

**UPPER THAMES METHODIST CIRCUIT**  
**DRAFT PROPOSALS FROM THE CIRCUIT MISSION & MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT GROUP [CMMDG]**

Dear friends

We were delighted to have received so many replies to the questionnaire and we are particularly grateful to the local leadership groups who met with us to discuss the replies and the significant issues at local level. This now gives us the opportunity to present to you these proposals that are linked to each of the 4 questionnaire sections. – worship learning and caring, service and evangelism, The amount of material to be reflected upon means, that after three meetings of our group we are in a position to offer proposals for the first three headings which we believe need three levels of response – Personal, Church and Circuit – What can each member, each local Church governing body and your Circuit Meeting do to contribute positively to this period of change.

**A      WORSHIP**

Responses from the Churches indicated an overall satisfaction with the historical pattern, style and organisation of worship in our churches and only a minority expressing a desire for change. There was, however, an openness to further explore the sharing of lay and ordained ministry and a willingness to be flexible in addressing the inevitable change that must arise from a reduction from three to two ministers both in leading and facilitating services of worship. The following recommendations derive from this:

**Recommendations**

- 1.1 Local Churches are asked to undertake a serious review of its worship provision with particular regard given to the pressures that this places on the large number of people that are required to provide the existing pattern of worship. (e.g. musicians, stewards, Local Preachers) and to introduce adjustments where necessary.
- 1.2 Local Churches are asked to explore all opportunities to combine services with other local Methodist churches and our ecumenical partners as a means to enriching Christian fellowship and a more efficient use of people and physical resources.
- 1.3 Local Churches are encouraged to show some flexibility in the setting of dates for Covenant Sunday (some could move to 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in September to celebrate the start of the Methodist year).
- 1.4 Local churches are requested to be realistic in their expectation of maintaining present worship patterns and practices especially, but not solely, in relation to frequency of Communion. Adjustments should reflect what is feasible and what might enrich the local congregational experience.
- 1.5 Local Churches are to encourage all members to attend three evening Circuit Services per annum. 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in September, 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent and Pentecost Sunday. These being for the purpose of celebration, blessing one another in God's presence and for sharing the Good News as well as to build fellowship.
- 1.6 The Circuit will endeavour to provide training for all Local Preachers and Worship Leaders especially in relation to new patterns of worship. e.g. Healing services, extended Communion etc.
- 1.7 The Circuit will provide resources for all churches who are asked to undertake Own Arrangements – services undertaken by local members WITHOUT local preachers. A reminder that no sermon is to be preached on such an occasion. Standing Orders (SO 569) require that those leading a Local Arrangement service for particular groups (such as children, young people, elderly or those with special education needs) shall receive encouragement and guidance from persons working with that group as well as an appropriate member of the Local Preacher's Meeting.
- 1.8 The Circuit Ministers will, together with Local Preachers, make provision for extended communion.
- 1.9 The Circuit Meeting will be asked to review the trial of zoned planning of preachers and determine its future.

- 1.10 Local Preachers will be asked, through their conduct of worship, to explore and receive training in the leading of healing service and the administering of Holy Communion by extension. They will also be asked to promote the 'call to lead worship', the 'call to preach' and 'the call to presbyterial and diaconate ministry'.

## **B LEARNING AND CARING - PASTORAL CARE**

There were three key issues that came out of the questionnaire in terms of pastoral care.

1. All members and adherents at local church level should be covered by that church's pastoral care system.
2. Anyone who needs a ministerial visit should receive one.
3. It is important that our ministers should not be expected to routinely visit people who do not need a ministerial visit. It is recognised that there are times when only a visit from a minister will suffice. The ministers will be expected to visit in exceptional cases – these would typically be: hospitalisation, death of a close relative, receiving a serious diagnosis or other traumatic bad news etc., (obviously this list is not exhaustive). What is vital is that we make best use of the unique gifts that Ministers have in relation to Pastoral Care and so there must be discernment on the part of the pastoral visitor requesting a ministerial visit. deleted bit here

## **Recommendations**

- 1.1 Every church must examine its pastoral system and ensure that it:
  - a) is not dependent upon a minister for "routine" visits and
  - b) that it is robust enough to ensure that when there is a crisis, a minister will be informed and expected to visit.
  - c) It is not expected that every church will have the same system, however, best practice could be shared by cross church communication.
  - d) It is essential that everyone at local level is aware of the pastoral system employed by its own church and that ALL members are reminded of the need for the Body of Christ in that place to exercise a common responsibility for pastoral care to one another.
- 1.2 Every church should identify those people within their congregation who have a particular gift for visiting and a pastoral heart.
- 1.3 The people identified should then, subject to Safer Recruitment & Safeguarding processes, be trained in the Methodist Churches approach to pastoral care.
- 1.4 The Circuit will provide annual training for pastoral care volunteers. Pastoral Visitors who have been doing the role for a number of years are strongly encouraged to attend especially in the light of changes to the safeguarding procedure.

## **C. SERVICE**

The Circuit wishes to affirm and celebrate all the work that is sacrificially done by members and friends across the Circuit, much of which goes unnoticed. We have one immediate recommendation set out below to acknowledge this on an annual basis and we will return to it in future papers especially in regard to safer recruitment and DBS and subsequent training. Because the time frame is short (lay workers are under contract until the end of 2020 and by Easter 2020 they will need to know what the position will be from January 2021) we have chosen to set out these draft proposals now and we pray they will encourage wide debate and a visionary and sacrificial approach. The Circuit wishes to affirm the unique and gifted ministry of all our lay employees and wishes to assure the Churches that we have continued to engage with all our workers in relation to the time frame for the advertising of any future posts.

## Recommendations

- 1.1 Every Church should hold an annual service to acknowledge and celebrate the many acts of service done locally and to dedicate all members to the service of God as an appropriate outworking of their faith.
- 1.2 The Circuit proposes that for employment and oversight reasons it is both the employer and the deployer of each Lay Worker. This means that the circuit will appoint management and support personnel for all posts that will aim to establish a clear and established pattern of working and accountability across the posts.
- 1.3 The Circuit proposes that we have 3 areas of lay worker deployment a) The West Swindon Partnership b) Purton LEP, Braydon and Royal Wootton Bassett c) Highworth, Shrivenham and Abbey Meads.
- 1.4 In each of these 3 areas we should aim to employ appropriate lay workers and it would be for each grouping to determine which type of worker is most necessary from January 2021.

Such an approach will need:

**SACRIFICE** (both financial and time and resources).

**SHARING** (especially for churches who have been used to having their own worker).

**SUPERVISION** that removes the tension between the Circuit who employs them and the local church who deploys them.

**SUPPORT** and **TRAINING** that is the best that we can offer to those who 'labour among us in the Lord.'

**FUNDING** Not just Circuit resources that are finite but possibly an initial levy on church reserves to ensure that all the posts are underwritten for a minimum period of 3 years.

**FAITH** do we really need to explain this?

In order to deliver on the above and indeed all the changes set out in this and the following document which will focus on study and fellowship, we propose the following new Circuit management framework The Circuits work to be covered by 3 Networks:-

### 1. CIRCUIT SUPPORT NETWORK

To handle business undertaken by individuals appointed to roles concerning:

- i GDPR
- ii SAFEGUARDING
- iii FINANCE – CIRCUIT BUDGET/ SALARIES ETC
- iv PROPERTY – SCHEDULES, QUINQUENNIALS AND SALES
- v EMPLOYMENT - ALL MANAGEMENT TASKS INCLUDING TRAINING
- vi CIRCUIT INVITATION COMMITTEE

Meetings would be 6 monthly called by a group appointed convenor (with telephone conferencing as necessary) but each separate area of work may meet as required. The Circuit Admin Officer would attend the plenary meetings. The Circuit Treasurer should invite all Church Treasurers at Budget time and to review local funding especially for Lay Work The Circuit Safeguarding Officer would call together local officers from time to time.

It is this group's remit to ensure we are up to date with Safeguarding, GDPR and employment legislation and directives.

## 2. CIRCUIT WORSHIP NETWORK

To handle the work of;

- i Local Preachers and worship leader's involvement in new patterns and styles of worship
- ii Own Arrangement assistance – provision and register of resources
- iii The Plan
- iv Music Ministry
- v Prayer Ministry
- vi Special acts of worship e.g. healing, praise and circuit services

Meetings would be 6 monthly called by a group appointed convenor. The Local Preachers would continue to meet as now and would appoint members from its group to sit here.

It is this group's remit to ensure that our spiritual life as expressed in worship and prayer is of the best we can give.

## 3. CIRCUIT MINISTRY NETWORK

Within the purview of the Circuit meeting to set the strategic direction of ministry and mission

- i Ministers
- ii All paid and unpaid voluntary lay workers - Children's and Family Workers, Youth Workers, Pioneer Link workers, whose time would be divided between 'in the community' ministry and in the Church; key role is to help build bridges between the two and Local Lay Pastors whose role would be shared oversight of the local Church with the Ministerial staff [\*]
- iii Three Circuit Stewards – one from each area
- iv Local Preachers Secretary or representative
- v Circuit appointment to support Pastoral Care

Meetings would be monthly and would include representation from Circuit Network groups 1 and 2 as appropriate. The Circuit Admin Officer would attend.

It is this group's remit to maintain and drive Mission Focus.

## VOLUNTARY & REMUNERATED LAY WORKERS

With a reduced number of ordained ministers, it will be necessary to carefully consider roles and appointments to lay work.

How would we appoint such workers?

**CHURCH MEMBERS** Regarding the Pioneer Link workers and Local Lay Pastors posts. [\*] Reflect on your gifts, consult with your friends, pray it through, respond to the call, submit to testing, undertake training, serve with gladness. As regards ALL appointments, consider how you might support this work with finances, prayer and nurture.

**CHURCHES** For ALL appointments – The local Leadership should examine the possibilities and identify the priority appointments, compile a job profile, seek local sacrificial support and funding, budget sensibly and then submit a bid to the Circuit Ministry Network, invite servanthood – at all times consult with the Circuit Ministry Network everyone is clear on role, responsibility and funding.

**CIRCUIT** For ALL appointments - Outline the possibilities, prioritise for some churches but involve all the Circuit and our ecumenical partners, agree with LOCAL CHURCHES the profile, the funding, the responsibilities and only then advertise. With the local church, test the call and arrange training and safeguarding protocols. Arrange contracts for appointment, thereafter supervising, training, reviewing regularly and caring for the post holder.