**Mission Development Plan for Calderdale Methodist Circuit 27/ 34**

**Circuit Reshaping – September 2024**

**Introduction**

The Calderdale Circuit recognises the need for strategic restructuring due to declining congregations, an excess of buildings, and limited human and financial resources. To address these challenges, the circuit will undergo a significant reshaping process, focusing on mission alignment and resource optimisation. This plan centres on clustering churches to maximise impact and sustainability.

**1. Cluster Formation**

To better organise the churches for mission and sustainability, we propose forming three clusters based on geographical proximity:

* **Upper Valley Cluster**
* **Lower Valley Cluster** (will have two ordained ministers, including the Superintendent)
* **Central Cluster**

Each cluster will have:

* A named ordained minister for oversight
* Lay support to assist in various capacities

These clusters will enhance collaboration, build relationships, and share resources for mission. They will reflect the unique diversity and context of the churches within each cluster, adapting to specific needs accordingly.

**2. Cluster Worship & Relationship Building**

* **Quarterly Cluster Worship**: Each cluster will gather for joint worship at least once every quarter. This initiative aims to foster a sense of unity, build relationships between congregations, and reduce the number of preachers needed to fill the preaching plan.
* **Resource Sharing**: Regular meetings will take place to share ideas, explore ways to support one another, and exchange resources.

This approach will enable churches to form stronger, interconnected communities while also optimising human and financial resources.

**3. Strategic Conversations about Buildings**

Churches within each cluster will be encouraged to engage in open conversations about their buildings, exploring:

* **Best Locations**: Which locations are most suitable for a forward-looking, vibrant Methodist presence?
* **Resource Allocation**: What resources are available, and how can they be pooled?
* **Mission Opportunities**: Identifying mission opportunities in various communities and assessing the needs they present.

This conversation is designed to encourage strategic decisions about building usage and placement, ensuring that resources are used effectively.

**4. Multi-Site Churches & Governance Simplification**

* **Multi-Site Model**: Clusters are strongly encouraged to work towards developing multi-site churches under the governance of a single church council. This model reduces administrative duplication and enables churches to support each other, streamlining operations and fostering collaborative growth.
* **Flexible Participation**: Flexible Participation: Recognising that the multi-site governance model may not be suitable for every church, the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) is committed to exploring options for churches to "opt-out" where appropriate. This approach ensures that each church's unique needs and preferences are respected while still encouraging collaboration where beneficial. Importantly, churches that choose to opt-out of certain aspects of the governance model will remain part of the cluster to which they are assigned. This means they will continue to participate in cluster-wide services, events, and activities, and will not be free to independently arrange services on designated cluster service Sundays.

• **Treasurer Support and Development:** To facilitate a smooth transition, opportunities will be created for cluster treasurers to meet with experienced multi-site church treasurers. These sessions will offer a Q&A format to discuss practical challenges, best practices, and collaborative financial management.

**5. Circuit Property Support**

To address the ongoing and increasing burdens of building compliance and maintenance, the circuit will explore employing a **Circuit Property Officer**. This role would support clusters by:

* **Building Compliance**: Assisting with compliance in health, safety, and regulatory standards, ensuring each site meets legal and operational requirements.

**6. Circuit Finance and Mission-Oriented Budgeting**

The circuit recognizes the need to align financial resources with missional goals. To achieve this, we will prioritise:

* **Mission-Focused Spending**: Ensuring that circuit finances are not solely directed toward maintenance but are strategically allocated to fund mission, outreach, and growth-oriented programmes.
* **Sustainable Resource Allocation**: Reviewing and adjusting financial practices to ensure long-term sustainability, empowering churches to invest in community impact rather than solely in upkeep.

By reorienting financial strategies, the circuit aims to release more resources for programs that foster spiritual growth, outreach, and community engagement.

**7. Graveyard Strategy**

The circuit acknowledges the need for a Graveyard Strategy, which will involve:

* **Disposal Considerations**: Long-term planning around the disposal or management of graveyards.
* **Maintenance Programme**: Development of a maintenance programme to ensure ongoing care of these sites.

This strategy will ensure that the circuit is managing its graveyards sustainably, reducing financial and administrative burdens.

**8. Heritage Churches and Feasibility Study**

The future of the two heritage churches without a worshipping congregation will be explored through a feasibility study and needs assessment. This includes:

* Assessing the significance and potential of these sites
* Considering alternative uses for the buildings to preserve their heritage value

Two funded heritage workers will help drive this exploration, with the goal of determining the most appropriate and sustainable future for these important sites.

**9. Lay and Ordained Staff Training**

Recognising the importance of lay and ordained staff, the plan includes:

* **Contextual Evolution**: The roles of lay staff are evolving, and we are committed to ensuring they are equipped to meet the changing needs of the circuit.
* **Ongoing Training**: Continuous training for both lay and ordained staff is a priority to ensure everyone is empowered and equipped to serve effectively.

This training will support both mission and governance, creating a more resilient and adaptable circuit staff team.

**10. Children and Youth Engagement**

The future of the church depends on engaging children and young people. Key components of the development plan include:

* **Cluster Collaboration**: Each cluster will be encouraged to work together to offer youth activities, schools work, and events like **3Generate** weekends.
* **Youth Ministry Support**: A dedicated focus on building up youth ministry will be encouraged, ensuring that the church is active and relevant to younger generations.

**11. Inclusive and Accessible Worship**

The circuit is committed to ensuring that worship is inclusive and accessible for all. Efforts will focus on building on the great work our churches do to create environments where everyone feels welcomed and valued.

* **Inclusive Practices**: Support churches to work toward becoming fully inclusive and accessible, removing physical, social, and technological barriers. Develop creative resources and share ideas to enhance worship experiences for people of all abilities and backgrounds.
* **Transportation Support**: Provide links to public transport options and ensure accessible travel information to help people attend worship services.

**12. Pastoral Care**

* **Equipping Pastoral Visitors**: For the past two years, the circuit has been resourcing pastoral visitors with training. This will continue to ensure high-quality pastoral care is available across the circuit.

Pastoral care remains central to our mission, and we are committed to equipping those called to this ministry with the necessary training and resources.

**13. Church on the Margins & NPNP (New Places for New People)**

The Circuit is actively exploring missional opportunities while seeking support and guidance from District and Connexional experts. It is envisioning ways to serve some of the most vulnerable communities, such as Halifax Town Centre, Sowerby Bridge, and Brighouse, as a demonstration of God's unconditional love. This includes supporting and building upon the work already happening in these communities while also exploring additional areas where there is a need to work alongside others in mission and outreach.

**14. Energising Local Preachers and Worship Leaders**

Local preachers and worship leaders are at the heart of the circuit’s mission. The development plan includes:

* **Nurturing and Teaching**: Finding new ways to energise and support preachers and worship leaders through teaching, mentoring, and providing resources.

This approach will ensure they remain integral to the life of the circuit, offering high-quality leadership in worship and mission.

**15. Safeguarding**

To ensure our outreach and church growth align with our mission to create a culture of inclusion, safeguarding is established as a non-negotiable priority. Every church within the circuit will operate as a safe, welcoming space for all.

**16. Resilience, Inclusivity, and Justice-Seeking**

The final component of the development plan focuses on building resilience and inclusivity across the circuit. This includes:

* **Mental Health First Aid Training**: Funding places for mental health first aid training to equip individuals to support mental wellbeing within the congregations.
* **EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) Training**: Providing in-person EDI training to foster a more inclusive and justice-seeking church.
* **Training in Dementia and Alzheimer’s Care -** Recognising the growing need for support for individuals with dementia and Alzheimer's, training will be included in the circuit's training schedule.

By prioritising resilience and inclusivity, the circuit aims to be equipped to meet the challenges of contemporary society and church life.

Conclusion

The reshaping of the Calderdale Circuit is rooted in a mission-focused approach that seeks to align resources with purpose, foster collaboration among churches, and prepare the circuit for sustainable growth and vibrant ministry. This development plan lays the groundwork for a more resilient, inclusive, and missionally effective circuit for the future.