

## **16<sup>th</sup> March Peterborough Methodist Circuit Sankofa Day 2**

As we prepare for the 16<sup>th</sup> March, the hope is that this brief document will help name some of the difficulties we highlighted in January and the potential opportunities we will explore on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

The golden thread that holds all of this together is the hope that what drives this is Missiological not Ecclesiological. Meaning, this is about the intention of sharing the good news of the gospel, not the saving of the and promotion of the church, in Peterborough and the surrounding areas.

### **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS (From the Mission Team Leader)**

- Peterborough Methodist Circuit cannot continue as it is for the next five years. Too many buildings, membership & attendance falling in most worshipping communities, increasing strain on those doing work;
- Long term: ministerial staffing reduced, adding to workload of local leaders;
- There is outstanding repairs & maintenance in a number of properties and the demands to become Net-Zero will only increase in the years to come.
- Financially, Circuit projected shortfall 2023 – 2024 of £28,274; the circuit reserves are dwindling and reliance on income from manse and church sales to balance the budget is not a good use of funds;
- Money from District & Connexion available to support some of ideas proposed.
- Any Closures of church buildings with significant property issues will create money– money saved will help fund mission across the Circuit.
- Merging Churches needs to come from a willingness between congregations in the first instance. However, if the above factors continue mergers will have to be considered or a merger with another Circuit/s might have to be tabled.

### **What Have we learnt so far?**

- The Circuit services, involvement in social action, pastoral groups and uniform groups are missional golden threads.
- We mourn the decline in membership and worshipping community, lack of youth work provision and the pandemic impact.
- What makes us Methodist is our commitment to: pastoral groups, Music, Social Action and sense of Connexion, and District.
- The role of the minister is to focus on sacramental worship, pastoral oversight and to enable and lead worship. In terms of mission, they bring people together, help us work our vision, enable us, and guide us.
- The areas of potential for mission Geographically are- Hampton, the City Centre and Great Haddon to name a few.

### **Questions that need considering**

- What are the local responses from the congregations? How do they wish to contribute?
- What decision does the Circuit need to make in the next 12-18 months? E.g. selling of manse and application for District funding, what other decisions are there to make?

- What are the reflections on the ideas as set out below?

***These Ideas are offered in no particular order and will be areas that will be talked about on the 16<sup>th</sup> March.***

### **What is the right shape for the Circuit?**

Given the observations, it is understandable that there is a fear of church closure. While the one church Peterborough Conversation has been tabled before, as the Mission Team Leader, I would implore the Circuit to consider the following:

What is the proper building/context that the Circuit wants to retain to ensure a flourishing community of the people called Methodist in Peterborough in 25 years?

Other Circuits are gathering momentum on similar ideas such as above 'reducing buildings, relocating, and providing a new beginning for what Methodism might look like in a time such as this'.

Starters for 10 idea:

- Does the Peterborough Circuit Change its structure/ model- <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/lead-churches-into-growth/merge-churches-for-mission/presence-in-what-ways-is-god-calling-you-to-your-community/different-models-of-merger/>
- Is there a grouping of churches feeling called to work together in a closer way in the city?
- How can the LEP's within the Circuit continue to thrive and be a part of whatever shape the Circuit becomes?

What does the churches of the Peterborough Methodist Circuit wish to do? A part of the 16<sup>th</sup> March will be to share your own opinions from your church on this matter.

No decisions will be made at this gathering, but views and reflections are being sought so that work can be done for the future.

### **A vision for the future**

In the January meeting, we began to hear visionary ideas for the Circuit future. Each of these ideas needs time to be considered but first we need these articulating. This meeting will enable this articulation to happen so that a feasibility of the ideas can be conducted within the Circuit.

We must acknowledge that any ideas that are formed must have the willingness of the local church at this point to move forward.

These ideas might include buildings but as the golden thread at the beginning reminds us of, this is about the God of Mission that has a church, not the other way around.

### **Faith and Finance**

How can we support a growth in faith and finance and explore ideas to ensure a financially sustainable Circuit?

This space will offer a chance for reflection and input as to how we might bring faith and finance together.

## **Belonging and Believing as a Circuit**

Drawing together from our CLT, the prayer team, and other volunteers, to build a sense of circuit, helping churches to focus on the link between fellowship and faith. How does the Circuit grow together? How can the Peterborough Circuit unite at this time?

This area will look at what the Circuit might do to help smooth the road ahead for the local churches and the stationing process.

### **A prayer to Close**

Lord, keep us focused upon Your will for us, individually and corporately.

In our diversity draw us together in unity and not uniformity.

Help us to reflect and to learn lessons from the past, both the good and not so good.

Teach us to discern the difference, show us your way forward.

Remind us continually that we worship a Great Big God, a God of Surprises,

A God Who holds each of us in His loving embrace.

“What does the Lord require of you, but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah Chapter 6 vv 8)

Lord, create in us a capacity to wonder where you are leading us,  
and give us the faith to follow.

You are the Potter and we are the clay (Romans Chapter 9 vv 21)