



District Mission and Development Plan

Introduction

The Cumbria Methodist District is part of an Ecumenical County, so this Plan reflects that the District is both Methodist and Ecumenical. Further, the Methodist Conference of 2021 directed districts to combine their District Mission Plans with their Property Development Plans, which this plan seeks to do in an integrated way together with other related aspects referred to or included. Thus, the sections that follow are intended to be a composite, integrated plan for the District and its Circuits and Local Churches within the Cumbrian Covenanted Partnership in Extended Area.

A. District Mission Plan

1. As part of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, the District is guided by and seeks to follow the Methodist Church's understanding that ***Our Calling*** is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. It does this through: **worship, learning and caring, service, and evangelism**. In the District's encouragement of the mission and activity of the Circuits within the District, these are overarching principles that can and should be embodied and pursued in numerous ways.
2. The Cumbria District is also part of the **ecumenical county** of Cumbria, committed to good relationships with other churches and denominations as part of Churches Together in Cumbria (see: [https://www.churchestogethercumbria.org.uk/Groups/318432/Churches Together in.aspx](https://www.churchestogethercumbria.org.uk/Groups/318432/Churches_Together_in.aspx)), and, specifically through the **God for All Covenanted Partnership in Extended Area** (latest version signed Advent Sunday 2016), the District is committed to working jointly with the Church of England, Salvation Army and United Reformed Church, and with other 'companion churches'. ('God for All' was a title, initiative, commitment and program adopted in Cumbria, prior to the term being used, with permission, by the Methodist Connexion in connection with its Evangelism and Growth Strategy; for the Cumbrian God for All initiative and resources see: <https://www.godforall.org.uk>.) This is in fulfilment of Christ's command to unity in John 17; the Priorities of the Methodist Church in 2004 encouraging us to work "in partnership with others wherever possible"; and Standing Order 400A: "Wherever possible the work of the District is carried out ecumenically".
3. a) In 2020 the Cumbrian God for All partnership adopted a ***Vision Refresh***, including four specific themes, that we seek to:
 - **follow daily** Jesus Christ;
 - listen to and **care deeply** for our neighbours and communities;
 - **speak boldly** through words and actions of the love that God has for all;
 - **tread gently** on God's earth through concern, action and justice for the climate and environment.

The four adverbs can be interchanged for the four themes: follow/care/speak/tread – daily/deeply/boldly/gently, emphasising that they are mutually informing and interconnected (as are the four *Our Calling* themes). Appointed Ecumenical groups are further developing strategies, initiatives and programmes for implementing the *Vision Refresh*, and these will continue to evolve according to the emerging needs and contexts from time to time, and any developments will be reflected in this Plan.

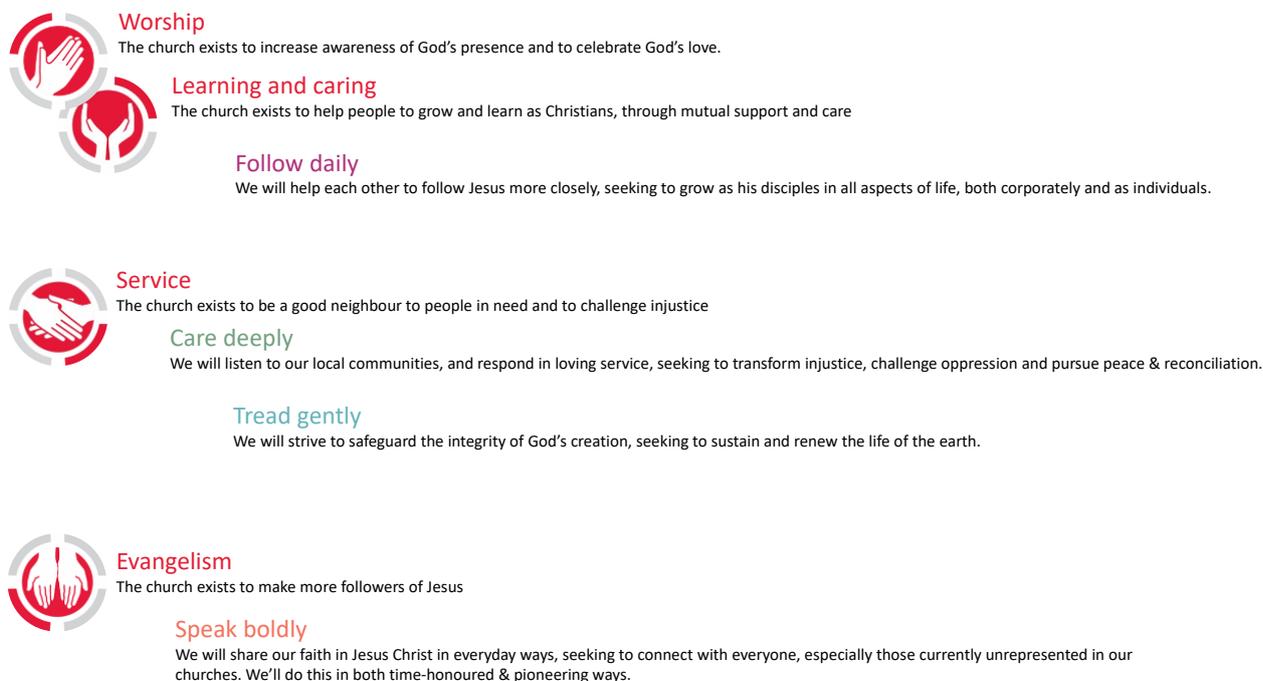
b) A connecting driver and purpose (sometimes described as a 'theology' or even a 'theory of change') for implementing the themes and describing their wider intention is:

A vision to release the whole people of God for the whole mission of God for the transformation of Cumbria in Jesus's name.

Further reflection and activity is underway with our ecumenical partners, including discussion about what the 'transformation of Cumbria' might mean, for communities and not just churches, and including continuing and developing work with a wider range of partners.

c) This is being worked out in both time-honoured, inherited and traditional, and in pioneering and fresh expression, forms of church. In particular, implementation of the Plan locally will be through ecumenical **Mission Communities**, of which each Local Methodist Church or Local Ecumenical Partnership is a part, and through which mission and, increasingly, resources are being jointly shared. (There are some 35 Mission Communities in the County; some Circuits relate specifically to one, others to several, and, once more, Circuits and Local Churches are called upon to be both Methodist and Ecumenical, and to navigate the complexities but also opportunities that this affords.)

4. The **relationship** between *Our Calling* and *Vision Refresh* might broadly be indicated by the following diagram:



5. Within the wider framework of *Our Calling*, the Cumbria District's **Mission Plan** is to follow and implement the *God for All Vision Refresh* referred to in Paragraph 3 above.

6. The Mission Plan will be **implemented** through ecumenical strategies and mission communities, and through Methodist contextual implementation within the District, Circuits and Local Churches. Aspects of the implementation are set out in the following sections:

- B. refers to some District level areas of activity, often in partnership with others;
- C. sets out the Property Development Plan (which is given a whole section to allow it sufficient space, but again it is an integral part of the whole Mission Plan and does not stand alone or separate from it; and
- D. invites Circuits and Local Churches to implement through their own mission plans and endeavours.

This document does not seek to be comprehensive or to set out every relevant detail; rather, it seeks to distil the essential elements, and to identify and refer to some of the interlocking aspects to enable a cohesive implementation of the Mission and Development Plan as a whole.

B. Implementation through the District

1. The **primary purpose** of the District is to:

advance the mission of the Church in a region, by providing opportunities for Circuits to work together and support each other, by offering them resources of finance, personnel and expertise which may not be available locally and by enabling them to engage with the wider society of the region as a whole and address

its concerns. The District serves the Local Churches and Circuits and the Conference in the support, deployment and oversight of the various ministries of the Church, and in programmes of training.

(Part of Standing Order 400A.)

2. The District, therefore, does not exist for its own ends, but to **support and connect others** in fulfilling the above purposes. Working through District synods, committees and groups, officers and representatives, and in partnership with others (Ecumenically, Connexionally, Regionally, and with Circuits, Local Churches, and other agencies, communities and individuals), the District will seek to implement the District Mission and Development Plan, including through the themes and resources set out below. (Activity and initiatives may be both 'inward' and/or 'outward' facing in terms of church communities.)
3. The District offers support to help implement District, Circuit and Local Church mission plans in order to:
 - a) **Follow Daily** – including through:
 - i. promoting discipleship and spirituality, such as through the 'Methodist Way of Life';
 - ii. worship, such as support for Leaders of Worship and Local Preacher training and fellowship), and assistance with physical, hybrid and virtual forms of worship.
 - b) **Care Deeply** – including through:
 - i. developing inclusivity and mutual learning and respect, including through the Being Inclusive Group, Positive Ways of Working and Reconciliation, Unconscious Bias Training, and applying the Connexional Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity ('JDS');
 - ii. promoting the offering of and training in pastoral care, and the use of small groups for care and discipleship;
 - iii. Safeguarding;
 - iv. engagement with social justice, including through the Churches Together in Cumbria Social Responsibility Forum, and with Action for Children, Christian Aid, Methodist Homes, etc..
 - c) **Speak Boldly** – including through:
 - i. exploring and encouraging pioneering as well as (and where possible in connection with) time-honoured ways of being Church, including through the Connexional New People for New Places and Church at the Margins funding streams;
 - ii. the use of programmes to help us individually and corporately to speak and act sensitively yet confidently about our faith, and about God's presence and activity in the world.
 - d) **Tread Gently** – including through:
 - i. engaging in ecumenical and Methodist initiatives;
 - ii. individually and corporately through our church activities and buildings (see further section C.) taking responsibility for reducing our carbon footprint, acting in more sustainable ways, and working for climate change justice, not least for some of the world's poorest societies.

Once again, these four emphases are mutually informing and interconnected; they do not stand alone.

4. Some of the District's **resources** have been referred to above, but others cut across and are available to help implement all four emphases, including (listed alphabetically):
 - a) Finance: including through the provision of District grants.
 - b) Lay Ministry and Leadership: including advice and support regarding lay office holders (such as Circuit Stewards), lay employees, and Local Lay-Pastors.
 - c) Learning, Development and Training: including through the Methodist Regional Learning Network and Ecumenical initiatives and programmes.
 - d) Ordained Ministry and Leadership: including regarding stationing, and various ministerial development and support processes.

- e) Oversight and Trusteeship: including helping Circuits and Local Churches creatively to reconfigure in the light of the effects of the Covid 19 pandemic and the 2021 Conference decisions regarding Oversight and Trusteeship (there are missional, governance and property aspects to this, so see also Section C.).
- f) Property: including the development, maintenance and use of property for mission (see Section C.).

C. Property Development Plan

1. In 2013 a County Ecumenical Property Strategy was developed. In 2014, the Cumbria Methodist District undertook an extensive review of church societies and buildings, the findings from which have continued to inform the development of churches, Circuits and the District in subsequent years. In 2021 the District appointed a new paid District Property Secretary (jointly with the Lancashire District) to facilitate the development of a new District Property Development Plan. Consultation and work to develop this will enter a new phase in the Autumn of 2021, for which preparations are underway.
2. *[An audit is planned: initially existing information will be collated, and this will then be shared with a gathering of circuit property secretaries and others, in order to obtain further information and to begin to consult regarding principles for the Development Plan; etc., with additional paragraphs to be added to this Plan.]*

D Implementation of the Mission & Development Plan through Circuits and Local Churches

1. The District commends its Mission and Development Plan to **the Circuits and Local Churches**, and encourages each Circuit and Local Church, often working in tandem with their local Mission Community, **to develop or review their own contextual Mission and Development Plan**, and to do so on a regular basis. It is recognised that in preparing and implementing local mission plans, sometimes these will be influenced more by a Methodist *Our Calling* framework and sometimes more by the Ecumenical *God for All Vision Refresh* framework, and always by the particular context and calling to which the Circuit, Local Church, or Mission Community is responding. Thus a variety of emphases and foci will emerge, but within this, Circuits and Local Churches are encouraged to note and connect to some degree with the wider Methodist and Ecumenical themes and priorities, even as these are expressed with and in local emphases and ways. In all this, again, as set out in paragraphs B.3. and 4. above, the District can help and support the processes of working out and implementing their own Mission and Development Plans.
2. **Each Circuit and Local Church** is encouraged **annually to identify priorities and tasks for the year ahead**, and in doing so to have regard to the possibilities and resources available to them. For example:
 - a) in larger churches, it might be possible to identify several priorities each year for the four *Our Calling* or *Vision Refresh* themes, or the choice may be to focus on particular areas and initiatives (since quality rather than number is important), including intentionally to continue to develop previous initiatives;
 - b) smaller chapels may only be able to develop one or two initiatives and in only one or two of the themes; this should not be perceived as being any less valuable, since it might be proportionate and pragmatic with the available people, finance or property resources in that context (and effectiveness, not size of congregation, is what is important); nonetheless,
 - c) every congregation is encouraged actively to reflect on, discern, commit to and implement so far as possible a programme for the coming year, such as: what collectively might you do to follow more daily, care more deeply, speak more boldly, or tread more gently (including regarding your carbon foot print), that all may join in more fully with God's presence and activity, mission and ministry, in the world?
3. Listening to the Circuits and Local Churches, and to Ecumenical partners and Mission Communities, and to the wider Methodist Connexion, **the District** will similarly commit to **reviewing annually** the contents and implementation of this Mission and Development Plan, and to the development and deployment of the initiatives, resources, structures and officers needed to achieve its implementation, including by **identifying priorities and tasks** for the year ahead.

Date of adoption of the Cumbria District Mission and Develop Plan: September Synod, 2021

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