# Updates to Circuit Stewards’ Handbook 2024

*Capitalise local church so that it reads Local Church throughout the booklet*

# p.3

update reference to 2023 edition of ‘CPD’

# p.5

2nd para of Methodist structure. Check number of Districts and update to 2023

# p.6

*Add the following section at the bottom of p.6*

**Community of Practice and Training**

The Learning Network provides a range of online learning and development opportunities, including a community of practice, where circuit stewards’ can meet for mutual support. More details of these and videos from previous events can be found in the Circuit Stewards’ webpages on the Methodist website: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/equipping-circuits/offices-and-roles/circuit-stewards/>

* Add God For All strategy to list of key resources at the bottom of page 6, following this paragraph

As a circuit steward, there are a number of other key resources helpful for providing a good foundation. All are available on the Methodist Church website from [www.methodist.org.uk/conferencereports](http://www.methodist.org.uk/conferencereports) where you can search by date:

God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth (2020 Conference report)

# p.10

*Add the following at the end of the paragraph beginning ‘The Methodist Church believes…’:*

This could be undertaken together in the circuit, or could be attended online at one of the sessions offered by the Learning Network: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/unconscious-bias-training-tickets-387493412227?aff=oddtdtcreator>

# p.12

3rd para. Amend to add more text to end of paragraph:

… approval requests. All meetings may be held physically, electronically or in hybrid form (as defined by SO 019B). For guidance as to which form may be appropriate, see Book VII B, Part 6A of *CPD*. Fourteen days’ written notice is required for meetings which include certain types of Circuit Meeting business (SO 502(7)), and in all cases notice of a Circuit Meeting must be sufficient to make it reasonably practicable for all Circuit Meeting members to attend.

Delete next paragraph (“If extra (non-emergency meetings are needed for certain types of business…” )

# p.13

The constitution of the meeting.

Insert opening paragraph: “The constitution of the Circuit Meeting is listed in SO 510(1). The Superintendent may appoint a deputy to chair the meeting if necessary (SO 502(1)).”

delete final para/section entirely (Temporary arrangements …and beyond) as it’s no longer relevant.

# p.14

*Add the following as first bullet point:*

Every circuit meeting agenda should include a space for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, to consider the work of the Strategy on Justice, Dignity and Solidarity as agreed at Conference 2021. Examples could include: Discussing the priorities for the circuit in terms of justice and inclusion; Supporting leaders with deciding what personal EDI learning they need to do in order to fulfill their leadership role; Reviewing the diversity of the circuit meeting and other groups and committees within the circuit, and taking decisions about how to describe and advertise vacancies in ways that improve the representativeness of leadership within the circuit; Having honest conversations about whether people feel safe and included within churches and meetings and discerning what steps need to be taken to implement change so that this is the case; Allocating the task of completing Equality Impact Assessments and receiving and reviewing draft Equality Impact Assessments, or establishing a structure for doing this within the circuit, under the oversight of the circuit meeting.

# p.15

Minimum size of church 1st para. Amend to say :

If there are Local Churches that are, or maybe coming, under the provisions of SO 612 (minimum size of the Church Council),…

# p.16

1st para. Remove unnecessary line break at the end of the paragraph

# p.17

MDR. The reference in (brackets) should be to SO 743.

# p.19

Church Councils 1st para. The final reference in (brackets) should be to SO 611.

# p.20

*Add the following as last paragraph before payroll:*

Funding is available for New Places for New People. More information can be found on the Methodist website: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/new-places-for-new-people/begin-a-new-place-for-new-people-districts/circuit-npnp-funding-process/>

1st para 5th bullet point. Reference in (brackets) should be to SO 532(2), not 515(2).

*Update payroll to read the following:*

The circuit stewards must ensure that stipends and agreed allowances to meet circuit expenses are paid to ministers and other staff, including any lay employees.

* All ministers are paid through the Central Stipends Scheme that is administered by the Connexional Team.
* Lay employees’ salaries can be paid locally, but this requires experience of PAYE, so many circuits now opt to use the payroll services of the Connexional Team for their lay employees. If employees’ salaries are paid locally, the circuit stewards should ensure that the Apprentice Levy is paid <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/22837/apprenticeship-levy.pdf>

The circuit stewards must ensure that each month the required level of funds is available in the appropriate bank or Central Finance Board (CFB) account to meet the full payroll costs, including National Insurance, pension contributions, etc.

# p.21

Items for the circuit stewards… 1st sentence. Reference in (brackets) should be to SO 012(4), i.e. delete "-(5)”.

# p.22

*Edit the following so it reads:*

The Methodist Church holds a block membership with the Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers (ACAT, acat.uk.com) for all districts, circuits and churches. Details can be found at https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/finance/acat/.

# p.23

Manses etc. In penultimate sentence reference in (brackets) should be to SO 954(x)

2nd bullet point -  Arrange for quinquennial inspections to be carried out every five years on all circuit property (including manses, closed churches and burial grounds).

*Add the following at the end of the property section:*

* When a church ceases to meet, there are various steps that need to be taken as part of the closure process. The Guidance for Closed Church Buildings was created collaboratively with the aim of providing useful information, checklists and templates to assist with this process. The guidance can be found on [www.methodist.org.uk/Property/A-Z](http://www.methodist.org.uk/Property/A-Z). If the building is to be sold, please refer to TMCP’s guidance on [www.tmcp.org.uk/sales](http://www.tmcp.org.uk/sales).
* The Methodist Church is committed to Justice, Dignity and Solidarity. We believe that all people are uniquely made in the image of God, and we aim to live this out in the Church and in our communities. You can read more about this commitment in the [Conference report](https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/21966/conf-2021-56-strategy-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity-working-towards-a-fully-inclusive-methodist-church.pdf) and the [User Guide](https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/strategy-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity/user-guide/) will help you engage with this work. For information about how to help buildings to be more accessible, please look at [www.methodist.org.uk/Property/AccessibleBuildings](http://www.methodist.org.uk/Property/AccessibleBuildings)
* As churches and circuits look to respond to the climate emergency, a set of practical steps and recommendations have been created to help churches reduce energy usage and associated carbon emissions. The guidance has been divided up into four steps that churches can work through at their own pace, recognising that Step 4 may not be possible for every church. Full details of the four steps, including a case study of how one church moved through all four, can be found at [www.methodist.org.uk/Property/NetZero](http://www.methodist.org.uk/Property/NetZero).

# p.26

Special property circumstances 1st para. Amend 1st sentence to read:

If a manse becomes vacant and a decision is made to retain the building with it being occupied by a paying tenant, the circuit stewards must ensure that all relevant legislation is complied with in the letting of the property.

# p.27

*Add the following new section after Safeguarding:*

**Justice, Dignity and Solidarity**

The Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity was launched in 2021. It commits the church to structural, cultural and attitudinal change in order to prioritise justice and respect for all, especially those who have previously been excluded. The strategy calls for us to learn from one another so that we can recognise God’s presence more fully in our life together and create a culture of care and connectedness. A guide to this strategy is available at: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/strategy-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity/user-guide/>. The strategy includes a range of actions, including mandatory training for all leaders and an Equality Impact Assessment that will be used in all spheres of Methodist life, to ensure the impacts of policies and activities on different groups of people is understood. Details of the Equality Impact Assessment can be found at <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/resources-events-and-support/resources/equality-impact-assessment/>

All circuit stewards are asked to complete mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training, which consists of unconscious bias training, an EDI module, and personal annual learning. The training is available in a number of formats, including for people to access themselves directly on MCBX (the online training platform). Full details can be found at: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/training-for-justice-dignity-and-solidarity/mandatory-edi-training-equality-diversity-and-inclusion/>.

# p.28

The circuit safe: The reference in (brackets) at the end of the 1st sentence should be to SO 903(3).

Edit District Grants to ‘District Grants and Other Source of Funding’ and add the following:

Funding is available for New Places for New People. More information can be found on the Methodist website: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/new-places-for-new-people/begin-a-new-place-for-new-people-districts/circuit-npnp-funding-process/>

# p.31

Remove ‘regional’ from Regional Learning Network and update web link to <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/learning-and-development/about-the-learning-network/>

Add Evangelism and Growth Team contact details

# p.32

Appendix 2 (Best Practice). Where will we find a copy of the Connexional Team’s Procurement Policy? Is it on the website, or should there be a link to an email address to contact?

# New section after Circuit Leadership Teams called: Mission and the Circuit Steward

SO 500 states: “The Circuit is the primary unit in which Local Churches express and experience their interconnexion in the Body of Christ, for purpose of mission, mutual encouragement and help.”

The 2005 Conference report ‘What is a Circuit Superintendent?’ reminds us that the Superintendent acts as the chief officer in the Circuit Leadership Team. Therefore, you will be responsible (with others) in leading the circuit in mission.

God for All is the Methodist Church’s strategy to expand our commitment to be an inclusive, growing, evangelistic and justice-seeking Church. We believe that these are all facets of one gospel: the gospel of Jesus Christ, which we are called to receive and respond to.

Partnering with the Church’s commitments detailed in the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity; Justice-Seeking Church; and Action for Hope, God for All longs for:

• new people to become disciples of Jesus Christ,

• faith to deepen for everyone, and

• diverse communities and churches to experience transformation.

God for All invites circuits and churches into prayerful and decisive action, coordinated strategy, and organised teams that build on the deep theological rooting and positive will for cultural change in the Methodist Church. It names intentional, concrete steps and sets out key programmes and resources to help take these steps. The details of these can be found below and updated information can be found at [www.methodist.org.uk/evangelism](http://www.methodist.org.uk/evangelism)

God for All is not a tick list of activities to compulsively work through or robotically manage. The following programmes and resources are not pre-packaged initiatives, nor ‘top down’ information to merely download and insert, nor challenges to do more and work harder out of desperation. Rather, they are invitations for diverse circuits across the theological spectrum to journey together deeper into the gospel, to clarify and affirm a life-giving mission, and to make reflective decisions about how to spend their time, energy, and resources on the most important activities – and all of this by God’s grace.

Big questions for discernment

As circuit stewards called with the circuit team to equip and organise circuits for mission and ministry, stay with these key questions as you explore and discern God’s invitation to you and those you serve with:

• What is the gospel? Simply put, the gospel is the ‘main thing’: it is crucial that everything we do arises from and reflects the good news. How do we talk about the gospel in our circuits – what is it, actually? If we asked our circuit meeting or worship service to answer that question, what kinds of responses would we get? How might we describe the good news in ordinary language to someone who is ‘unaffiliated’ or new to spiritual exploration? Though there will certainly be diverse faithful individual responses to this question, it will be important for the circuit and churches to develop a shared understanding of how the gospel connects to their mission, and an expectation that God means to change them as they undergo the gospel together.

• Do you really know your local contexts? How are your churches befriending and falling in love with their communities? What are the hopes, anxieties, laments, desires, and gifts of the people in those communities? What can you learn and seek together in relationship? It will be important for churches and circuits to discover these answers and to fall in love with their contexts not simply by commissioning research or sending out e-surveys, but by actually meeting new people and having real conversations.

• What is the core capacity or orientation you may need to develop as a circuit? If you could ask God for one animating energy for mission and ministry that would bring joy and confidence to your circuit, what would it be? Evangelism and faith sharing? Confidence in seeking justice? Boldness in testimony? Addressing conflict with charitable honesty? How might you seek to receive and develop this capacity?

• What new thing will you try to activate behaviour change? In order to be the Church, we need to leave the building and get out there and try. Transformative moments don’t just happen through prayer and bible study, as important as they are. And talking about evangelism and mission is not the same thing as doing evangelism and mission. What will you actually do together to positively change the behaviour of the church or circuit?

• What do you need to let go of in order to centre the most important things? As you survey God for All’s strategic areas below, keep the above questions before you.

**1. Centred in God**

God is the Three-in-One who creates us, loves us, frees us, saves us, and transforms us to be who God has always been calling us to be. If we are faithful, our mission flows intentionally from this orientation. The Centred in God strategic area focuses on deepening the discipleship of Methodist people and lays a foundation for God for All as a whole. It aims to inspire and equip Methodists to be rooted and grounded in prayer, and to make Our Calling a lived reality, particularly through participating in the 12 commitments of A Methodist Way of Life: [www.methodist.org.uk/mwol](http://www.methodist.org.uk/mwol)



Circuit stewards, as part of the circuit leadership team, have a key role in engineering a discipleship pathway for the people in the churches of their circuit: ensuring that opportunities are available to travel to all twelve ‘stations’, and fostering a culture of reflection and conversation about their experiences of worship and mission.

It might help to think about which churches in the circuit are particularly good at living out the different individual stations; they can help other churches in the circuit that wish to develop in this area.

See: [www.methodist.org.uk/travellingtogether](http://www.methodist.org.uk/travellingtogether)

**2. Everyone an Evangelist**

The Methodist Church is committed to being an evangelistic church: making more followers of Jesus Christ is one of the core parts of Our Calling. All disciples are called to listen for, speak of, and live out the good news and yet, as a Church, we can often lack confidence with evangelism. We want to be a Church which authentically shares our faith through our prayers and by our lives and with our words, so that new disciples are made, faith deepens, and communities are transformed. The following programmes seek to help equip the whole Church for evangelism:

• Everyone an Evangelist – a course for groups from local churches and circuits to explore their calling to evangelism and step into a practical evangelistic project.

• Evangelism for Leaders course – a five-session course on Zoom for Methodist leaders, lay and ordained, to equip leaders to confidently model evangelism; to intentionally prioritise evangelism and to encourage and equip others as evangelists.

• The Community of Evangelists – a group of Methodists called and spiritually gifted as Evangelists. which aims to support and encourage diverse Evangelists for our world today.

Find out more here: [www.methodist.org.uk/equippedforevangelism](http://www.methodist.org.uk/equippedforevangelism)

**3. Missional growth and leadership**

As Methodists, we want to see more people exploring faith and encountering grace, more people coming to a living faith in Jesus Christ, more people growing in faith and discipleship and more people becoming committed members of Methodist churches. Great growth requires great change, and great change requires great leaders. Leadership in circuits is shared, with the Superintendent and the circuit stewards, ministers and lay workers all leading the circuit in mission together. Mission planning at church and circuit level is a key tool for growth. A church’s mission plan frees the church from the burden of having to do every good thing in order to focus on the one or very few things God is calling them to do to reach their community with God’s love in Jesus. A circuit mission plan allows the circuit’s resources, including staff time, buildings and finances, to be allocated where they will be best used for God’s mission, and allows opportunities for New Places for New People and Church at the Margins to be discerned.

* Guidance and resources to help you discern and write a really simple, useful mission plan can be found at [www.methodist.org.uk/missionplanning](http://www.methodist.org.uk/missionplanning)
* Resources for circuit mission planning, including guidance for smaller churches considering a merger, can be found at [www.methodist.org.uk/mergeformission](http://www.methodist.org.uk/mergeformission)
* The team coaching programme offers lay and ordained leaders from the same circuit the opportunity to gain new insights and work better as a team, being transformed for the sake of transformation in the world God loves. Find out more and register your interest at [www.methodist.org.uk/teamcoaching](http://www.methodist.org.uk/teamcoaching)

**4. New Places for New People**

The Methodist Church sees starting New Places for New People (NPNP) in every circuit as a vital part of responding to the gospel of God’s love, revealed to us in Christ. Our aim is to see new people becoming disciples of Jesus and forming new Christian communities in rural, estate, urban, suburban and village contexts. NPNPs are an extremely fruitful means of connecting new people, new people groups, and new residents to Christian exploration and community. In addition, NPNPs bring learning from experimental ‘research and development’, identify and strengthen emerging leaders, and help the whole Church reflect on and examine its calling.

NPNP communities are all about encouraging a change in missional culture so that every circuit makes beginning an NPNP a core priority in their mission plan. NPNPs can be started anywhere, in diverse contexts. The Methodist Church has suggested the following contexts and people groups as priorities for NPNPs in the next five years:

* new towns or new housing developments
* student/young adult/university
* families with children
* replanting in an existing place or second site of a growing church
* Church at the Margins
* digital

Each district has selected which tranche year they wish to begin the NPNP journey from 2020-2023. See: [www.methodist.org.uk/npnptranches](http://www.methodist.org.uk/npnptranches)

When the district has submitted their NPNP, the district-led process to support circuits imagining their NPNP communities can begin. Connexionally funded NPNPs will all follow the criteria in the practical guide (see link below).

[NPNP tranche process graphic, incl info about Established Funding Cycle-District NPNP/Cam

Process-Tranche Project-with E&G Team-NPNP in Every Circuit] **attached as separate document**

Find out more here:

• How to start a New Place for New People: [www.methodist.org.uk/npnpbegin](http://www.methodist.org.uk/npnpbegin)

• The NPNP practical guide to starting new circuit-based Christian communities: [Circuit NPNP funding process (methodist.org.uk)](https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/new-places-for-new-people/begin-a-new-place-for-new-people/circuit-npnp-funding-process/)

• Funded district NPNPs: [www.methodist.org.uk/npnpdistrictprojects](http://www.methodist.org.uk/npnpdistrictprojects)

**5. Church at the Margins**

Church at the Margins is a vital dimension of New Places for New People. Its vision is to nurture and build new Christian communities amongst and led by people who are economically marginalised. We know we are not taking God to the margins: we believe God is present with and in all people, in all circumstances. The goal is that every district and circuit will include Church at the Margins as part of their mission actions plans by 2025.

These new Christian communities will embrace four key elements:

• Creating connections: Create spaces where people truly encounter one another, discover friendship, and in which the gifts of people experiencing poverty are recognised, valued and received.

• Nurturing communities: Communities where power is shared and transformed, and people with lived experience of poverty are recognised as the experts.

• Sharing the Gospel: Communicating the good news of God’s transforming love and justice for all people.

• Seeing transformation: New Christians are nurtured in discipleship and new communities emerge which challenge and respond to injustice. Enabling those at the economic margins to transform the wider Church through their gifts.

Find out more here:

• An introduction to Church at the Margins: [www.methodist.org.uk/churchatthemargins](http://www.methodist.org.uk/churchatthemargins)

• Church at the Margins training: [www.methodist.org.uk/cam-training](http://www.methodist.org.uk/cam-training)

• Church at the Margins stories: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/discover-church-at-the-margins/church-at-the-margins-stories/>

Faith Rooted Community Organising: [Faith Rooted Community Organising (methodist.org.uk)](https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/discover-church-at-the-margins/faith-rooted-community-organising/)

**6. Digital Evangelism**

In the age of digital communication and community, the internet is a crucial platform for evangelism and mission. Together as the Church, we seek to understand, explore, and innovate around what it means to be followers of Jesus in digital space. We offer the following resources to help Methodists reach new people, share their faith, and build new Christian communities online:

• Social media and digital training

• Resources, guidance and campaigns for digital evangelism

• Support and resourcing for Methodists who are experimenting and innovating with mission, evangelism and pioneering online

• The Story Project – an online testimony library where you can access other people’s testimonies and share your own.

• Pioneering Digital Communities course – for people seeking to establish a new Christian community online.

Find out more at: [www.methodist.org.uk/digitalevangelism](http://www.methodist.org.uk/digitalevangelism)

**7. Rural Mission and Ministry**

Rural mission and ministry is part of the landscape in nearly all our circuits. It is often where some of the hidden treasure lies. Each context and place is different, but the church at its most local expression can be small, beautiful and offer depth to our relationships. A rural church with vision can connect with and impact the whole community, truly embodying God for all.

Key programmes:

• Starting out; training for those leaders new to rural life and mission – Rural Ministry Course:

[www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/ruralministrycourse](http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/ruralministrycourse)

• Rural hope network – join a hopeful rural conversation: [www.eventbrite.com/cc/rural-hope-1123799](http://www.eventbrite.com/cc/rural-hope-1123799)

# Want a personal conversation?

The Evangelism and Growth Team would love to Zoom into your circuit leadership team meeting or circuit meeting. In whatever slot you have available on your agenda – from 30 minutes to 90 minutes, we will listen to what you are wrestling with in mission and ministry, to offer a short introduction to God for All, and to explore questions together.

Circuit stewards can email evangelism@methodistchurch.org.uk to book us in for a circuit meeting or circuit leadership meeting in the year ahead.