



**Preston Ribble
Methodist Circuit**

**Following Jesus, Loving
Communities - New Ways of Being
Circuit and Church**

Strategy and Resources Group

Update 4 - June 2017

This is the fourth in a series 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.

What did we tell you in the last update?

In our last update in May, we explained that the Circuit Strategy and Resources Group was in the process of finalising our recommendations. We were arranging a Circuit Prayer Day which took place on Saturday 3rd June and held a further consultation evening with church leadership teams at the end of May.

Where are we up to now?

The Group presented its final report and recommendations to the Circuit Meeting on June 20th 2017 and this is an important update as we summarise the decisions made at that meeting.

We have a new vision for the mission and ministry in our Circuit.

Jesus didn't ask people to go to church! He simply said: "Follow Me." He invited the people he met to become his disciple, to begin a new, lifelong adventure with God. Our Vision for the Preston Ribble Methodist Circuit is of a thriving, growing partnership of churches where each person feels welcomed, encouraged and supported to become the disciples Christ hopes we will be. We are asking Jesus to help us rediscover the passion and excitement of being part of His family, a movement of disciples ready to say "Yes" to Him, willing to serve Him at the heart of our communities.

For these reasons we have therefore called our report ***‘Following Jesus, Loving Communities – New Ways of Being Circuit and Church.’***

Golden threads

There are also two golden threads running through all of our recommendations. The first is that the churches in this Circuit need to work much more closely together as neighbours and partners across the whole Circuit. We believe that a strong and healthy sense of 'circuit' will help us to better use our resources, rebuild a presence in our localities and help us work together to advance Christ’s mission through His church.

The second golden thread is that we believe that in order to see the “new thing” that God wants to do among us, it will be necessary to identify some areas of work to lay down. This decision to declare a “mission accomplished” should not be viewed as a failure but a chance to create space, time, resources for a new and exciting adventure with God.

Our recommendations

We made 5 major recommendations for consideration by the whole Circuit. You can find much more detail about them in the main report:

Theme	Recommendation
Worshipping Communities	Recommendation 1: The Circuit should create a new Plan for Worship and Discipleship which renews our commitment to relevant, high quality worship and responds to the opportunities for mission in our churches.
Spirituality/ Discipleship	Recommendation 2: The Circuit should offer further opportunities for individuals and groups to explore their spirituality and discipleship. This could include house groups, faith development courses, Bible studies, retreats, spiritual direction and mentoring.

<p>Pastoral Ministry</p>	<p>Recommendation 3: The Circuit should restate its commitment to pastoral ministry in relation to both faithful members and those in need of hospitality, care and prayer in our wider community.</p>
<p>Mission in our Communities</p>	<p>Recommendation 4: The Circuit should act as an effective 'steward' of God's resources (people, money, skills, buildings) in a small number of bold mission opportunities for a 3-5 year period. Each church should articulate a Plan for Mission including the vision and resources required as a response to this Circuit Strategy.</p>
<p>Leadership (including response to Stationing)</p>	<p>Recommendation 5: The Circuit should redesign the Circuit Ministry team with a blend of 5 full time ordained and 6 full time lay roles to be in place from September 2018. This will mean recruiting 4 additional lay employees. The Circuit should also strengthen lay leadership within the Circuit Leadership Team to respond to the challenges the church is facing.</p> <p>To underpin this strategy, the Circuit should invest additional resources (from its reserves) between 2017-2020 to increase the available ministry resources.</p>

The Circuit Meeting held a ballot vote and agreed to these recommendations with 62 votes For and 0 Against.

We made 7 further recommendations which related to specific mission activities across the Circuit:

Mission activity	Recommendation
East Preston	Recommendation 6: The Circuit should agree that Ribbleton Avenue Methodist Primary School is the missional, worshipping Methodist community in this area of the Circuit and therefore continue to support this through chaplaincy and foundation governors.
Ministry to children and young people in our churches	Recommendation 7: There is an urgent need for the Circuit to establish which churches are able to continue to resource and develop ministry for children and young people through junior church/ fellowship and youth groups. This will be supported by the proposed children and family workers but needs congregational commitment for the future. Proposed churches are Bamber Bridge, Fulwood, Ingol, Kingsfold, New Longton, Penwortham, Trinity Gregson Lane.
One to One Listening Spaces and Training Ministry	Recommendation 8: The Circuit understands these listening spaces are a vital piece of its missional and pastoral ministry and resourcing. Therefore the Circuit and churches strongly encourage every Pastoral Visitor and Lay employee to attend the One2One ‘Listening For Life’ course as a way of providing training and support for pastoral care.

<p>Schools work and SPLAT</p>	<p>Recommendation 9: The Circuit should continue to encourage links between ministers/children and family workers into local schools, especially our two Methodist Schools, Cuerden Church School and Ribbleton Avenue Methodist Juniot School. The Circuit should maintain its financial commitment to SPLAT for the remainder of the current 3 year period. (2017-2019)</p>
<p>University Chaplaincy</p>	<p>Recommendation 10: The Circuit should withdraw ordained ministry from the Chaplaincy to concentrate resources on other priorities in this Strategy.</p>
<p>Police Chaplaincy</p>	<p>Recommendation 11: The Circuit should withdraw ordained ministry from the Chaplaincy to concentrate resources on other priorities in this Strategy.</p>
<p>Interfaith</p>	<p>Recommendation 12: The Circuit should endorse a continuing commitment to interfaith dialogue in the City, maintaining activities relating to Preston Faith Forum and the annual interfaith week. The Circuit should hold further discussions with the District about the potential to recognise and resource this commitment on a wider Lancashire basis.</p>

The Circuit Meeting held a ballot vote and agreed to these recommendations with 61 votes For and 1 Against.

Lastly, the Circuit Meeting received a number of recommendations from the Strategy and Resources Group and agreed unanimously to ask individual churches or groups of churches to consider these in more detail over the next few months. In summary, we recommended that some churches consider how to:

- Work together to discern the future of individual congregations (West Preston churches: Ashton, Lea, Cottam supported by Ingol)
- Work together to share resources and mission opportunities
 - Bamber Bridge and TGL (Children/YP and young families)
 - Fulwood and Central (radical hospitality, Ribbleton Ave School)
 - Kingsfold and Penwortham (Kingsfold estate)
- Work together on a new collective vision (Longton, Hoole, New Longton)
- Work together with other denominations (Christ Church, Ashton)
- Work together in the City Centre

What does this all mean?

It means that over the course of the next 1-3 years, we will carefully implement the recommendations in this new Circuit Strategy. We need to ensure people understand what may change and why and learn quickly if we make mistakes!

This is now a very important time for the Circuit and we ask you to pray for all those who visit or worship in our churches, for young and old, for our Circuit and Church leadership teams as they work together to plan for the future.

What's happening next?

As the main recommendations have been approved, the Circuit Leadership Team has been asked to develop more detailed implementation plans. Individual churches will have the opportunity to receive and discuss ***'Following Jesus, Loving Communities – New Ways of Being Circuit and Church'*** at the next Church Council meeting in September.

We are also planning to hold an open day during July or August which will allow church members to talk to members of the Circuit Strategy and Resources Group and understand more about the Strategy. Watch out for more details about this.

When will I hear more?

We will publish another update in September.

Who is on the Strategy and Resources 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

If you have any questions, suggestions or feedback about the Circuit Strategy, please use our dedicated email address: strategyprmc@gmail.com - or feel free to contact any of the Group members if you would like to discuss any of the issues raised in this leaflet.

