

# **Peterborough Methodist Circuit of Churches**

## **Mission Statement, Strategy, and Supporting Evidence**

This section summarises the circuit policy and its relevance to the mission and ministry across the section.

### **1.0 Mission Statement:**

“The Peterborough Methodist Circuit aims to be the people of God within our communities, sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and showing God’s love through worship, witness and service.” - [www.peterboroughmethodistcircuit.org/missionstrategy](http://www.peterboroughmethodistcircuit.org/missionstrategy)

### **2.0 Mission Strategy:**

1. We will build up individuals and congregations in faith.
2. We will let go of things of the past which have completed their work, and look to the future confident in God, with a willingness to take risks.
3. We will build for the future on prayer, with sufficient resources, in partnership with others.
4. We will reach out into our communities in grateful response to God’s grace and share our faith through loving word and deed.

### **3.0 Recent work arising from this:**

We retain regular engagement with the District Mission Enabler who resides within the circuit.

Post lockdown, the Circuit Meeting (or staff working in the interests of the circuit) have committed to the following measures:

#### *3.1 In Respect of Point 1*

We have supported churches financially during the pandemic, by negotiating individually with our churches and drawing on our reserves to alleviate the strain. Meanwhile, through our weekly bulletins we have encouraged and enabled our churches in authentic discipleship

3.2 We committed to developing small groups – many of which shifted to on-line or retaining contact via phone over the lockdown. We continue this emphasis on small group development by assessing what is happening (there are excellent examples that we should celebrate and give inspiration to others), and signposting people to resources that they might find useful. (Point 1)

3.3 The circuit is looking to support its churches and developing its wider ministry by creating three posts, whilst the funding the circuit has been able to inject has been low, support has come from the local churches, or from the wider District. We anticipate that these posts will be filled by September 2023. These part-time posts are:

**A support worker post for Westgate New Church for BoB** (Back of Beyond) fellowship group, based at Westgate New Church and funded by local giving and delayed grants from The Methodist District and The United Reformed Church synod.

**A Lay Pastoral Assistant to our second presbyter** (who is focused on engaging with groups and newcomers). This role was discerned through our previous co-superintendent as we

identified the need to provide better follow-up and continuity. This is funded through a mix of Circuit and District funding, and was considered a priority.

**A Children's, Youth, and Family Worker, based at Whittlesey** following their Mission Action Plan working. This is funded through a generous bequest made to the local church, and match-funding through the URC Synod. It is likely that we will turn to the Methodist District for support in phase two of what is a significant project that looks to improve welcome, visibility, and access.

#### *3.4 In Respect of Point 2*

Sadly, we have had to let go of a chapel, after having explored its potential as a circuit mission centre and a place for fresh expressions (over some years), because we lack the resources locally or circuit wide to support and justify its continued use.

3.5 We have weathered the curtailment of two ministers, both for understandable reasons; one on the grounds of ill-health (their appointment to Peterborough was a return to ministry), another to take a break from ministry to support their family.

3.6 The Circuit has shown considerable grace and resilience, trusting that just as we exercise this towards others, God's blessing will return to us. In the case of the latter post, we benefitted clearly from an injection of support and expertise that surfaced as a result of adopting co-superintendency. We have modelled what it is to look to the future with faith and have confidence in God.

3.7 The circuit has encouraged churches to adopt more flexible ways of working, particularly in terms of leading worship, resulting in a shift towards alternating forms of worship on Sunday mornings (café church or fellowship gatherings one week led by worship leaders, and services led by preachers the next). This involves an element of risk in developing new work.

#### *3.8 In respect of Point 3*

There has been much ecumenical work with the United Reformed Church to consider how we retain a Methodist presence in the city centre – and this has involved a diversion of resources to allow our superintendent minister to focus on this work. We have maintained and developed our partnership with the Church of England, and with other charities. We now also have a Methodist presence withing Churches Together in Central Peterborough, whose particular charism is one of identifying needs, starting new work, and handing this over to lay leaders so that it can thrive.

3.9 As a result of our Livestream ministry, we have become more aware of, and determined to support those who cannot attend church because they are involved in shift work, care for family, or who are unwell themselves. Our policy is to encourage people to become part of a local church – but the daily witness provided by our livestream, our focus on morning prayers, and our engagement with what is happening in the world is helping people in their discipline of prayer. We understand, from our Mission Enabler, that this blend and pattern (with its focus on being live and open) is unique within the District, and possibly across the Connexion. We continue to focus also on paper resources, for those who are not able to engage digitally, and to consider how we are as inclusive as possible.

3.10 In terms of our partnership with the District and the Connexion, our superintendent minister serves on the connexional guiding group from New Places, New People, is a coach for the Pioneer Pathway and has been nominated to serve on the District Executive. Our Lead Circuit steward has a background in HR and Project Management and is serving on the District Lay Employment Group.

3.11 Westgate New Church recently partnered with Equipping the Saints (and ecumenically open organisation) to run an evangelism course in central Peterborough, in partnership with the superintendent. In addition, we have developed links with Good News For Everyone (formerly Gideons UK) which we feel may be beneficial in encouraging local churches. We are also considering how the Methodist Church's course 'Everyone an Evangelist' might be helpful in some settings.

### *3.12 In respect of Point 4*

There are significant examples of this across the circuit, but the following may assure the panel:

During the pandemic the circuit developed new work for those who had essential needs, particularly in the areas of parent/carer support, and youth support across Southside and Oundle.

3.,13 Oundle Methodist Church continues to explore the viability of partnership with Oundle Baptist Church in mission.

3.14 Westgate New Church drew together a consortium of stakeholders; those who let the church premises (housing Peterborough Christian Books, CROPS (Christian Options for Peterborough Schools), and Peterborough Association for the Blind, in a move to build greater solidarity in light of the North Westgate Development (a plan to redevelop the centre of Peterborough which may well impact the Church. The circuit has been given authority to recruit an individual to serve as the co-coordinator for BoB, a 'lunch-club plus' project looking to reach those who are situated in or feel that they live in 'the Back of Beyond'. The URC has provided grant funding for this. We are seeking permission to draw down, later than anticipated, on funds awarded to us previously by the Methodist District.

3.15 Dogsthorpe Methodist Church became the singular point of entry for Foodbank assistance during the lockdown and provides a base for an independent pre-school. Crowland Methodist Church in partnership with the Church of England continued to offer a Community Larder and beyond the lockdown, a community meal for families struggling with low income. Meanwhile Brookside Methodist Church excels in its ministry through the Boys Brigade (drawing in leaders from other areas), providing a home for other uniformed organisations, and running a Church owned pre-school. Finally, Yaxley Methodist Church have started a toddler group.

3.16 Emerging from the lockdown Southside Methodist Church worked with the Light Project Peterborough to host a Homelessness Pod in its car park. Work within this area was an extension of the previous work carried out across the circuit with churches offering themselves as a Night Shelter project.

3.17 Whittlesey Methodist/URC Church has now been recognised as a community hub for Ukrainian Refugees – and two of its families are giving refugees a home.

### **3.18 In our most recent stationing form (2022), we have stated:**

- We are constantly looking to reach out and develop new relationships with those who live in the communities that we serve.
- Our ministry team is strongly ecumenical. We believe we achieve more working in partnership than working on our own.
- Development of new ways of worship is key to our future and we actively seek out and encourage new ways of bringing the love of Jesus to those who would struggle with traditional worship
- We look to recognise, use and develop the abilities and skills of lay people within the circuit. We actively encourage people to explore what their gifts are and how God is calling them to serve. We are committed to making and growing disciples.
- We believe that God calls us to work together as a team in which we all share responsibility for ministry and are accountable to each other. We are seeking to utilise and ensure the abilities and skills of lay people fully in the circuit and encourage others to explore and offer themselves for service at all levels as equal partners in our work.