



### **Preston Ribble Methodist Circuit**      ([www.prestonribblemethodistcircuit.org.uk](http://www.prestonribblemethodistcircuit.org.uk))

The Preston Ribble Methodist Circuit is a group of twelve local Methodist Churches, one Local Ecumenical Partnership (Methodist/URC) and one planted ecumenical congregation, who work together to provide a co-ordinated approach to worship, mission, ministry and administration. From September 2018 the proposed staffing will be a team of 5.5 presbyters, 2 Lay Youth, Children's & Family Workers, a café manager, a lay pastoral minister (here being recruited) and a part-time Circuit Administrator. It is hoped that this will provide an exciting leadership and ministry team with a variety of skills who will meet regularly and offer mutual support. Two other lay posts are also being considered to respond to local needs and mission opportunities. The geographical boundaries of the Circuit include the compact city of Preston, its suburbs and surrounding urban and rural communities.

The Circuit is engaged in education through two church primary schools and a partnership with a neighbouring Circuit, which provides a full-time Schools Worker. In addition, several members of staff have regular contact with local schools. Lay chaplains also serve in the hospital and hospice. The Circuit is engaged in established mission alongside homeless, isolated and vulnerable people and manages a Listening project: 'One2One Listening' in the city centre.

Several of the church buildings have been re-developed as Community & Worship Centres to provide creative community engagement with all ages. Four are currently offering 'open' youth and children's work and seven have 'Messy Church' programmes. There is regular Inter-faith dialogue and social action across the Circuit and significant active engagement with the District World Church Partners. The Circuit is a full member of Churches Together in Lancashire and is represented on the Preston Inter-Faith Forum.

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

In March 2016 the Circuit Meeting agreed to create a Strategy and Resources group in order to respond to the opportunities and challenges being faced by the circuit. This led to a thorough review which involved the circuit, churches and individual members at each stage and resulted in a positive and exciting strategic plan called 'Following Jesus, Loving Communities – New Ways of Being Circuit and Church'. This received resounding endorsement at the circuit meeting in June 2017.

The overarching vision of this strategy is as follows: \_

*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.*

*The Circuit strategy and resources group has adopted a very distinct focus on mission rather than the management of church decline in order to develop its proposals for New Ways of Being Circuit. We have been motivated by the hopes of many church members who expressed a desire to leave a church for future generations capable of boldly proclaiming the gospel message of God's love into our local communities.*

The strategy set out a series of recommendations about different areas of circuit life. These are Worshipping Communities, Pastoral Ministry, Spirituality/Discipleship, Mission in our communities and Leadership. The recommendations relating to pastoral ministry are as follows.:-

*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.*

*In order to fulfil this commitment, the Circuit should:*

- *Increase the ministry team resources available with additional pastoral ministry workers who can provide support to the increasing number of people requiring care.*
- *Acknowledge a vocation/call to pastoral ministry within the church in a similar way to that applied to Local Preaching/Worship Leading.*
- *Agree how each church's Pastoral Ministry Team will support church members and the wider community. This will depend in part on the size of each church.*
- *Provide training to those willing to undertake pastoral visiting and other forms of ministry within the church.*

Alongside this commitment the circuit also agreed to fund a number of Lay ministry posts to work in partnership with the presbyters and the current lay employees. In order to help to fulfil the Pastoral ministry commitment a full time Lay Pastoral ministry post is being created. This is a new and innovative post with the opportunity to develop and shape pastoral ministry in the circuit and help to achieve the circuit vision.