

Conclusion

We are indebted to so many across the Circuit for their tireless service. We wish to both honour our tradition and to look ahead. Although challenging, this strategy offers new possibilities which can remove crushing weight from the past, ease our present circumstances and be the basis for the future to which God calls us.

We commend the strategy to you for prayerful consideration, discussion and acceptance.

St Austell Circuit Leadership Team, September 2020

ST AUSTELL METHODIST CIRCUIT

Registered Charity No. 1141712



Draft Circuit Strategy for 2021 for Circuit Meeting 17 September 2020

The importance of change and transformation for the Christian

This document is more than a response to the impact of Coronavirus. The steps being taken to contain the spread of the infection are having a huge impact on the Church, not least in shutting down buildings and activities. That challenges us to reflect on the relationship we have with God, what part the Church plays in that relationship and what our Christian experience will be in the future.

Christians are called to be people constantly on the move. It is God who calls: the Bible attests to God's willingness to call people to do something different, often at moments of tension, danger and unpredictability. The Old Testament narrative tells of people called to make journeys, adapt to new circumstance and survive change in their lives. Throughout, God is faithful to people in those circumstances: to support, guide and inspire. God's call to His Church may also be a challenge to live with difference, change and the unpredictable - and his faithfulness and our faith in Him makes this possible.

The Church does not define our Christian experience. Our Christian experience is defined by a life that is full of God's love and a driving desire to be obedient to His call. What follows in this document is offered in the light of that belief but requires all of us to be attentive to God and to share what He is saying to us.



Why a draft strategy now - to turn a threat into an opportunity

The Methodist Church has changed dramatically within our lifetimes. We have increasingly faced difficult decisions. The pandemic adds to historic problems, but also offers an opportunity to see a radical vision of a streamlined Circuit using resources in a more effective way with new mission possibilities.

It is increasingly unworkable for Circuit and churches to sustain existing commitments. This strategy proposes a way of streamlining our work and finances, reducing the burden on ageing and reducing membership, sustaining a balanced infrastructure and supporting churches to function more effectively post-pandemic.

Some stark realities

- Finances are finite and reducing, and will worsen as the pandemic goes on. They will only allow 2 Ministers from September 2021, to be supported by lay staff.
- The people available to run Chapels and Circuit is limited and likely to fall.
- On average we can only provide preachers for fewer than 12 services a week in a Circuit that has previously planned 18-20 acts of worship.

A Vision of a Circuit that is sustainable and streamlined with new priorities

The Circuit and its churches will pro-actively move during 2020-21 towards a smaller number of societies that:

- normally meet in one building for worship and activities, with scope for a society (or in some cases, the Circuit) being Managing Trustees for more than one building.
- prioritise co-operation, mission and ecumenical working where possible
- provide opportunities for Christian worship, fellowship such as bible studies and house groups, and activities across different communities, especially where there would no longer be a Methodist building, including 'streamed' participation.

A sustainable, streamlined structure

- 2 Presbyters
- x lay Pastors/Pastoral assistants
- 1 Admin Officer
- Around 10 Societies operating across multiple buildings
- 10-12 Principal Acts of Worship each week
- Fellowship and missional opportunities for all across and within different communities

The Strategy – a process to turn present threat into future opportunity

- September 2020 - Circuit Meeting decides **in principle only** to group churches into clusters from September 2021, and authorises the CLT to work with churches to implement the vision
- Autumn 2020 – Spring 2021: CLT organises planning groups to form clusters, working out implications for staffing, finance, property, worship, fellowship and mission. Each group reports on steps needed to establish a single society for each cluster with multiple buildings and/or disposals. CLT makes interim reports to December Circuit Meeting.
- March 2021 - Circuit Meeting:
 - Invites and encourages societies within each cluster to enact amalgamations and/or closures to establish a new society. (The Circuit cannot 'close' a chapel but societies can restructure themselves.)
 - Identifies ways of supporting each cluster, to take effect from September 2021.
 - prepares a Circuit budget for 2021-2 with new assessment formula
- June 2021 - Circuit Meeting confirms:
 - New structure and staffing
 - New budget and assessments
 - roles of presbyters and lay pastors/pastoral assistants
 - prepares training for new lay vocations and leadership
- September 2021: New structure takes effect

An example of clusters

- St John's and Trinity
 - Mount Charles and Polgooth
 - Bethel, Carclaze and Tregrehan
 - Bugle, Stenalees and Gunwen
 - Leekseed, Par, Tywardreath and Lostwithiel
 - Indian Queens and St Dennis
 - Whitemoor, Nanpean and Roche
 - St Andrews remains an LEP
- Many other variations and combinations are possible.

Budget for 2021-22

Staffing and District assessment accounts for 85% of the Circuit budget. Core income/expenditure for 2021-22 will need to be approx £200,000 with £180,000 raised from assessments. A new formula for raising assessment from each society could be based on

- income from giving, or
- total income, or
- net income over expenditure, or
- net assets, or
- a combination

A working group would be established to work this out.