR PRIORITIES

The people called Methodists in South Yorkshire, North Nottinghamshire and North East Derbyshire have many different lived experiences, passions, gifts and contexts. Over the next five years the District aims to be available to support each of them through actions such as:

- Modelling – what we do when being District together
- Supporting – asking difficult questions, providing consultancy & advice, setting expectations
- Resourcing – getting what is needed to those who need it e.g. finance, expertise, training, information
- Prompting – stories we tell, providing subsidies/nudges towards risk-taking mission

Six priorities have emerged where the District can make the most difference in equipping our circuits, churches and members to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ, which is their calling and our calling: **GROWING DISCIPLES** leading to **PASSIONATE CONTEXTUAL WORSHIP** and **TRANSFORMING MISSION** for such a time as this.

Particular support is needed to rediscover confidence in **SHARING STORIES** for such a time as this.

We will help set disciples free for a life of worship and mission by **SIMPLIFYING PROCEDURES** and expert support to make their **PROPERTIES FIT FOR MISSION** for such a time as this.

OUR RESOURCES

We will re-align our District Leadership Team and other groups to focus on these priorities and to model the behaviours we are encouraging.

In addition to the many people who serve as district officers and volunteers, our priorities will be implemented by our staff team. Our consultations have told us that access to expertise, support and communities of practice is essential for resourcing mission, alongside sufficient financial resources. Subject to funding and further consultation, we will create new staff roles to resource your mission.

We will partner with the Learning Network Yorkshire Plus to best support **GROWING DISCIPLES** and **TRANSFORMING MISSION** through mentoring, communities of practice and locally-directed learning.

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We will continue to seek out, promote and subsidise responses to locally identified learning and development needs of **GROWING DISCIPLES**.

We will provide targeted grant support towards **TRANSFORMING MISSION** initiatives and making **PROPERTIES FIT FOR MISSION** (including improving environmental sustainability). We will prioritise grants for transformative projects where there are compelling missional plans, and there are either insufficient local funds or a District grant will create access to significant funding from sources beyond our Methodist district.

IMPLEMENTING OUR STRATEGY FOR RESOURCING MISSION

We will review and reconfigure our governance, processes and committees so that they are fit for purpose as a scaffold and support for delivery of our strategy.

We will set annual targets linked to our objects, report regularly on progress and be responsive to changing circumstances.

We will communicate our priorities regularly, widely and clearly, making clear how they interact with local and national priorities.



We believe that a Connexional church exists both through the lives of each of its members and collective or national endeavours. We will seek about opportunities to speak of our strategy for resourcing mission to circuits and churches. We will seek common ground and the parts of the strategy most relevant to each context.



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GROWING DISCIPLES for such a time as this

Our aim	What we will do	What we expect to see
Foster restored culture of high-quality small group and personal discipleship <i>vocation and mission flows from personal relationship with Christ</i>	Support circuits/ churches in strengthening/ establishing new discipleship groups. Facilitate ready access to high quality resources. Model discipleship accountability practices in district meetings Encourage all district officers to be active participants in a discipleship group	Increasing numbers of people engaging in discipleship groups
Nurture leaders <i>realising visions not filling roles</i>	Provide mentor support, networks and learning opportunities for new and established local leaders of all ages – members and staff – to grow in knowledge and skills, and visions rekindled. Encourage a permission-giving culture that takes holy risks.	Visibly growing leaders
Equip disciples to serve through local learning <i>equipping to meet contextual needs</i>	Ensuring circuits and churches have access to locally based development/ learning materials to meet missional needs they identify – through signposting existing high-quality resources, or creating new resources where required Develop new ways of working with our Learning Network to resource this Provide grants to enable lay and ordained people to access learning and development opportunities	Increased demand for learning & development grants

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PASSIONATE CONTEXTUAL WORSHIP for such a time as this

Our aim	What we will do	What we expect to see
<p>Share best practice <i>our acts of worship must always be occasions when congregations expect to encounter the presence of God</i></p>	<p>Use District gatherings to be occasions celebrating God’s presence. Provide infrequent large inspirational worship celebrations for adults and young people.</p> <p>Support circuits in fostering cultures that actively anticipate and confidently promote public worship.</p> <p>Create opportunities for people with particular expertise to support circuits and churches in developing their worship, and in developing a culture of excellence and continual learning amongst those responsible for leading worship.</p> <p>Initiate conversations about resources needed to enhance worship which are not locally known of or available, and ensure that these are easily accessible.</p>	<p>Increased participation in District celebrations.</p> <p>Stories of increased engagement in worship from congregations supported</p>
<p>Online worship keeps growing <i>lockdown becomes the start of an era of complementary dispersed and gathered worship</i></p>	<p>Create a team advising on and producing high quality impactful online worship resources with a contextually local flavour.</p> <p>Support and advise churches and circuits as they explore and create new sustainable blends of inclusive contextually relevant online/ remote and gathered worship.</p>	<p>Growth in people engaging with online and blended worship.</p>

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SHARING STORIES for such a time as this

Our aim	What we will do	What we expect to see
Make testimony normal <i>noticing God moving in our lives</i>	Model use of testimony in all District meetings Support & encourage recognised leaders to model and invite regular testimony Provide support and advice for circuits/churches seeking to increase use of testimony	Increased regular use of testimony amongst members and churches
Share stories <i>recognising God acting in our societies</i>	Promote stories of God at work regularly via District social media, email, printed resources. Recognising a gospel of hope, including from vulnerability and lament District officers/ leaders to model inspiring communication	Increasing levels of interaction with District social media and regular emailed communications
Make communication easy <i>celebrating God present in our communities</i>	Provide website and social media support where helpful to circuits/ churches Provide communications/ media advice for circuits & churches, that they might be better equipped to know, be known by, and speak into, their communities	Increased interaction with church & circuit social media Sufficient good quality information about all churches readily available online
Creating a culture of invitation to relationship with Christ <i>trusting God speaks into the hearts of our neighbours</i>	Support & encourage circuits/churches seeking to create a culture of invitation, getting beyond social activities to faith exploration. With permission and care, celebrate stories of new relationships with Christ	More churches creating explicit opportunities for exploring Christian faith

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TRANSFORMING MISSION for such a time as this

Our aim	What we will do	What we expect to see
<p>Encourage new innovative mission <i>Our world is ever-changing and our need for God eternal</i></p>	<p>Encourage circuits and churches to experiment with regular new outreach experiments, including through advice, networking, sharing best practice and funding (subject to availability).</p>	<p>Trialling new ways of connecting becomes increasingly normal. Stories of successful ideas shared</p>
<p>Encourage and equip innovators breaking new ground <i>Joining in with moves of the Spirit</i></p>	<p>With churches and circuits, identify projects and local leaders with potential to create or develop spaces for new people/ fresh expressions – places of welcome, conversion and discipleship.</p> <p>Provide sustained mentoring, training and support for local members reaching out through intentional mission. Facilitate networking opportunities/ communities of practice for local people engaged in such projects.</p> <p>Encourage permission giving, risk-taking, allowing time for projects to succeed and appropriate measures of success.</p> <p>Recognise and promote the value of successful and failed experiments, and ensure that learnings from both are shared widely across the District.</p> <p>Support churches & circuits in finding ways to release innovators and pioneers to concentrate on growing flourishing fresh expressions from projects with potential.</p> <p>Subject to funding available, provide financial support to new missional initiatives where necessary.</p>	<p>Increasing number of innovative forms of church visibly growing in depth and reach. Supportive and accessible networks of innovators/ pioneers.</p>

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Our aim	What we will do	What we expect to see
Ask searching questions <i>Fruitfulness comes from both pruning and watering</i>	Provide expert teams to review missional projects with circuits: understanding impact, potential, challenges and required changes. (Responsibility for ongoing support of work in marginal communities which cannot sustain itself lies with circuits.) Support circuits and churches where requested in exploring early whether the mission of a church might be drawing to a close or needing to change significantly.	Recommendations from circuits/ churches who have benefitted from district-led reviews
Set plans for mission <i>Discerning and following where God is calling us to journey next</i>	Assist circuits/ churches in identifying, recording and setting paths to implement bespoke plans for missional action, arising from their context and gifts. Assist circuits in identifying and responding to opportunities for new Christian communities.	Increased sense of purposefulness from established churches Healthy new Christian communities
Embrace change <i>Resurrection hope flows from believing in endings</i>	Support circuits in achieving good endings in circumstances where the mission of a congregation or chapel is reaching its conclusion or transitioning to a substantially different new chapter.	Recommendations from churches

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SIMPLIFYING PROCEDURES for such a time as this

Releasing time and energy for sharing stories, passionate contextual worship and transforming mission

Our aim	What we will do
Challenge inefficiency	<p>Be alert to opportunities to simplify cumbersome administration or remove unnecessary tasks from local officers, ministers and lay staff</p> <p>Where relevant, represent strongly the impacts of poorly conceived external regulation/ procedures on our members/ staff</p> <p>Foster a culture where constructive feedback is willingly offered and gratefully received</p>
Easily accessible information	<p>Refresh District website, making information clearly presented and easy to find</p> <p>Review and evolve regular District communications, so that appropriate information is communicated to relevant people in helpful formats</p>
Easy to use templates	<p>Provide easily accessible templates/ examples for procedures/ documents repeated across our churches, through District website, or providing clear references to where information is already available elsewhere</p>
Centralise where helpful	<p>Be alert to opportunities to lift administrative burdens from local officers, ministers and lay staff, and for opportunities to share or consolidate roles, where efficient and effective to do so</p>
Share good practice	<p>Create opportunities for sharing good practice, communities of practice and mentoring amongst officers and staff with governance roles</p>
Address bottlenecks	<p>Be alert to and prioritise support for individuals or roles burdened with unrealistic volumes of administration or information to relay</p>
What we expect to see	
<p>Noticeable and identifiable improvements in procedures each year</p> <p>Feedback on the District's own procedures responded to promptly</p> <p>Awareness of procedures to be simplified over the coming year</p>	

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PROPERTIES FIT FOR MISSION for such a time as this

Our aim	What we will do	What we expect to see
<p>Property support for local trustees</p> <p><i>missional opportunities may arise in societies without relevant property expertise</i></p>	<p>Provide increased support and advice to local trustees regarding property management and improvement where needed.</p> <p>Provide support and advice on quality of facilities necessary for contemporary mission and practical impactful steps required to reach these standards.</p> <p>Subject to availability of funding, provide grant support towards capital costs needed for premises to respond to identified transformative missional opportunities.</p> <p>Support churches/ circuits in exploring and developing innovative models of property management and development, or partnerships with other providers of local public spaces, in response to missional needs and bringing to bear property expertise from across the District.</p>	<p>Practical improvements being made to premises with missional potential but inadequate facilities.</p>
<p>Reduce our carbon footprint</p> <p><i>being good stewards of creation</i></p>	<p>Support projects improving carbon footprint of Methodist churches. Provide advice on practical and efficient ways of achieving this.</p> <p>Advocate for good stewardship of creation through management of Methodist properties.</p>	<p>Implementation of carbon efficiency measures across properties within the District.</p>