

Mission Action Plan

March 2025

Sharing in the Transformation of Life
made Possible through God's Love



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Birmingham Methodist Circuit Mission Action Plan

Sharing in the Transformation of Life made Possible through God's Love

Introduction

The Birmingham Methodist Circuit was formed in 2011 when a group of neighbouring Methodist Circuits decided to join together around the city centre of Birmingham.

The Circuit has undergone significant change and development since its formation (see Appendix 1). Some developments have been welcome and encouraging, whereas some have brought sadness; some have been planned, whereas others could not have been anticipated. Leaders across the Circuit, in many different contexts, have aimed to deal responsibly with all these circumstances.

Responding to the gospel of God's love in Christ¹, the people in our churches, projects, schools and chaplaincies have shared in missions and ministries that have touched and changed lives. We are thankful for God's faithfulness in giving guidance, strength and inspiration.

This Mission Action Plan is being offered now to set a direction for our next steps as a Circuit, building on what has gone before. It has been drafted by a working group of the Circuit Leadership Team, who have reported regularly to the whole team for discussion, advice and comment. The working group have tried to listen to others carefully, to notice God at work and to reflect prayerfully on what we have learned.

Using the Plan

It is intended that the plan will become the start of a **Mission Action Planning Cycle of Discerning, Planning, Acting, and Reviewing** for each of the Areas for Development identified below. As new Areas for Development emerge, they can be added.



The main part of the plan gives the overview of our Vision, Priorities and eight Areas for Development. It sets the direction for those eight areas. Detailed plans can then be created by those involved in each one. Those plans will be kept separate as working documents that are updated regularly.

The Circuit Meeting agreed this plan in March 2025. The Circuit Leadership Team will have oversight of the implementation across the Circuit. Detailed monitoring and guidance will be delegated to the Development Support Group. Progress will be reported to the Circuit Meeting and a comprehensive review is likely to be helpful in connexional year 2028/29.

¹From the statement of 'Our Calling' as the Methodist Church in Britain (see Appendix 2)

Vision Statement

Birmingham Methodist Circuit aspires to be a welcoming Christian family with inspiring worship, radical compassion and social justice at its heart. In this way, and following in our Methodist tradition, we aim to share in the transformation of life made possible through God's love.

Five Priorities

As members of the Birmingham Methodist Circuit, we have agreed the following five priorities for the sharing of our God-given resources:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Transforming Life | We aim to live in such a way as to bring about positive change in our own lives and the lives of others, to share God's love and to learn and grow as followers of Jesus, both individually and in community. |
| 2. Inspiring Worship | We aim to offer worship across the Circuit which glorifies God, is inviting to all, enriches faith and inspires us to respond. |
| 3. Radical Compassion | We aim to develop and practise a radical compassion which is welcoming, inclusive, safe and empowering. |
| 4. Social Justice | We aim to speak out and take action against injustice in all its forms. |
| 5. A Methodist Perspective | Working together with our ecumenical partners and many others, we aim to uphold the values and principles which arise from our Methodist heritage, including being sustainable, ethical, collaborative and connected to Methodists across our nations and around the world. (See Appendix 2) |

"I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me." John 15:5

Areas for Development

Our Circuit Mission Action Plan does not attempt to describe all that happens in our many churches, projects, chaplaincies and schools. We are a large Circuit and that is not the purpose of this plan. Equally, our Mission Action Plan cannot include all of the day-to-day work of the people who connect, resource and support us and link us with our many partners. We are very thankful for all they do.

Instead, eight key **'Areas for Development'** have been selected because they **stand out as those we should pay particular attention to over the next 2 to 3 years**. We are already active in these eight areas.

1. Working together effectively
2. Supporting local worship and mission
3. Sustaining leadership and participation
4. Doing fewer things well

5. Developing the faith of young people
6. Beginning new forms of church
7. Acting for justice, dignity and solidarity
8. Reducing our harm to the natural environment

The titles given to each Area for Development aim to express a **guiding principle** that could be applied and acted upon in many different ways across the Circuit.

For **each Area for Development**, we have explained below what we expect that area to cover and then set out some '**Fruits**' we hope to see in the near future. The list of fruits is not exhaustive and we trust and hope that we will see many more fruits develop. However, these are the ones the Circuit Leadership Team will intentionally plan for as a priority.

Area for Development 1: Working together effectively

This covers -

- how the people in the Circuit get to know each other better;
- how we build up networks and connections between us;
- how we continue to develop our communication methods; and
- how well our committees and groups are understood.

The fruits we hope to see are:

- There is a greater knowledge across the Circuit about the day-to-day work in our projects, schools, chaplaincies and churches and how that work is 'sharing in the transformation of life made possible through God's love'.
- People know who to go to for information and support and how they can support other people in the Circuit with their work.
- The purpose and scope of different groups in the Circuit is clear and well understood by people in our churches, especially those holding responsibility.
- More people are receiving the weekly newsletter, by email or otherwise, and feedback shows that the content is interesting and relevant.

Links: Circuit Vision Statement and Priority 5; Area for Development 2; the Nature and Purposes of Methodist Circuits in the Methodist Church in Britain (See Appendix 3).

Area for Development 2: Supporting local worship and mission

This covers -

- how we ensure that we continue to provide quality, accessible worship;
- how we operate with good governance; and
- how we can work from a shared sense of purpose, in a changing, challenging world.

The fruits we hope to see are:

- People from a wide range of different backgrounds and experiences have opportunities to join in inspiring worship that affects their daily lives.
- A diverse range of people are being enabled to lead 'local arrangement' services with confidence.

- People who hold offices in local churches and Circuit committees, especially new volunteers, are supported with accessible information and advice.
- Most of our local churches have an agreed sense of purpose and priorities.

Links: Circuit Priority 2; District Objectives, *in* Birmingham District Development Plan (2024) pp3-4; Connexional statement of 'Our Calling' (see Appendix 2).

Area for Development 3. Sustaining leadership and participation

This covers -

- how we value and protect the well-being of all our ministers, employees, and volunteers;
- how to ensure we have realistic expectations of each other and ourselves; and
- how we hold in balance the importance of self-care as well as service.

The fruits we hope to see are:

- The ministers and lay people who serve in the Circuit are fulfilled and thriving in their roles.
- Expectations of each other (and ourselves) are well-matched to the time and energy that can be given, while still maintaining good health and well-being.
- Volunteers are coming forward for roles so that the Circuit can function well.

Links: Circuit Priority 3; Areas for Development 1, 4; 'Positive Working Together'; 'The Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers'.

Area for Development 4. Doing fewer things well

This covers -

- how we choose to use our collective energy, time, expertise and finances, (especially in the light of Area for Development 3 above); and
- how we maintain strategic oversight of the Circuit, recognising challenging realities but still noticing and nurturing growth².

The fruits we hope to see are:

- All of us are reviewing our activities routinely, bearing in mind that "for everything there is a season" Eccl 3:1
- We are working together across the Circuit to seek solutions to common difficulties and share these with each other
- There has been a culture shift towards increasing confidence, courage and enthusiasm.

Links: Circuit Priority 1; Areas for Development 1, 2 and 3; District Mission Statement (2024) (see Appendix 2).

² 'growth' refers to growth in numbers of new disciples, growth in depth of discipleship, and growth in the transformation of communities and society (aligning with the Birmingham Methodist District's Mission, 2024, see Appendix 2)

Area for Development 5: Developing the faith of young people

This covers -

the support and coordination of our children, youth and families work;
participation in residential weekends (3Gen, Amplify); and
connections with our two Primary Schools.

The fruits we hope to see are:

- In each church where there are children and young people, there are good connections between them and the rest of the congregation/membership so that there is a mutual sharing of faith and Christian living.
- The children and young people across our Circuit, and their families, have opportunities to feel connected to each other for mutual support and encouragement.
- The aspirations and ideas of young people are captured and reflected in what we do together as individual churches, as a Circuit, and beyond.

Links: Circuit Vision Statement and Priorities 1, 2, 3; District Objectives, *in* Birmingham District Development Plan (2024) p5; Methodist Youth Conference (3Gen).

Area for Development 6: Beginning new forms of church

This covers how we encourage and support initiatives that nurture faith in people who would not otherwise be engaged with our churches, including

our New Places for New People/Church at the Margins project/s;
our Messy Churches; and
any new local gatherings that are coming together for this purpose.

Fruits we hope to see are:

- The Circuit NPNP project in the Stechford area is developing well under the leadership of the Pioneer Minister and Circuit Oversight Group.
- There are several gatherings taking place across the Circuit that are nurturing faith in people who are not otherwise attending an inherited church, e.g. local church outreach initiatives, Messy Church groups, NPNP initiatives.
- All new forms of church within the Circuit have secure leadership and clear systems of accountability.

Links: Circuit Priorities 1, 3; District Objectives in Birmingham District Development Plan (2024) p3; Connexional 'God for All' Strategy.

Area for Development 7: Acting for justice, dignity and solidarity

This covers –

how we support our local churches towards greater inclusivity in worship, church life and leadership;
how we fulfil our duties regarding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Safeguarding;
our collaboration with the District EDI Task Group;
our membership of Citizens UK; and

the ways we publicise opportunities for involvement in social justice issues.

Fruits we hope to see are:

- Safeguarding training at the appropriate level has been received by all those who are required to attend.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are well understood and being implemented in our churches to assist in keeping everyone safe.
- Training in Unconscious Bias and EDI is being provided and promoted so that at least those required to receive the training have done so.
- The people in our churches and Circuit groups are developing, modelling and promoting practices that move us towards being an inclusive and justice-seeking church.
- Leaders and others across the Circuit are benefitting from our membership of Citizens UK.
- There are regular notices in the weekly Circuit email about partner organisations and events to do with Justice, Dignity and Solidarity, e.g. JPIT, Just Money Movement, Racial Justice Sunday, etc.

Links: Circuit Priorities 3, 4, 5; District Objectives, *in* Birmingham District Development Plan (2024) pp4-5; Connexional 'Inclusive Church' Strategy.

Area for Development 8: Reducing our harm to the natural environment

This covers –

our support for groups within our Circuit who are raising awareness of environmental issues and promoting environmentally responsible practices;
our property management; and
our collaboration with the District Eco Task Group.

Fruits we hope to see are:

- The number of churches who have received Eco Church awards is increasing and most churches are progressing through the scheme from their current position.
- The environmental impact of our decisions is routinely taken into account and our practice adjusted accordingly.
- The justice implications of climate change and environmental degradation are well understood and serving as a significant motivation for change.

Links: Circuit Priorities 4, 5; District Objectives, *in* Birmingham District Development Plan (2024) pp4-5; Connexional 'Action for Hope' Strategy.

The detailed planning

For each Area for Development there will be a **more detailed action plan**. These will be kept separate from the overall Mission Action Plan, as working documents that can be kept up to date more frequently. (See 'Using the Plan' p1.)

We suggest that each of these working documents should include the sections shown in the example below, but it is important that it is the action that is central and not the written recording. People will naturally work in different ways. It is hoped that the **Development Support Group** will have a role in gathering information about progress, and assisting with the recording where this is helpful.

Area for Development

Context and current issues

...

Action plan

What fruits do we hope to see?	What shall we do?	Who will make it happen?	When will this be done?	What fruits did we see? (Review)

As work is reviewed by asking 'What fruits did we see?', any extra actions that have been taken can be considered and recorded, and the planning cycle can continue (see diagram, p1).

Closing Remarks

In the implementation of this Mission Action Plan, the Circuit Leadership Team share the commitments of our Methodist District to:

- ❖ Team working
- ❖ Shared leadership
- ❖ A 'Can-do' attitude
- ❖ Thanksgiving
- ❖ Prayer

If you are reading this plan and **would like to join with others who are working on one of the Areas for Development**, or are **interested in being involved in any other way**, please contact one of the Circuit ministers, a Circuit Steward or the Circuit Office for more information.

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Email contact@birminghammethodistcircuit.org.uk

Circuit Website: www.birminghammethodistcircuit.co.uk

A closing prayer from the Methodist Prayer Handbook 2024/25

Dwell within us, O Christ, as we go about our work in quietness and peace;
 Rejoice with us in the work you have given us to do;
 Bless us in the love you have called us to share,
 And be present in the message you have summoned us to speak. Amen.

Isabelle Gilmore, Pioneer Anglican Deaconess (1842-1923)

Appendix 1

The Story So Far

The Birmingham Methodist Circuit was formed in 2011 when a group of neighbouring Methodist Circuits decided to join together around the city centre of Birmingham.

The Circuit was set up with a constitution that was modified from the standard model of most Methodist Circuits. The opportunity was taken to do things differently and the structure was designed to enable the particular sense of calling of the new Circuit.

It was always recognised that being a large Circuit would come with advantages and disadvantages. Partly to help capitalise on the advantages, and reduce the impact of some of the disadvantages, a major review was begun in 2017.

From 2017, there were regular discussions and reports and a good deal was achieved, but by then financial challenges were of increasing concern.

An Away Day for representatives from the Circuit Executive, led by an invited facilitator, took place in February 2020 - just before life changed dramatically because of the pandemic and lockdowns. Some intentions from the Away Day were held on record and development work continued as far as possible, but the unprecedented circumstances redirected our priorities quite suddenly.

In March 2021, the Circuit Assembly agreed a wide-ranging 'Circuit Development Proposal' and this was then implemented.

In summary, developments between 2017 and 2021 included:

- agreeing our Vision Statement and Priorities
- setting up and modifying Mission and Ministry Teams
- streamlining our HR systems for lay employees
- appointing a Property and Facilities Officer
- carrying out a survey of all our churches
- adding a Circuit Steward for Property to the Circuit Stewards' team
- bringing together a group to address issues of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- reviewing and remodelling our meeting structures and constitution, adopting the standard Circuit constitution, and moving us on from the original 'Forums' model
- forming a new Development Support Group
- reducing the number of ordained ministers – for financial reasons and in light of the number of ministers available across the Connexion
- investigating the role of Lay Pastor and beginning to appoint people to this role

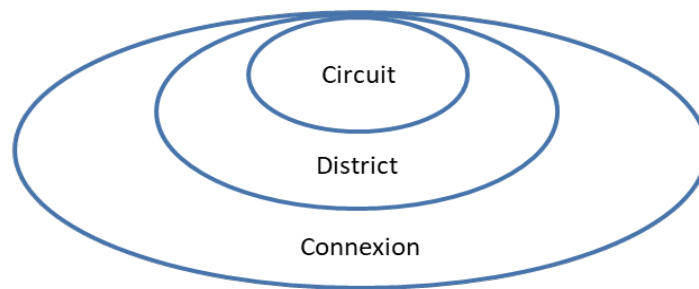
The period from 2022-2025 has been a period of more rapid change than we might have expected. This has demanded considerable time and energy from our ministers, lay staff and volunteers. We are grateful that we are still seeing so many signs of growth across the Circuit amidst all the change, and that the love of God is being experienced and expressed in so many important ways every day.

Appendix 2

A Methodist Circuit

This Circuit is blessed with several Local Ecumenical Partnerships. They enrich us and are living models of collaborative mission and ministry (see Circuit Priority 5, p2).

Methodists are always connected to others; we belong to this Circuit, which is part of a Methodist District, and the whole Methodist Church in Britain (the 'Connexion').



Therefore, we share the Birmingham Methodist District's Mission: for **growth "in numbers of new disciples, in depth of discipleship and in the transformation of communities and society"**. We look forward to participating in the mission of the new West Midlands District to be formed in September 2025.

We share the commitment of the Methodist Church in Britain to becoming **"a growing, inclusive, evangelistic and justice-seeking church"** and we embrace the statement of 'Our Calling' as Methodists, adopted in 2000 and reaffirmed in 2018:

***The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out our discipleship in worship and mission.
It does this through worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism.***

Appendix 3

The Nature and Purposes of Methodist Circuits

The Conference of the Methodist Church in Britain states that:

“The Circuit is the primary unit in which Local Churches express and experience their interconnexion in the Body of Christ, for purposes of mission, mutual encouragement and help. ...

The purposes of the Circuit include the effective deployment of the resources of ministry, which include people, property and finance, as they relate to the Methodist churches in the Circuit, to churches of other denominations and to participation in the life of the communities served by the Circuit...”

(from The Constitutional Discipline and Practice of the Methodist Church, 2024, Vol 2, Standing Order 500)

References

There is a wide range of documents and other resources available on the District and Connexional websites. Those that are referred to in this Mission Action Plan are listed below.

Anyone who would like to be involved in implementing this Mission Action Plan is welcome to ask for more information (see p7), whether or not they have easy access to these resources.

Birmingham District Development Plan (2024)

www.birminghammethodist.org.uk/synod

Connexional 'Action for Hope' Strategy

www.methodist.org.uk/action/climate/action-for-hope/

Connexional 'God for All' Strategy

www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/evangelism-growth/explore-the-god-for-all-strategy/

Connexional 'Inclusive Church' Strategy

www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/the-inclusive-methodist-church/

'The Covenant Relationship between the Church and its Ministers: Commitments and Expectations' Conference Report 2022.

www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/ministries/the-covenant-relationship-between-the-church-and-its-ministers-commitments-and-expectations/

Methodist Youth Conference (3Gen)

www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/ministries/children-youth-family-ministry/3generate/

Positive Working Together

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/introducing-positive-working-together/>