

*Dear Circuit Member,*

I have the pleasure of bringing to you the Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit Strategy.

This document was the fruit of a nearly three year journey. Some of you were with us in the beginning, during COVID as we were 'Re-imagining Church.' We began with sessions for Prayer and sessions to Share. It was felt that we needed the conversations to bear fruit, so we put together a Circuit Vision Team (which was open to all) and a small group of people committed to prayerfully seeking God's will for our circuit. In June 2022 we reported back to the Circuit Meeting and we brought our vision document. The meeting was warm but cautious and it was felt that the general direction was good, but it needed more thought - more flesh on the bones - so the Vision Team evolved into a Strategy Team. This team has, in consultation with whoever had the time to contribute (across our circuit and in every church) produced this strategy. We feel it's got a good balance of continuity and progression. We feel it's achievable but will require us to take risks, be brave and above all trust God.

When you read it, I would ask you to remember a few things:

**It's a circuit document.** In it are Circuit actions, not church decisions. Methodist Churches are governed by Church Councils and they are the decision makers. The Circuit does have an important role though - to encourage, excite and enable! This document aims to bring the churches together in ways that will make us stronger and better able to mission, it can't (and won't) dictate. It's an invitation. It is also a roadmap for how circuit resources can be directed to a well focussed, joined up mission. It's about circuit-level acts that we hope can bring about positive church and community-level reactions.

**It's a working document.** It is not perfect and will certainly evolve as we implement it. Not all the details are there but simply the first steps and some of our hopeful conclusions. Each lead, in each area will be able to shape the detailed steps with this as a road-map to give us a well discerned and considered direction.

**It's just a document.** If we do it to it, then the real work will begin. You'll notice that it has some gaps, for lead person and those involved (as well as the timescale and the potential cost). That's because we need everyone to be committed, to put their hands to the plough and get involved.

My hope is that we will be able to adopt this, formally, as our strategy, for the next three or so years (to be decided) and the strategy team can evolve into an implementation team who will draw in as many folk as possible, as many as are willing to serve in the variety of ways, to transform our circuit into one that **encourages, excites and enables** our churches to **deepen faith, offer faith to all and transform communities.**

I'd like to thank all those involved in the journey so far. Those that have given up a tremendous amount of time and prayerfully and carefully dreamt what our circuit could be. I'd like to thank everyone who has journeyed with us in prayer, given thoughtful feedback and I'd like to thank everyone in advance that could be part of making these dreams a reality.

For the glory of God, by the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ.

*Rev Peter Hibberts (on behalf of the Circuit Strategy Team)*

# **Newark & Southwell Methodist Circuit Strategy**

Adopted by Circuit Meeting 12th June 2023

Our mission:

**In God's strength, as a family of churches in Newark and Southwell, our circuit encourages, excites and enables people to deepen their faith in Christ, offer it to all and work with communities for transformation.**

In short, our role as a circuit is to **encourage, excite and enable** so that churches **deepen faith, offer faith to all and transform communities.**

**N.B.** Each section begins with the strategic intentions agreed by Circuit as our 'direction of travel'. It then includes the notes (*in italics*) quoted directly from the Circuit Vision Document received by the Circuit Meeting. There then follows actions and details about how we think these intentions may be achieved.

Please pray through and imagine where God might be leading you to be part of this strategy. It's for all, open to all and needs all of us to take it forward.

If you have any questions, concerns or feedback please contact the Circuit Leadership Team through our Circuit Administrator:

**Strategic Intention A: Transform our existing Circuit Preaching Plan into one focussed on fewer, well-resourced worship hubs.**

*What if we had fewer worship centres [hubs?] each with a localised team of dedicated people, allowing for quality of worship and systematic teaching relevant to the needs of the gathered community. (Moving forward, we will have fewer available preachers in the circuit and therefore need to be strategic.)*

Action	Details
<b>Audit supply and demand for preaching appointments.</b>	Audit available preachers (supply) compared with services requested (demand). How many preachers are going to be available (appointments) from September onwards? How many services are requested by churches on a 'normal' plan? Feedback to Circuit Meeting.
<b>Report audit findings to circuit meeting and discuss priorities.</b>	Hold discussion at Circuit Meeting about appointment priorities: Where will the ministers prioritise their appointments? Where will the Local Preachers be prioritised? What patterns will be followed for planning? Feed priorities into preaching plan-makers (staff team).
<b>Promote joint activities/worship</b>	Encourage more joint gathered worship opportunities across all the churches E.G. Section services (led by their minister/LLP). (See subsequent sections for other suggested collaborations.) Explore circuit led transport arrangements and livestream of joint services. Feed these opportunities into the plan.
<b>Develop Long Bennington (LB)/Balderton (B) collaboration</b>	Meeting of all interested parties to pray and dream. Discuss possible ways of collaborating including possible worship patterns. Feedback to preaching plan-makers (staff team).
<b>Develop North Muskham (NM)/Sutton On Trent (SOT) collaboration</b>	Meeting of all interested parties to pray and dream. Discuss possible ways of collaborating including possible worship patterns (E.G. Traditional and Cafe Church). Feedback to preaching plan-makers (staff team).
<b>Develop North End (NE)/Charles Street (CS) collaboration</b>	Meeting of all interested parties to pray and dream. Discuss possible ways of collaborating including a balance of possible worship patterns and styles. Feedback to preaching plan-makers (staff team).

**Strategic Intention A: Transform our existing Circuit Preaching Plan into one focussed on fewer, well-resourced worship hubs.**

*What if we had fewer worship centres [hubs?] each with a localised team of dedicated people, allowing for quality of worship and systematic teaching relevant to the needs of the gathered community. (Moving forward, we will have fewer available preachers in the circuit and therefore need to be strategic.)*

Action	Details
<b>Explore ways of supporting Local Arrangements EG with technology.</b>	Set-up working party to explore live-streaming to smaller communities where a preacher may not be planned. Examine possible venues for groups to gather (EG: churches/homes etc.) Look at costs both in personnel and financial. Could equipment be made available (for loan) to other churches (or from other circuits)? Could the circuit invest in circuit owned equipment for loan to church groups.

**Strategic Intention B: Create a culture of outward-facing, good news sharing invitation across the circuit.**

*What if we created a culture of invitation; people inviting their friends and families to small, informal, relational groups or inspirational gathered worship opportunities as was relevant? What if people were confident in their church experience to trust the church with their friends and family coming along?*

*What if we united those with a heart and/or gifting for evangelism across the circuit to work together to serve wherever there are evangelistic opportunities in the circuit and beyond? What if they shared their gifts by supporting others with one to one witness?  
Create a culture of outward-facing, good news sharing invitation across the circuit.*

Action	Details
<b>Host evangelism training for members of all churches</b>	Approach District Mission Enabler (DME) to organise an event or series of events ('Everyone an Evangelist'?) aimed at bringing together folk from around the circuit to explore evangelism opportunities.
<b>Connect with District Mission Enabler (DME)</b>	Explore ideas and initiative from outside the circuit Explore support networks for evangelism Explore possible available resources.
<b>Appoint Circuit Evangelism Enabler(s) (CEE*)</b>	Identify and appoint an individual or team to enable evangelism across the circuit.
<b>Create space at circuit gatherings to talk about evangelism</b>	Plan for evangelism discussions at Circuit Meetings, Services and Stewards Meetings and more. Explore what opportunities there could be to develop evangelism.
<b>Network amongst churches over evangelism</b>	CEE to visit Church Councils, Leadership Teams and key groups across the churches encourage and excite as well as finding how we might better equip the churches. Look at wider (ecumenical?) collaborations for evangelism.
<b>Fund evangelism in the circuit budget (through enabler?)</b>	Work with DME to identify funding streams for Evangelism.
<b>Connect evangelists across circuit into team</b>	Connect churches to work together on joint evangelism projects (Alpha?...) Identify/unify/connect the different individuals and groups. Work with Local preachers and Local Preachers & Worship Leaders Meeting to develop evangelism across services (develop seeker friendly/invitational worship).
<b>Develop digital evangelism</b>	CEE to examine opportunities to use our website, social media and live-streaming opportunities for evangelism.

\*CEE is a role that is very much a fresh idea. The role has been listed alongside a number of these actions but the actions could be undertaken or led by a number of individuals if the circuit does not pursue or cannot appoint someone to this role.

**Strategic Intention C: Develop circuit-wide network of small groups fellowshipping and missioning in their locality.**

*What if each community had at least (?) smaller fellowship groups (one for every 15 members) linked to the gathered worship opportunities and fed by them but focussed on discipleship, fellowship, prayer and support.*

Action	Details
<b>Audit what groups go on in all churches.</b>	Identify: purpose/target audience Organisational features: When does it meet and where? Material used (study notes etc.) Geographical constraints Outreach/invitational characteristics Produce a circuit landscape of small groups. Feeding back to Circuit Meeting.
<b>Identify where needs/gaps are for new groups to rise up</b>	Who would like to join one? (For what purpose?) Are there any localities that don't have any? What opportunities are there? What <i>online</i> opportunities are there?
<b>Identify leaders/facilitators</b>	Put an appeal/invitation out for potential leaders to come and seek whether they are called/would like to lead/facilitate. Ask leaders participants of small groups to give testimony about small groups in churches and wider gatherings.
<b>Provide direction on small groups</b>	Find/create models of what a small group could be.
<b>Material/Facilitating</b>	Identify Connexional support. Create a network of leaders/facilitators. Provide a landscape of material/courses/seasonal opportunities.

**D. Release Preachers and Worship Leaders (and others?) to lead worship in worship opportunities and contexts best suited to their gifts.**

*What if we released our Local Preachers and Worship Leaders to lead worship in places and contexts where their gifts fit with the needs of the worshipping community? This could be in Gathered Worship Centres or smaller groups or linking the two [including online].*

Action	Details
<b>Conduct Worship audit</b>	Audit current worship styles across circuit (in churches)
	Audit worship skills/preferred styles across preachers
<b>Develop communication channels between churches, circuit and preachers to ascertain needs and skills/preferred styles.</b>	Use system of plan-making process to ask preachers to indicate flexibility, preferred styles and willingness to engage with new forms of worship and/or traditional styles and forms of worship.
	Work with churches to facilitate a conversation about how they discern worship which will best suit their local context, what different styles and models of worship are available for drawing folk into God's presence.
<b>Use plan-making process to match needs to skills.</b>	Develop communication channels to allow a match between churches' worship needs and skill-set of local preachers.
<b>Explore new ways of worshipping and potentially 'New Places New People'</b>	Identify ways in which worship is happening outside the circuit (geographically and/or ecumenically) that may bring new ideas (visit other churches). Encourage folk to visit other churches inside the circuit where innovations are being developed. (This could involve live-stream/recorded worship).



## E. Create a space for development of Preachers and Worship Leaders across the circuit.

*What if we had a worship academy of individuals who are keen to meet together to explore and develop different ways of worshipping in the circuit. (They could consult with and visit others outside the circuit to discover how God is working in other places.)*

Action	Details
<b>Audit Worship Leaders'/Preachers' (WL/P) needs</b>	Ask WL/P what training needs they have.
<b>Support local preachers in skills development</b>	Pair WL/P in worship to share skills, support reflection and develop skills.
<b>Look at worship beyond our circuit</b>	Provide opportunities for WL/P to experience worship beyond our circuit and denomination.
	Ask the Learning Network (or other group) to present to the circuit what possibilities are being realised elsewhere in the church (taster sessions).
<b>Provide feedback for Local Preaching</b>	Implement a system of reflection and feedback on our WL/P.
<b>Develop preaching academy</b>	Free up space for worship academy alongside the business of Local Preachers' Meeting.
	Ensure that the material covered in the worship academy empowers and enables the types of worship and skills needed for our contexts (possibly in partnership with other circuits or outside bodies).

**Strategic intentions F and G have not yet been explored by the Strategy Team. We felt these were important development points but the timescale was too tight to properly engage with their potential. We recommend that these are revisited at a not too distant point in the future.**

**Strategic Intention F: Develop smooth communication channels for activities, news and prayer across the circuit ensuring that folk feel united and equipped to mission across the circuit.**

*What if people knew what exciting things were happening across the circuit, what's working, what they could get involved in?*

*What if people were praying for the projects around the circuit (whether they are involved in them or not) and knew how to support them?*

Action	Details

**Strategic Intention G: Develop a sustainable online presence for communication, outreach and worship.**

*What if our online presence connected people, shared good news and enabled people to get involved?*

Action	Details

**Strategic Intention H: Release church members and ministers from the unnecessary burdens of trusteeship to focus on our core mission.**

*What if we reduce the burden of trusteeship (fewer church councils, fewer meetings, fewer office holders needed and less bureaucracy) making room for more outreach and greater focus on our core mission?*

*What if our trustees were focussed on the mission of the church and not sidetracked by property and finance firefighting?*

Action	Details
<b>Role of Local Lay-Pastors</b>	Employ LLPs to support the ministers with grass roots level church.
<b>Increase collaboration and cooperation between churches</b> (The more independent activities we have, the more administration is involved.)	Encourage greater collaboration wherever possible, across the circuit including (for example):
	Pursue closer suggested collaborations and potential joint trusteeship(s)... SOT/NM collaboration, NE/CS collaboration, B/LB collaboration. (and others which may develop.)
	Engage in joint projects (mission/evangelism/acts of service) TKC Prayer Walks, Open the book, Life 2k praise party, Newark's got talent.
	Bring stakeholders together to discuss what can be done collaboratively rather than independently. (This may well coincide with conversations in Strategic Intention A).
	Hold joint worship gatherings
<b>Reimagine Building Ownership</b> (the more buildings we have, the more administration is involved)	Conduct a cost to benefit analysis
	Explore the Connexional Property Strategy and hold discussions on how our buildings relate to our mission.
	Explore potential building shares and neutral premises use.
<b>Circuit Meeting, Local Preachers' Meeting</b>	Make the focus of the meetings the core ministry. (Encourage and excite.)
	Limit admin (use of reports, email communication in advance to avoid unnecessary conversations).
	Designate business meetings and missional focussed meetings on annual basis.

**Strategic Intention H: Release church members and ministers from the unnecessary burdens of trusteeship to focus on our core mission.**

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*What if our trustees were focussed on the mission of the church and not sidetracked by property and finance firefighting?*

Action	Details
<p><b>Free ministers and lay-workers up to be face-to-face rather than desk bound</b></p>	<p>Encourage ministers to identify tasks which could be delegated to members/circuit administrator.</p>
	<p>Find mechanisms for recruiting people to key roles. (Greater involvement of circuit reps in matching the needs of the circuit with the skills of the members in local churches.)</p>
<p><b>Reduce administration</b></p>	<p>Identify unhelpful or avoidable administration tasks (or those which are larger than they needs to be).</p>
	<p>Streamline existing burdens (GDPR, Property/Financial Returns, Safeguarding, EDI training etc.)</p>