

THE METHODIST CHURCH

NORTHAMPTON DISTRICT

**DISTRICT
DEVELOPMENT
PLAN**

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**The following policies all relate to and undergird this Development Plan.
They can be viewed at www.northamptonmethodistdistrict.org.uk**

- District Safeguarding Policy
- District Mission Policy
- District Grants Policy
- District Chaplaincy Policy
- District Youth Strategy

1. The purpose of the Plan:

This plan is prepared by the District Executive for the guidance of all churches, circuits, district officers and committees under SO 962 and to help try to identify and set priorities for the work of the district, recognising that we are operating in a time of restricted resources, especially of personnel, and therefore cannot do all the things for all the people that we may wish to do.

The framework for this District Development Plan is our existing connexional polity and a renewed emphasis on Our Calling as the Methodist Church.

SO 962 states: *The District Policy Committee (Executive) shall formulate and keep under annual review a development master-plan for the Methodist church buildings and circuit staffing of the District taking into account Planning Authority proposals (e.g., new residential areas, new road proposals, and urban centre redevelopment). Existing and proposed church buildings of other denominations shall be noted, particularly with a view to ecumenical co-operation or the formation of local ecumenical partnerships and the consideration of projects under the Sharing of Church Buildings Act 1969. Any such project may be referred for detailed consideration to a group appointed by the committee for that purpose. The committee shall report annually to the Synod upon any such projects and upon the content and implementation of the development master-plan generally.*

SO 400 defines the Nature and Purpose of the District:

The primary purpose for which the District is constituted 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. (SO 400A(1)).

The purpose of the Methodist Church: Our Calling

The calling of the Methodist Church 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

The Church exists to increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love

Learning and Caring

The Church exists to help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care

Service

The Church exists to be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice

Evangelism

The Church exists to make more followers of Jesus Christ

Safeguarding

The Northampton District is committed to the centrality and foundation of excellent safeguarding practice as we fulfill our mission and ministry in the District.

The District has agreed a Safeguarding Strategy covering the period from 2016 to 2020-21, which included increasing the officer provision to a full time equivalent post, and providing increased administrative resource to support the officers.

This strategy is in course of implementation and a significant budget has been agreed to resource this work.

Excellent Safeguarding practice must underpin all activities that form/will form part of this plan.

2. Our Context:

The Northampton District is one of the largest Districts of the British Methodist Church. It consists of 22 circuits and stretches from East Midlands Airport in the north of the District to Heathrow Airport in the South and is a very diverse District. Parts of the District are deeply rural and others are very urban and suburban. There are areas of affluence and considerable deprivation alongside each other in both – the District includes Milton Keynes, Oxford and Leicester. Some of its communities are small villages and others major cities which are continuing to grow and develop. Significantly this district has been identified as one of the areas with the highest proposed level of new housing in the UK. In particular, major development schemes are planned over the next 15 years in around half of the district's circuits:

Some of the new housing developments can be connected to a phenomena

described as the “London halo effect” where areas proximal to London (or a reasonable commuting distance from) are identified for the building of new homes for those unable to afford London housing costs but we also note new housing developments in the north of the District where commuting journeys to Birmingham and other Midland cities are possible.

3. Our Priorities

The priorities identified within this plan will also guide and influence decisions made regarding the provision of grants from the District Advance Fund.

This plan is designed to be formally approved by the September 2018 Synod and to be reviewed, and if necessary revised, annually thereafter at each September Synod.

The following sections refer to those areas of the district’s work that the Executive feel should form our priorities for the next three Connexional years, from 2018-19 to 2020-21, but be subject to annual review.

They are in no particular order of importance and are ranked alphabetically merely for administrative convenience.

I. Chaplaincy work

There is a significant amount of chaplaincy work of varying types carried out across the district, some by ordained persons either on a full or part time appointed basis but much of the work is delivered by ordained staff in addition to their circuit appointments/responsibilities and with the support of a very significant lay volunteer resource.

Initially the district will carry out a mapping exercise to accurately identify all of the chaplaincy work being carried out across the district. It will then seek to provide suitable ongoing training to those undertaking the work and also training for those wishing to become part of the delivery of this work. This is with the aim of maximising the effectiveness of the work of evangelism carried out in our communities by chaplaincy workers.

Target 2018-19

- a. Carry out a mapping exercise to identify all current chaplaincy work of whatever type undertaken in the district.
- b. To encourage chaplaincy as a model of ministry for every circuit minister and encourage all ministers to give at least one session (3 hours) per week to community presence and activity outside the church.

II. Diversity and Inclusion

This plan recognises that the Northampton district is made up of communities that are gloriously diverse. We seek in our District to become a truly welcoming and inclusive church – whatever that may mean in each locality. We invite and encourage each local church/circuit to identify the opportunities and needs within its local area and seek ways to befriend and engage with a broad range of peoples especially those who are marginal and who have less. We celebrate existing work in Food Banks and Winter Shelters for the Homeless, street pastors and mental ill health services.

Target 2018-19

- a. In line with our new EDI policy ensure that suitable training is provided to all ministers and other church leaders by our Equality Officer and Disability Advisor on how to become a welcoming church to those of differing abilities/background.
- b. To increase more diverse participation in our representatives to the Conference and Synod, in our membership of committees and those holding office.

III. Ecumenical work

It is recognised that the most effective ecumenical working is a helpful combination that takes place at a local level, supported by the ecumenical officers of the District and close collegiality with senior leaders in our District and our Connexional and national instruments of ecumenism.

The District will through the Chair and the Ecumenical Officers do all it can to enable and support this work.

The Ecumenical Officers through their representative submit a report to each meeting of the District Executive to enable this work to be monitored and supported and endorsed as necessary.

It is noted that the Chair has been appointed an Ecumenical Canon of Peterborough Cathedral and will be visiting Trichy Diocese, India with the Bishop of Leicester.

Target 2018-19.

- a. To encourage every church and circuit to reflect together on the proposals of the *Mission and Ministry in Covenant* report and consider the implications in their context

- b. To encourage all churches and circuits to reflect on the report with their Anglican colleagues and neighbours and invite them to do this in an evening of food and conversation.
- c. To encourage all churches and circuits to engage with and cooperate with their local Churches Together or equivalent ecumenical grouping.

IV. Fellowship Groups and Language Groups

It is recognised that this district has a great deal of diversity within its boundaries with a great many countries of origin represented amongst our communities and significant numbers of people from a wide range of nations. We regard this diversity as one of our greatest treasures. We wish to celebrate our diversity and ensure that our church structures, District committees and Synods reflect this diversity in both representation and leadership, candidates for ministry and local lay leadership.

The district will initially seek to map the differing language groups worshipping in their mother tongues within our churches – either as part of the regular congregation or as separate worshipping communities using our buildings for their own worship purposes.

Efforts will be made to update and complete the survey carried out initially in 2016.

The Chair meets regularly with a Reference Group of ministers of World Church heritage who serve in the District. Conversations with this group include planning an annual Service of Celebration for the fellowship groups and language congregations, considering a mentor scheme for lay and ordained ministers to support and enable their wider representation and leadership development.

Target 2018-19.

- a. To map, celebrate and encourage participation in each local church/circuit

V. Interfaith.

The district exhibits significant diversity in number of ways, one of which being the very rich diversity in many parts of the district provided by the wide variety of faiths represented in our communities. In the times in which we find ourselves we need to ensure that we do all that we can to improve relationships with other faiths for the overall benefit of everyone in our communities.

Target 2018-19.

- a. To map the extent of existing interfaith relationships (both formal and informal) within our churches and more particularly circuits.

- b. To identify where there are areas of significant weakness in interfaith relationships and to investigate ways in which they can be improved working with colleagues such as St Philips Centre in Leicester

VI. Schools work

It is probable that over the next ten years a significant number of new schools will be required in parts of the district due to the number of major new housing developments (see Our Context above) planned to be built in the district.

The Executive agreed in December 2017 that a business plan be scoped out to enable a proposal be submitted to apply for a Connexional grant to fund work with schools including the sponsoring of one or more schools in the district.

It is recognised that this is an area of work that requires specific skills and also will require significant input of human resources to achieve any meaningful impact on the opportunity.

Target 2018-19.

- a. Based on a business plan prepared in 2017-18, apply for Connexional grant.
- b. Subject to grant funding appoint a district schools officer to lead this work.

VII. Supporting Superintendents, ministers and lay workers

The pastoral care of all ministers, both active and supernumerary, is one of the key duties of a District Chair. It is recognised that this is an extensive district geographically and the Chair believes that her focus should be on care and support of superintendents who in turn should care for their ministerial colleagues both active and supernumerary and also widows of ministers/supernumeraries although she is committed to meeting, visiting and caring for all in these groupings wherever possible. It is recognised that pressures upon ministers seem to increase inexorably as the level of lay support is decreasing in many areas due to the difficulty in finding sufficient able and willing people to take on the many and various lay offices. A training event will be identified for circuit and church stewards to help them support their ministerial and lay staff as effectively as possible.

Target 2018-19.

- a. The appointment of the District Vocations Officer and creation of the District Vocations Support Group
- b. All Superintendents to have received an MDR in 2017/18 and to receive their supervision training in 2018/19 with a full roll out in 2019/20.
- c. All the above to enable ministers to flourish.

VIII. Training and Supporting local Preachers and Worship leaders

Much of the preaching and worship leading in our churches is heavily dependent upon our accredited and in training local preachers and worship leaders.

The district will work with the Learning Network staff to seek ways to support and endorse the loving service offered in preparing and leading worship week in and week out in our churches.

We will provide suitable training opportunities for these people to enable them to continue their personal development and learning and help to increase their effectiveness in their role and also their effectiveness in evangelism.

Target 2018-19.

- a. To recruit at least 44 (2 per circuit) local preachers and/or worship leaders, including some aged under 40.
- b. To recruit extra and support existing tutors and mentors ensuring that there is at least one tutor and one mentor in each circuit

Monitoring

This plan will be subject to formal annual review and revision as needed.

Monitoring of performance against any and all agreed measurable targets that form part of this plan will be a standing item on the agenda of each meeting of the District Executive with reports being issued to the Spring and September Synods.

To be Inserted

