



Preston Ribble Methodist Circuit

Strategy and Resources Group

Update November 2016

This is the first of a set of updates for church members in the Preston Ribble Circuit. It has been written to keep you up to date with the work of the Circuit Strategy and Resources Group. The Group was set up by the Circuit Meeting earlier in 2016 to consider the challenges and opportunities facing the 14 Methodist Churches in the Circuit. These relates to the mission, ministry, worship and discipleship in our churches – and the resources to support them.

What are the Challenges?

In common with many churches in the UK, the Circuit Meeting has identified several significant challenges. Many of our churches have a vision but they struggle to resource it. Church membership is falling, churches are finding it increasingly difficult to fill certain leadership roles e.g. for stewards, and many people attend worship less frequently than in the past.

Some churches are struggling financially and several of our buildings are becoming more of a millstone than an asset. Over the next 2 years, 4 ministers will reach the end of their current invitations and it is very unlikely that there will be enough ministers available to replace all of them immediately.

What are the Opportunities?

Conversely, the Circuit has also identified several positive signs of growth and development. Some churches have developed new worship opportunities including Messy Church which have attracted

new members. There are a number of specific mission projects which connect churches to local communities - this includes work with schools, volunteering into a wide range of groups, links to Methodist Action North West, ecumenical support for local food banks and meeting new people through the Interfaith Forum. The pastoral support offered by churches to members and non-members alike is highly valued.

The Circuit Meeting has asked the Strategy and Resources Group to be ambitious in its thinking and make its recommendations by May 2017. We are already clear that Doing Nothing isn't an option!

How is this going to work?

The Strategy and Resources Group has divided up its task into 4 stages over the course of a year. These are:

Stage 1 - Preparation	Time to agree the focus of the Group - completed June 2016
Stage 2 – Exploration	Time to understand what is happening in each church, meeting church officers, reading, research and information gathering – to be completed by November 2016
Stage 3- Developing Options	Time to consider the options facing the Circuit – to be completed by February 2017
Stage 4 – Making Recommendations	Time to develop and test recommendations – by May 2017

Each stage is accompanied by discussion with the Circuit Meeting and is supported in prayer.

What are the possible outcomes from a Circuit Strategy?

Nothing is ruled in or out. We need to seek God's guidance, along with our own wisdom, to create a view of the Circuit's mission and ministry over the next 5-10 years. The Strategy will not offer a "one size fits all solution" but it will make recommendations about issues such as:

- Paid and unpaid ministry.
- Opportunities for new models of church
- Challenge churches to consider that some parts of their mission have now been accomplished.
- The Circuit's priorities for the stationing (the Methodist word for recruitment) of ministers from September 2018.
- Use of our buildings
- Collaboration in outreach and social action

It will be important and we will need to be confident we can put it into action.

When will I hear more?

The group are holding fact finding discussions with representatives from each of the churches in October and November. A Circuit Consultation Event will be held on the 11th January 2017, where more information will be available then about the work the Group is undertaking. Further updates like this will be produced as the work progresses.

Who is on the group?

Jan Astley
Rev Katharine Bland
Rev John Fisher
Rev Malcolm Hickox
Rev Mark Slaney

Andrew Bennett (chair)
John Ferris
Stephen Gregory
Rob Matthews

Questions or concerns

Feel free to contact any of the Circuit Strategy and Resources Group if you would like to discuss any of the issues raised in this leaflet.