God for All
An Emerging Connexional Strategy for Evangelism & Growth
Draft Strategic Foundations Paper | July 2019

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1 We are grateful to have permission to borrow the Cumbria District’s clear Gospel language, rooted in Methodism’s Four Alls, to describe our vision for a renewed and expanded 21st century commitment to evangelism in The Methodist Church.

2 As the paper will describe in detail, this is a draft paper at the midpoint of an extended process of consultation and strategic formation. It is not a final or complete version. It is still a flexible work-in-progress. Please forgive any typos, grammatical mistakes, or creeping Americanisms.
Introduction and Primary Rationale

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the Gospel of God’s love in Jesus Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. It does this through Worship, Learning and Caring, Service, and Evangelism.

We are called to be a growing, evangelistic, inclusive church of diverse people who speak of, listen for, and live out the goodness of God – so that new people become disciples of Jesus Christ and committed Methodists experience a deepening of faith.

Convicted by the Holy Spirit, who is surfacing a profound honesty about our current reality and stoking a new passion for more people and the whole world to be transformed by God’s grace, the Methodist Church has claimed evangelism as an imperative dimension of our mission and identity in the 21st century.

Following the 2017 Methodist Conference’s reaffirmation of “Our Calling”, a new Evangelism and Growth Team was appointed in 2018/2019. Comprising 10 full- and part-time staff, the team is now working diligently with leaders across the Connexion and with our ecumenical partners to inspire, architect and embed a contextual, coherent and coordinated Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth.

Committed to building this strategy in a truly collaborative way, since September 2018 the Evangelism and Growth Team has led 75 on-the-ground listening consultations and theological workshops with groups in every region of the Connexion, and has engaged in hundreds of individual conversations with leaders and practitioners across Methodism’s broad theological and ecclesial spectrum. We have taken this approach because we believe that God speaks through God’s people. The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth will be clearer, stronger, more practical, and potentially more achievable if it emerges from the prayers, passions, wisdom, and questions of people faithful to the living God in different places, with different perspectives and beliefs.

This goal of this collaborative work is to build a deeply embedded commitment to evangelism and growth for the present and future life of our Church. We are not suggesting any impetuous quick-fix, magic new resource, or seasonal initiative. We hope to signal a direction of travel for deep Gospel transformation not only for the next three to five years but also for the long-term future of our mission and whole life together. Though this expansive strategy will require much soul-searching, courageous decision-making, and significant structural change in the years ahead, we pray that it will be a gift to the Church and a blessing from God for all those who love God and want others to experience the love of God for themselves.

Biblical and Theological Foundations

“Our Calling” begins with God and our experience of the Good News. Our searching, our faith, our mission, our prayer – none of this is generated by us alone. It all starts from God who is before the beginning of everything, the source and sustainer of all life. Anything good and gracious that the Church accomplishes flows from “Missio Dei”, God’s mission that we are invited to join and be changed by. John Wesley’s articulation of prevenient grace – “grace that comes before” – points to this foundational theme, which is a key aspect of the “general tenor” of Scripture:

- Long ago the LORD said to Israel: “I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love, I have drawn you to myself.” – Jeremiah 31:3
- I came so that you may have life, and have it abundantly. – John 10:10
- We love because God first loved us. – 1 John 4:19
Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. – Romans 6:3-4

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in/the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me. – Galatians 2:20

It is I, Jesus, who sent ... this testimony for the churches.... Let everyone who hears say, “Come.” And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift. – Revelation 22:16-17

We want every aspect of our Connexional commitment to evangelism and growth to flow from this amazing grace. Of course, we must also have an intelligent understanding of changing demographics, cultural and social shifts, and the patterns of younger generations: and our strategy must engage these factors in relevant, savvy, and compelling ways. But ultimately the future of the Church is not strategy, however brilliant or effective: the future of the Church is the risen Lord Jesus Christ, known by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are committed to evangelism and growth because we have been met by and are undergoing the Living God. This God – in the birth, life and teaching, death, resurrection, ascension, and coming again in glory of Jesus Christ – creates, reconciles, and redeems the whole world so that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, all people and the whole Creation will flourish and therefore glorify God.

This renewed commitment to evangelism and growth underpins our commitment to be a Church that aligns with the “Missio Dei”, the mission of God for all. Our desire to be a growing church that reaches new people and new groups of people flows from our experience of God. We recognize humbly that even as we seek to join with God, the “Missio Dei” will challenge us in profound ways. But we know this wrestling is holy ground. We remember than when our foremothers and forefathers in the first-century Church experienced the coming of the Holy Spirit that Peter preached was being poured out on all flesh, their understanding and practice around who was welcome, affirmed, and fully incorporated into church membership and leadership continued to be challenged and expanded. Their communal struggle and ongoing sanctification led to the inclusion of Gentiles, women, people of diverse nationalities, eunuchs and many other groups.

For Methodists, this ever-widening, prayerful, Pentecostal incorporation is linked theologically both to the process of salvation, of which inclusion is a necessary dimension, and to a strengthened mission to the world. A traditional summary of Methodist teaching holds that “All need to be saved. All may be saved. All may know themselves saved. All may be saved to the uttermost.” The Holy Spirit continues to enliven the Methodist Church in the 21st century as we aspire to join with our ecumenical partners and lead the larger Church in proclaiming the Good News of a God for all, and a Church for all.

As we proclaim this Gospel, we surrender to be transformed by it ourselves. We name these particular commitments: to becoming a church, ever more transformed by God, that:

- Seeks robust ecumenical partnerships rooted in mission and action
- Practices anti-racism and is increasingly multi-ethnic
- Recognises, affirms, and celebrates the presence and ministry of LGBTQ+ persons
- Expects and nurtures the participation of children, youth and young adults
- Ministers in rural, estate, urban, suburban and village contexts.
A Call to Unceasing Prayer

To theologically embrace God’s presence and ongoing promise is to seek God in prayer. To paraphrase Evagrius of Pontus, a fourth-century Church father who deeply influenced John Wesley: “if we are theologically rooted, we will pray truly. If we pray truly, we will be theologically rooted.” Therefore, as we set about our work, we commit to intentional, unceasing prayer, so that our commitments to evangelism, church growth, mission with those who are poor and those who are young, and pioneering and church planting will flow from a deep, contemplative orientation to God’s grace, voice and will for us and the world.

One of the particular gifts of Methodism to the Church of Jesus Christ is an insistence that prayer and evangelism, contemplation and justice, should never be separated: they are two sides of the same Gospel coin. As we seek to be a church more fully alive with grace and truth, a people acting courageously and justly in the world, we come to God in prayer: we call upon the Lord and ask for renewal, revival, and resurrection; we confess and repent of our sin and seek forgiveness; we wait upon the Lord in silence and attentiveness; and we trust God to transform us by God’s grace.

We are approaching the 200th anniversary of “The Liverpool Minutes” of the 1820 Wesleyan Methodist Conference. That Conference, alarmed at the decline in church membership only a generation after the death of John Wesley, articulated a strategy to grow again, which included as major drivers a call to prayer (XII. Cottage Prayer Meetings) and the challenge to reach new people in new places (XVI. Opening New Places).

The 2019 Methodist Conference, anticipating the 2020 Conference’s work to commit to a significant structural change towards evangelism and growth, joyfully accepted a memorial to call for focused prayer as we set about this holy work of reaching new people in new places.

In addition to calling the whole Church to prayer, we have commissioned a team of intercessors to pray in a regular, focused way for God’s Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven, and for the Methodist Church to align sacrificially and joyously with the expansiveness of the Kingdom.

Towards a Methodist Culture of Authentic Evangelism

Evangelism is sometimes referred to as “the E-word”. For a variety of reasons, some have been suspicious of it and reluctant to meaningfully engage it. This resistance, much of it understandable, may begin to be relieved by a fuller description of what we mean by “evangelism.”

As we expand our commitment to authentic evangelism across the Connexion, we look for these markers:

- Authentic evangelism is an intentional orientation to the Good News in all of life – not only our beliefs and ideas, not only our practices, not only our relationships, but a holistic integration of all three. Evangelism serves as the foundation and matrix of all of our discipleship – our living out, listening for, and speaking of the goodness of God. As such, evangelism is not merely a list of invitation techniques or

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3 A list of descriptions of commonly used terms can be found in the appendix of this paper.
4 For many Methodists, however, increasing the capacity to speak humbly, courageously, and personally of the goodness of God will be the most important challenge.
communication skills but a way of reflecting on all we are and do as Church. If we are committed to authentic evangelism, we review our mission and ministry and ask, “How is this activity orientated to the Good News (or not)?” Our crucial commitments to social justice, beautiful worship, small groups, youth and children’s work, property development, hospitality, etc., find deeper life with that question in mind and heart.

- Authentic evangelism is thoroughly relational. It invites depth, vulnerability, curiosity, and joy in relationships between church participants themselves and between the church and neighbours in its community.
- Authentic evangelism seeks both to reach new people in new places and to convert nominal Christians in existing churches.
- Authentic evangelism brings spiritual joy and spiritual growth to those who practise it.
- Authentic evangelism is not theologically or strategically monolithic. It can be expressed in diverse ways across the broad theological/ecclesial/human spectrum. We value creating a tapestry of approaches rather than pitting approaches against each other.
- Authentic evangelism always seeks to do good and to do no harm; it requires a positive, non-shaming commitment to build up Gospel life in individuals and communities. Some understandably resist evangelism because the word conjures images of coercion, fear, shame, and judgmental attitudes. The Methodist Church absolutely rejects those kinds of destructive tactics. The word “evangelism” comes from a Biblical Greek word, “euangelion”, which literally means “good news”. So if we are properly evangelistic, we are committed to good news – not bad news – in all of our motivations, relationships, words, and actions.
- Authentic evangelism is hyper-contextual, expecting different approaches for different people groups, e.g. for people who speak Christianity as a “first language” and for those who, if they embrace Christianity for the first time, will be learning it as a “second language”. As evangelists, we need to learn new “languages” too, as we listen with people in diverse contexts to discover why Christianity is “good news” for them, and commit to journey and learn from each other.
- Authentic evangelism resists false dichotomies and lives in the realm of the “both/and”. For example, the following commitments are faithfully held together:
  - Church spiritual growth and Church numerical growth
  - Inviting people to church and creating new expressions of church and new relationships outside of the church building, in the community
  - Radically inclusive and joyously evangelistic
  - Evangelism and social justice
  - Pointing to/expanding the Kingdom and ecumenical movement and starting/growing more particularly Methodist Christian communities
  - “Missio Dei” and “Missio Ecclesiae”.
- Authentic evangelism is energized by a synergy of our theological statements about God and our subjective experience of God.
- Authentic evangelism is enhanced by learning from deep relationships with people of other faiths and of no faith.

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Building a Strategy and Strategic Plan: The Process

In the spirit of the Apostle Paul and John Wesley, who both led mission movements that were at once theologically rich, contextually relevant, and spiritually alive, we aim boldly and humbly to bring a contextual, coherent and coordinated Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth for affirmation and launch at the 2020 Conference in Telford.

The materials brought to the 2020 Conference will include (1) a primary set of papers, (2) a fully costed financial model, and (3) a detailed strategic plan to help the Church normalise cultures of evangelism, growth, experimentation, and innovation.

As mentioned above, we are in the midst of developing these elements from a thoroughly collaborative and participative process:

- In autumn 2018, the Director of Evangelism and Growth wrote an Emerging Strategic Intent (ESI) document, which served as the basis for the aforementioned 75 consultations and hundreds of one-to-one conversations with leaders and staff across the Connexion. After each consultation and conversation, the ESI was updated in order to reflect the feedback, ideas, and critique of the conversation partners.6

- In spring 2019, the Director of Evangelism and Growth, in concert with the Evangelism and Growth Team, reflecting on the aggregate analysis of the ESI, wrote a Strategic Foundations paper to describe core understandings, to give an overview of the emerging strategy and strategic process, and to identify several core orientations and core strategic streams. (This document is the Strategic Foundations paper).

- In summer 2019, the Foundations paper and its suggested aims were workshopped at both the Representative and Presbyteral Sessions of Conference, in addition to a focused meeting with the Warden and Deputy Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

- Also in summer 2019, conversations about potential financial models have continued with the Connexional Treasurers, the Director of Finance, and the Chairs of key Connexional Committees.

- In autumn 2019, 250+ district-nominated and other invited leaders from across the Connexion will prepare for and participate in a Consultation and Celebration of Evangelism and Growth in London, when we will pray and worship, discuss and test the strategic streams of the Foundations Paper, and affirm, we pray, a shared sense of where God is leading us.

- Also in autumn and early winter 2019, the draft elements of the strategy papers, potential financial models, and the emerging strategic map will move through the cycle of key Connexional Committees, e.g. Ministries Committee, Strategy and Resources Committee, and Methodist Council.

- In late winter and early spring 2020, the entire package will be prepared for presentation and acceptance at the 2020 Conference in Telford.

Core Foundations of the Strategy

The following orientations and strategic streams have emerged directly from the collaborative consultation process described above. They will continue to be discussed, clarified and deepened over the connexional year 2019/2020 so that the strategy and strategic map can be built on shared values and vision.

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As you read and reflect upon what follows, please recall that all of this is still provisional during this season of collaboration and consultation. You are invited to offer your prayerful feedback, both affirmation and critique, by visiting www.bit.ly/e-g-consult

The Evangelism & Growth Team have set out the following core strategic areas with a prayerful bias for action. We believe that there is already a deep theological rooting and positive will for structural and cultural change in The Methodist Church towards evangelism and growth in the 21st century. What we sometimes lack is decisive action, coordinated strategy, and organized teams and structures for that thorough change.

The following suggested pathways are presented in two major sections. The first three are Core Orientations – our primary spiritual intentions and theological postures towards the work of evangelism and growth. Without these values frames, the strategy becomes disconnected from the living God and our missional imperative.

1. Centred in God, Freed in Christ, Sent by the Spirit: Whole-Life Discipleship
2. Everyone an Evangelist
3. Transformational Leadership

The next 5 pathways are Core Strategic Streams – the crucial movements that, actively attentive to the Core Orientations, will drive fundamental change. Under each Orientation or Strategic Stream, you will see brief descriptions of potential programmatic initiatives that will help embed a new culture and set of practices in diverse contexts across the Connexion.

1. New Places for New People
2. Every Church a Growing Church
3. Church of the Poor | Church at the Margins
4. Young Evangelists, Pioneers and Planters
5. Digital Presence: Mission for the Digital Age

We offer these Gospel pathways for such a time as this.

Core Orientations

1. Centred in God, Freed in Christ, Sent by the Spirit: Whole-Life Discipleship

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. This is the reason we exist and missionally what the Church exists to be and do. We receive, embody, proclaim, and invite others into relationship with God. If we are faithful, our mission intentionally flows from this orientation.

☐ A Methodist Way of Life: Bringing “Our Calling” to Life

Methodism looks back to the example of its founder, John Wesley, both in his personal commitment to a disciplined practice of the Christian life and in the Methodist movement that he led. The Methodist Church of Britain has expressed its commitment as a Church and of its members in “Our Calling”. The four aspects of “Our Calling” translate into a rule of life or a way of life through which Methodists live out their faith in the 21st century. “A Methodist Way of Life” is not a new initiative or programme. It is a way of living out “Our Calling” in practice. Methodists will be inspired and supported individually and communally in their commitment to following a Methodist Way of Life. They will be encouraged to sign up to a set of commitments based on “Our Calling” and set out on cards which on the reverse side will provide questions which Methodists can ask of each other as they test their ongoing commitment to follow Jesus in the whole of their lives. This will provide not only for mutual accountability, but also for encouragement in sticking to and progressing in their commitment to Christ, and to living out their faith in practice. Resources will be provided which will introduce a Methodist Way of Life and support people in getting into the practice of it. Further resources and learning and growth opportunities will be signposted so that Methodist can deepen their discipleship and spirituality. Annual Covenant Services will provide an opportunity to reinforce commitment to a Methodist Way of Life, and in turn this will deepen the meaning of the covenant to which Methodists make with God.
Good News Story:
Following the launch of “A Methodist Way of Life” in the Yorkshire West District in September, the March Presbyteral Synod provided enthusiastic feedback on its implementation. It has been carried out in a variety of ways in the District: amongst others it has been incorporated into worship, particularly in Covenant services, it has stimulated prayer, and it has moved people (e.g. lay workers) to link up with each other for mutual support in their discipleship. As news about it has spread, a great deal of interest has been stoked across the Connexion.

Developing Pathways for Growth
Churches that grow provide clear and accessible ways for their people to grow in faith and deepen their commitment as followers of Jesus and members of the body of Christ. Christians, both newly committed and of longer standing, are offered stepping stones to deepen their faith and commitment and to continue further towards spiritual maturity. Churches will be encouraged and supported in introducing and/or further developing pathways for congregation members to progress in their practice of the Christian faith. These pathways begin with welcoming people who attend worship for the first time, since a carefully planned, intentional welcome process sets the scene for integrating people into the life of the local church. The next steps of the pathway will vary depending on the nature and situation of the church. These may include a regularly offered course introducing the Christian faith, invitations to join a small group of some kind, exploring people’s gifts and talents, and providing ways for people to contribute to the life and work of the church and so grow their sense of belonging. When people are invited into membership, they will become aware of its benefits and commitments. Simple resources with guidance on establishing and developing pathways to growth will be made available to churches, and these will draw on the experience of churches of different kinds, small and large. In addition, existing members of congregations will be encouraged to engage with these pathways from the point which is appropriate to them. Formal membership is an important aim but spiritual growth is open-ended.

Good News Story:
Brindley Ford Methodist Church (now known as The Village Church) in Brindley Ford village, Stoke on Trent, had dwindled to fourteen regulars but that small congregation had a desire and a vision for growth. When support was offered from the Swan Bank Church, they eagerly accepted it. Over a period of a few years the Church has grown to almost 30 with an average weekly attendance of around 25. The renewal of their Church came not only from organisational changes but also from a renewed focus on discipleship. The Village Church has adapted the Swan Bank model in a form suitable for a small church. The Church has run the Alpha course and, before that, Christianity Explored, with existing members providing the core of the group. Rather than use the Alpha videos the material was presented by church leaders, supported by Swan Bank. A small group with a discipleship focus meets fortnightly, and missional/community initiatives have been started which, in turn, help energise the discipleship of the congregation. This includes visiting the community twice a year at Christmas and Easter and focussing on “shop window” services to encourage greater involvement with the community and friends. Annually, the Church has an open-air “Away day worship” as part of its witness. The Church also runs a village choir, regularly visits the local care home, and runs the village café. The Church has also sought to make Church attractive to its community, including through re-labelling its activities, worshiping three times a year outside the church but in the community, and advertising itself as “The Village Church” on a large, attractive noticeboard as well as through its website www.myvillagechurch.co.uk This proclaims its openness to the community and to God to whom they are committed, “to be a people who believe Him, love Him, and trust Him in our daily lives”.

Resourcing Growth within Pathways
Churches will be encouraged and supported in resourcing aspects of growth in the discipleship and spirituality of their members. This will be directed towards congregations and small groups, as well as to individuals where possible.
Making Beautiful Worship

Making beautiful worship focuses on helping worship within the gathered community connect people to God and transform them for mission within the world. Making beautiful worship also seeks to equip Methodists to worship God within everyday life, allowing God’s presence to shape them in their engagement with daily life. Worship is a key focus since it transforms us as disciples (Rom 12:1-2). As we worship, we gaze at the glory of God in Christ, and so are changed.

Good News Story:

At Smithy Bridge Methodist Church in Greater Manchester, a renewed focus on worship was a key part of their commitment to whole life discipleship. One dimension of this was the incorporation of “This Time Tomorrow” within services. This simple practice, developed by the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity, encourages leaders of congregations to interview members of their congregation about faith at the “frontlines” of their lives (www.licc.org.uk/resources/this-time-tomorrow). By incorporating this practice within worship, people began to talk about their lives with each other after worship and began to pray for one another during the week. They also began to invite people weekly to bring an item that represented something about their daily life with God. One young man brought his football boots and talked about the challenges of being Christ-like on the football pitch. This Time Tomorrow helped members of the church connect their faith to their daily life.

Beautiful Worship within the Gathered Community of Faith

In order to equip Methodists for whole life discipleship, the Evangelism & Growth Team will support churches and circuits with practices and resources that can help them connect Sunday services with their discipleship throughout the week. This will build on previous learning from within the Connexion, including findings from the Imagine pilot project in the North West.

Beautiful Worship in Everyday Life

In order to help Methodists worship God within the context of daily life, the Evangelism & Growth Team will signpost and promote resources that promote practices and habits of daily worship. These will explore practices that help worship to take place “on the road”, including in the midst of work, play, education, home-life, and retirement.

Theological Depth

Theological depth involves developing the skills of theological reflection and engaging in theological learning. While theological reflection helps Methodists link their faith with their experience and their own contexts, theological learning helps Methodists grow in their knowledge of the faith and its relevance today. Theological depth is a key area of development as it helps Christians grow in their discipleship while also giving them greater confidence in sharing their faith with others.

Good News Story:

In the former Leek Circuit, a theological educator led a five-week course on the New Testament nativity stories. The course involved a close reading of the biblical texts with participants encouraged to note the similarities and differences between the accounts of Jesus’ birth as well as their theological significance. One participant expressed her frustration that she had never before been given the chance to read Scripture in such a close manner. Everyone who attended found it stimulating and left with a thirst for further learning with one person even going on to study theology at graduate level in her 50s!

Theological Reflection

To support the skills of theological reflection among Methodists, the Evangelism & Growth Team will develop and promote a number of different models of theological reflection for use across the Connexion. Such models will offer simple processes for bringing faith into conversation with experience, and provide a means of connecting faith with daily life.
Theological Learning

Given the relationship between confidence in evangelism and confidence in one’s faith, the Evangelism & Growth Team will seek to curate a conversation around theological learning within the Methodist Church with the aim of developing a pilot that can encourage local Methodists to grow more deeply in their engagement with theology, scripture and the Methodist tradition.

2. Everyone an Evangelist

While some people have been given particular spiritual gifts as evangelists, we believe all disciples of Jesus are called to listen for, speak of, and live out the Good News – from their own skin, experience, theology, and perspective. We are all called to be evangelists – to witness to the Gospel. Responding to this calling doesn’t require a personality transplant or the adoption of a theological stance we don’t resonate with. Being an evangelist means starting authentically from where we actually are.

Embedding a Culture of Congregational Testimony

Our testimony is our story about being part of God’s story. As we share our honest testimony, we expand our experience of God, our understanding of ourselves, and our participation in the Body of Christ. We will provide individuals and churches with resources and encouragement to build public testimony into worship and the whole of church life.

Equipping the Whole Church for Evangelism

Methodists want to be more confident in sharing our faith. To do this, we must build a stable confidence in God and also reflect deeply on cultural change and difference. How do we share faith sensitively and effectively in communities of all faiths and none, which are a long way from any Christian heritage? We will develop a training package for use in districts, circuits, and churches that enables people to gain an understanding of the mission challenges of our contemporary contexts and to learn and practice simple ways of sharing faith with confidence in those contexts.

Training and Releasing Dedicated Evangelists

While all are called to be evangelists, some lay people and ministers have particular spiritual giftings for evangelism. We will identify such evangelists and provide training and support for their ministry to build up the mission of the Church.

Methodist National Evangelistic Witness

We want to be known nationally as a growing, evangelistic, inclusive Church that proclaims the saving Good News of God for all, and a Church for all. With apologetic sensitivity, cultural relevance, and a Methodist distinctiveness, we will build a national evangelistic witness at major events and festivals, and alongside major issues of faith and society, which will connect to related evangelistic outreach in local communities.

Rural Evangelism

We will contribute towards an effective Christian presence at the heart of every rural community, with people confident in sharing their faith and making disciples. Such a presence will need to be flexible as to when and where worship takes place, to encourage lay leadership, and often to seek ecumenical partnerships.

Good news story:

A church in Cumbria has spent time working with the study guide A Discipling Presence. This gave them the confidence “to be a discipling presence in what they say and do and come out of our comfort zone” it made them more aware of their community and how they could build links. The community has many holiday cottages and the congregation has begun to send Christmas and Easter cards to the occupants.
resulting in an increased attendance at the Carol service. They have produced prayers for the community to be used in services and a prayer card for themselves to encourage them to be salt and light in their community.

3. Transformational Leadership

Some leaders are born, but many are made. We will invest in extensive leadership development for our clergy and laity, in order to expand the capacity of those who are willing and able. Transformational leaders receive God’s vision for the churches (new and/or existing) they serve; build ownership and joy for that vision; focus and grow energy, teams, and strategy around that vision; welcome and transform conflict; coach leaders who then identify and coach other leaders; and build momentum for new life in the church and community.

Good News Story:

A very small church in urban Gateshead has experienced rapid growth over the past few years due to the transformational leadership of a Methodist deacon. Tracey Hume has led the church into many different forms of involvement in the local community, such as campaigning against benefit sanctions, giving out Christmas hampers, and providing space for community groups to meet. She has built a team of mostly retired people as well as welcoming the involvement of those who are not yet members of the church. Tracey has also led changes in Sunday worship, introducing a monthly café-style service with breakfast, crafts and discussion. Her leadership and the example she sets of passionate engagement in the local community are specifically mentioned in the “Leading Together” report as a key factor in the growth this church has experienced.

☐ Transformational Leadership Learning Community

In order to develop transformational leadership gifts within the Methodist Connexion, an ongoing programme of learning communities will be established. Teams of lay and ordained leaders who work together at circuit and/or district level receive training, opportunities to dream and plan together, and regular coaching over a 2-3 year period. Twice a year they gather with other teams for input from transformational leaders, mutual learning and accountability, and time set aside to create realistic and specific plans for positive action. This combines theory and skills training with time carved out to identify with colleagues how to put their learning into practice.⁷

☐ Coaching for Transformation

In order to increase the reach and long-term sustainability of the Leadership for Mission learning community, leaders receiving coaching will be trained to coach others. In the final year of the 3-year commitment, or earlier if appropriate, leaders will begin identifying others who would value and benefit from a coaching relationship. Those who cannot commit to a learning community, perhaps because they are in circuits where there is no collective buy-in to the concept, can thus benefit from the learning too. This could also be a means of recruiting participants for future learning communities.

☐ Ministerial Training for Transformational Leadership and Evangelism

In partnership with The Queen’s Foundation, we are excited about building on the focused and intentional work in evangelism already taking place in initial ministerial training and through probation studies. Currently, all taught modules at Queen’s include a focus on the urgent questions of evangelism, apologetics and the tasks of ministry, helping students to hold together what they are learning, in all subjects, with the demands and opportunities of the work they will undertake. The emerging strategy

provides a context in which to explore, among other potential commitments and developments, continued alignment with and expansion of the Church’s commitment to evangelism and growth.

Core Strategic Streams

1. New Places for New People

New Places for New People are projects whose primary goal is to start, build, and reproduce new Christian communities among unaffiliated people. These include church plants, pioneer experiments, Fresh Expressions, missional communities, etc. New Places for New People are the most effective means of connecting new people, new people groups and new residents to Christian exploration and community. In addition, they bring learning from experimental “research and development”, identify and strengthen emerging leaders, and help the whole Church reflect on and examine its calling.

Good News Story:

Potters Church is a 600-member church that began with a vision in 1987 when just 17 members of Swan Bank Methodist Church were commissioned to plant another church in Stoke on Trent. In 2005, Potters Church purchased a redundant school building as their premises and opened the Bridge Centre to serve the community. With a vision and calling to plant more churches in the city and surrounding area they have asked 100 members to give a year of their time to replant alongside an existing congregation in Longton Central Mission, one of the Circuit’s city centre churches. Their desire to plant does not end here, as they have just begun a partnership with a neighbouring circuit to replant into a recently closed chapel, in the university student area of the city. They even have the whole world in their vision for God’s Kingdom, being a key sponsor of a missionary planting church in Thailand. All this began with a small group of 17 people and their children believing God could use them to plant New Places for New People.

- Districts and Circuits to Plant New Churches

Flowing from district commitments to plant new churches, each circuit will prayerfully consider the geographical area or human population from which a new church can be planned, funded, staffed, and launched in the future.

- Diversity of Planting and Pioneering

The Methodist Church will be the church that plants churches in diverse and varied ways. We will rediscover our DNA as expressed in the way early Methodist pioneers planted churches that connected the gospel to a whole nation in a fresh way. At the heart of our vision is the desire to see New Places for New People that vibrantly reflect the world in all its beauty and wonder, not narrowing our method to one model or tradition but rather embracing all. We celebrate our diversity as a Church and so too in our pioneering, seeking unity in our difference of opinions and ecclesiology, believing those different to us have plenty to show us of the God we follow. The New Places for New People movement will include church plants that match traditional models but also discover new, perhaps yet unseen, models that are gift to the whole church planting movement in Britain. We invite every Methodist community and follower of Jesus to engage the commitment to New Places for New People as they are, and not define themselves in opposition. Each person is a gift to shaping our future.

- Pioneer Recruitment

In the same way that we asked who was called to go as missionaries to every corner of the globe, we will ask who is called to new places in our circuits and districts. We celebrate those who have already discerned a call to pioneer, however, we need significantly more. As well as releasing the pioneers within our own community, we will recruit from outside of Methodism those attracted to our vision for planting and pioneering. We will become the church in the UK and increasingly the world where all want to plant and pioneer, because our theological depth and ecclesial nuances can find expression.
Curating the New Places for New People Story

In a variety of places across the Connexion, in districts and circuits, churches and individuals, the Holy Spirit is leading Methodists to pioneer new communities of faith. We will weave these diverse and increasing number of stories together to form a wider narrative of change that inspires others. It is a complex but important piece of work to help us rise to the challenges offered by life and growth. We will continue effective storytelling and move beyond anecdote to deeper theological reflection and analysis that can withstand the proper and robust questioning that will be asked of the New Places for New People. This is vital if New Places for New People are to become part of our identity as a church not just an activity tolerated on our fringes.

Methodist Pioneer Pathway

Good News Story:

In the Yorkshire Plus region a community of up to 20 pioneers gather throughout the year to support each other and reflect on their call as pioneers. Some are experienced with established projects and others are just beginning. Some are a part of the Methodist Pioneer Pathway, have been to Cliff College for the short course in Pioneer Ministry and are now regularly coached. Others are discerning if the Methodist Pioneer Pathway is for them and where the Holy Spirit is leading them to go. What gathers them is the desire to connect faith with their communities in a new way and this is a place they are understood and not seen as troublemakers. Here they can see and feel that they are a part of bigger unfolding picture of New Places for New People when often their pioneer journey is a lonely one.

As the primary network of pioneers and planters the Methodist Pioneer Pathway will be the community that underpins the New Places for New People movement. The place that they will be shaped, supported, connected and resourced. Currently there are varying levels of understanding and implementation of the Methodist Pioneer Pathway. This will change over the next five years. Across the Connexion it will be heard of, established and made an essential part of every Methodist Pioneer’s ministry.

Replanting Rural

We will develop a pioneering mission strategy to replant rural church communities. This strategy will hold together engagement work, high-quality community relationship, and long-term pastoral presence towards the new, challenging territory of establishing new patterns of Church (often in old places) for new people in these rural communities.

A Trained Coach for Every Pioneer

Coaching is an ongoing intentional conversation that empowers a person or group to fully live out God’s calling. It’s a process with a bias for action that draws out possibilities and clarifies concrete next steps for working in new ways with new people.

In order to help pioneers (lay/ordained, full-time/part-time, paid/voluntary – anyone who’s creating New Places for New People) achieve their potential, we will train coaches to work at multiple levels – from volunteer coaches for local church-based New Places for New People projects to a cohort of highly trained, experienced coaches for high-capacity pioneers.

Multiplying up from the existing 30 coaches to 200 basic trained coaches who are mission focused and experienced people in next five years

Fresh Expressions Multiplier Programme

In order to reach out to people who are currently outside the influence of existing churches, we intend to multiply numbers of Fresh Expressions (small-to-medium-size, hyper-organic New Places for New People) from 1000 to 3000 (an average of 10 per circuit) by 2030). Together with the Transformational

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8 The coach model for Christian Leaders, Keith Webb, Active Results LLC 2012 p28
Leadership process, this commitment will help circuits become mixed ecology units where old and new ways of being church complement and co-exist with one another.

**Good News Story:**

Fellside Methodist Church have run a SHARE coffee morning for several years raising money and awareness for a number of charities. Through these events, they now have regular contact with a group of people who have no other connection with the church community. They are now working to create a worship service that will “look and feel” like a SHARE coffee morning. A new place (in an existing church) for these new people.

**□ Fresh Expressions Ecumenical Team**

The Methodist Church has been a key partner in the Fresh Expressions movement from the beginning and celebrates its effectiveness at embedding the imperative for new forms of church. As the Fresh Expressions movement moves into its fourth quinquennium, the national leadership is restructuring its ways of working. It is in a period of active discernment about the most faithful, flexible, and cost-effective ways to continue to resource the movement that has drastically and positively changed over the first 15 years of its life. As Fresh Expressions are a key part of our larger commitment to New Places for New People, we will continue to explore the most missional and fruitful ways to stay vitally linked with the national ecumenical movement.

2. **Every Church a Growing Church**

Churches who consciously centre in the Gospel, build real relationships in their communities, prioritise making new disciples, and make reflective evangelistic decisions about how to steward their time, energy, and money will experience spiritual growth/joy and, the great majority of the time, numerical growth. Rooted in God, we start to expect change and growth.

**Good News Story:**

Brighouse Central Methodist Church in Yorkshire is involved in a range of community engagement initiatives, including a Music Academy that is now financially self-sustaining. There is a strong focus in the church on identifying and developing young leaders with a view to church planting. The church has seen growth over the past five years, with around 80 new people joining, half of whom are under 40, and 28 fresh faith commitments expressed in adult baptism or confirmation. Presbyter Mark Cheetham identifies two pathways to people’s faith development. Some have been drawn by engagement in quality Sunday worship. Others have been impressed by the church’s engagement with poor and marginalised people in the community, such as through its food bank and its delivery of food packages during school holidays for children who receive free school meals. The Yorkshire West District has received an Our Calling grant with the hope of releasing some of Mark’s time for enabling church planting elsewhere in the district – sharing the learning at Brighouse around so that others in the Connexion might benefit.

**□ Revitalising Every Church**

Every church that wants to grow will, supported by the District and Circuit, commit to the following:

- Develop a Church Mission Plan and concrete missional goals that connect meaningfully to the Circuit and District Mission Plans and goals.
- Incorporate the church’s simple, core mission into the welcome of every worship service.
- Build a system of intentional welcome, connection, and individual follow-up for every newcomer.
- Include a form of lay testimony in every worship service.
- Include evangelism at the top of every church council meeting agenda.
- Undertake a “community audit” to understand the needs and concerns of the people who live nearby.
- Undertake regular (at least three times a year) evangelistic projects that take the church out of the building to meet and develop relationships with people in the community.
- Consider starting a new Fresh Expression as part of their ministry and mission.

**Mission Hubs**

Churches, circuits, districts, Methodist organisations or possibly even individuals involved in significant, purposeful, sustained mission and intentional discipleship will be recruited to become “mission hubs”. These mission hubs will share their learning with others in the Methodist Connexion in order to encourage intentional mission activity in every Methodist church. By becoming exposed to approaches to mission and evangelism which may be unfamiliar and being encouraged to reflect on their experience, participants will be encouraged to experiment and take risks in mission.

**Mission Planning Training and Grants**

Circuits will be inspired, equipped and incentivised to begin mission planning with a two-pronged strategy: district training days and circuit mission planning grants. District training days will build skills and energy for mission planning in partnership with churches/circuits/districts who are already doing this well. The aim will be to get round every district by 2025, starting with those who are most energised by the Evangelism & Growth emerging strategy, and delivering the training at district superintendents’ gatherings. The availability of small mission planning grants will incentivise circuits to set aside time for prayerful discernment, reflection and action planning for mission.

Circuits will be offered the opportunity to apply for grants to kick-start a new mission initiative. Grants will only be awarded to circuits with a mission plan which clearly indicates the strategic importance and missional intent of any new project, and which do not already have considerable financial resources. A consultant recruited and trained by the Connexional Team could be allocated to provide help with mission planning where there is energy for mission but support needed to produce a good plan. The grants will not be large enough to pay for any staffing needs but could be used for the purchase of equipment, the renovation of a meeting space or for training courses for ministers, staff or volunteers, for example. Wealthy circuits that would not be eligible for a mission-planning grant can still apply for a consultant’s help with mission planning.

**Community Engagement**

Research has shown that growing Methodist churches engage well with their wider community. Care will be taken to ensure that churches which demonstrate great community engagement are among the mission hubs and that mission plans which show commitment to community engagement are posted as good examples to the Mission Planning Toolkit.

3. **Church of the Poor | Church at the Margins**

The promise of new life and new leaders grows in the heart of many of the most marginalized communities. How can the Church learn from our “indigenous” leaders who already have deep knowledge and wisdom about their communities? How can leaders across socio-economic classes partner with each other so that we can all continue to imagine new ways of being church and community together? How can we steward resources with a faithful and preferential bias for people experiencing poverty?

**Church of the Poor | Church at the Margins Officer**

Appoint a full-time connexional officer whose primary responsibility is work with Methodist leaders, ecumenical partners, and other key stakeholders to envisage, architect, create, and embed a movement
of starting hundreds of New Places for New People led by God’s people in the most marginalised estates, communities, and neighbourhoods in Britain.

4. **Young Evangelists, Pioneers, and Planters**

We know that conversion and commitment to faith happens for most people when they are young. We want to become again a church that is fuelled by the full participation of young people, so that their imaginations and faith formation are nurtured and supported – but also so that the Church can be challenged and converted by them.

**Good News Story:**

Young people have responded to the call to being a young evangelist at several Methodist events in 2019. For example, at Cliff Festival a prayer response and call was made in the 14-18’s age group venue for young evangelists and 20 young people responded. From this group twelve joined the Cliff College Evangelist, Tom Donoghue, for conversation and prayer time, and seven indicated their interest in committing personally to evangelism. Two young adults from the Cliff Festival 18-30’s venue and two from the Rise and Shine young leaders’ event also made a commitment.

- **Young Evangelist Movement Training**
  
  We will provide training, learning communities, and mentor support for young people who are exploring their identity and calling as evangelists.

- **Young Evangelist Internships**

  We will explore opportunities for young adults to engage in a year of mission as paid mission interns for a church or circuit committed to evangelism and growth.

- **Evangelism Presence at Young Peoples’ Events**

  3Generate is a popular weekend for hearing the voice of children, young people and young adults from across the Methodist Church. We aim to have a presence at 3Generate and other events and festivals where we can start conversations with young people, identify young evangelists, and provide training and experience in a safe environment.

5. **Digital Presence: Mission for the Digital Age**

In the digital age of communication, the internet is our parish – particularly for younger generations who spend 15+ hours a day online but also for those who are isolated, housebound, or far from home. We need a digital and social media transformation in how we relate to iGen/Gen Z and all of those whose lives are inextricably connected in this way. We must develop approaches to online evangelism and Christian community that are not simply digital versions of those offline.

**Good News Story:**

In 2008 a group of young Christians passionate about God but not so passionate about organised church got together in a neighbourhood of Nottingham to explore Christian faith for a postmodern and post-Christendom context. They decided to invite others into the conversation and so Nomad Podcast was born, online conversations about life, faith and culture available to all via digital media. 11 years later the people involved have changed with the one constant of Methodist Pioneer Tim Nash. The Podcast is continually building in popularity as it reaches many others asking questions about faith in our contemporary world. With the addition of a listener map those people can now find each other offline and are creating local communities for faith exploration. Online apologetics is now forming offline communities of faith.
Digital evangelism
We will design and implement (1) a platform for web-based Methodist digital evangelism particularly targeting those who are “digital natives”; (2) a dedicated social media strategy for evangelism; and (3) guidance for Methodists using social media for evangelism.

Online Church
For some, online is a safe place to explore faith and Christian community. For others who are housebound or far from home, Church online may be the only church they can access. For both we will build an online community to support people wherever they are in their journey of faith.

Digital presence and witness of the local church
A church without an online presence increasingly has no presence for many in our community. At the very least every church should be able to be found online and make sure events, services and contacts are available. But so much more is possible if this is seen as a vital tool for mission and evangelism. We want to see churches not only present online, but attractive, interactive and linked to national web-based resources of the Methodist Church and others like the Christian Enquiry Agency.

Our Next Steps
As we take the next concrete steps into action, we centre in the familiar story of the Feeding of the 5000, which is repeated through the Gospel with variations on the “with Jesus, there is always enough” theme. When contemplating a major new strategy meant to drive significant ecclesial change, there is the tendency to imagine the Church as a superhero or wonderworker. “If we just work really hard”, “if we perform amazingly”, “if we take the stage with great courage and power”, we say, then we will be able to make the needed change. But if we are rooted in the Gospel, we know that the needed change is not ours to supply: it is God’s. Our job is, over and over again, to surrender what we have – the few “loaves and fishes” that are ours – and to trust Jesus to take them, bless them, break them, and offer them, so that all will have what they need. With Jesus, amazing abundance and wild generosity grow up from our offerings of what we actually have. Jesus transforms it all, and us in the process, and there’s enough for everyone with plenty of leftovers for those who come to the party later. This is truly a God for all so that we can be a Church for all!

A Preferred Future Vision and A Manual for Letting Go
As we move into this strategy together, we ask the Holy Spirit two questions:

1. Holy Spirit, would you give us a picture of the future?
   As we dream and pray, these are some of the images and pictures we see. What would you add?
   - Every district, circuit, and church absolutely clear about its mission and living it out with joy and hope
   - Thousands of young people personally invited to Christian leadership and hundreds who respond
   - Existing churches taking major, costly risks to reach new people
   - Scores of new Methodist churches planted in every region of the country
   - 75% of our churches growing with new members
• Methodism re-presented to Britain for the 21st century and known as a Church for All worshipping a God for All
• What would you add?

2. Holy Spirit, would you show us what to let go of?

One of the things we hear in almost every consultation about evangelism and growth is “We are really excited about this! But our plates are so full. What are we going to stop doing in order to give energy to these new things?” That question is crucial for us to answer in concrete ways. As we dream and pray, what are the things that you think the Church may need to lay down for a season (or forever)!
• What would put on the list?

Appendix: Description of Terms

We commend the beautiful and extensive theological reflection on these terms present in the Methodist catechism and many Conference reports including Called to Love and Praise. The following descriptions are offered as a short-hand meant to complement the official theological work of the Methodist Church in Britain.

Evangelism
• At a foundational level, we hold that evangelism is an orientation to the Good News in all of our life together. It is not limited to techniques or practices of inviting or speaking (though it non-negotiably includes those) but is a cross-current in every aspect of mission and ministry.
• At a more particular level, evangelism is about proclaiming the goodness of God. This proclamation involves three dynamics: (1) speaking of the goodness of God; (2) listening for the goodness of God in the voices of others; and (3) living out the goodness of God. Fully-engaged evangelism necessarily involves all three.
• At an even more particular level, evangelism can be understood as set of practices that introduces and inaugurates people into the Kingdom of God for the first time.9

Grace
• Is God’s undiscriminating, transforming attitude of love towards human beings
• Becomes effective through entrusting ourselves to the God who holds us in God’s loving gaze
• The “means of grace” offers a framework for allowing ourselves to be transformed.

Gospel
• The Gospel is about God’s gift of new, transforming life through Jesus Christ.
• God’s transforming work in and through Christ has individual, communal and creation-wide facets.
• Within Methodism there are a variety of emphases and perspectives on the nature of the gospel. For example, some Methodists may give more emphasis to 1 Corinthians 15:3, that “Christ died for our sins”, and others to 2 Peter 1:4, that God gives us power so that we “may become participants of the divine nature”. A parallel to this is seen in the 1998 Conference report, “A Lamp to My Feet” which outlines seven different ways in which the Bible is understood in the Methodist Church in Britain.

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9 W. Abraham, The Logic of Evangelism
Salvation, from the Methodist theological tradition:

- Is initiated by God out of prevenient grace by which we mean the unconditional love of God which never-failingly seeks our good, however far we may stray from that love
- Includes forgiveness of sins and acceptance by God
- Involves restoration, associated with images of healing
- Is more than individual in its extent
- Involves the restoration of human relationships, breaking down dividing walls between people
- Is part of God’s purpose for the whole of creation.

Faith

- The response of the whole person to the personal God: believing is entrusting oneself to God, and involves our hearts (loving God above all else), our hands (serving God within the world), and our heads (trusting God’s address to us in Jesus Christ).

Discipleship

- More than (but not less than) following Jesus, discipleship involves commitment to ongoing opening of oneself to the life and Spirit of God, and to working that out in one’s life in community.

Theological diversity in The Methodist Church

- Methodism has capacity to accommodate different perspectives on the gospel, drawing from the various sources of Wesleyan theology: Reformed, Orthodox, Catholic, and Puritan, etc. A mature Methodist theology incorporates different perspectives, mindful that no formulation can embrace the fullness of God’s truth.
- Amidst our beautiful theological diversity, our unity is situated as a centre within these bounds:
  - Belief in the love of a transcendent God who is also present in the world, in human lives, and supremely in Jesus Christ, known through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.
  - The statement in the Deed of Union that “the Methodist Church claims and cherishes its place in the Holy Catholic Church,” and the theological corollaries to that claim.

Church growth

- We want to see churches grow the number of people in their local community who are warmed by the love of Christ, including intentional discipleship with the hope that people will become his followers. This involves showing and telling; preaching and serving; practice and story. In this way each church comes alive, brings life to the community around it, and is likely to experience numerical growth.

New Places for New People

- New Places for New People are projects whose primary goal is to start, build, and reproduce new Christian communities among unaffiliated people. These include church plants, pioneer experiments, Fresh Expressions, missional communities, etc.

Pioneering

- The adventure of discovering, shaping and articulating the gospel in a place previous untouched by established patterns of ecclesiology and evangelism. Pioneering begins by listening, waiting and discerning the ways in which the Gospel can connect creatively with the language, imagination, hopes, fears and dreams of a specific context. Pioneering expects the emergence of a new ecclesial community and breaks the ground for the possibility of a new church to grow.
Church Planting

- The process of establishing a new church, as opposed to a new congregation or expression of worship within the life of an existing church. It is the sending of individuals and/or teams with the intention of starting, forming and growing a community of faith that reaches a new culture, population or people group. It does not transplant members of an existing church community, but make new followers of Jesus Christ through imaginative and sensitive evangelism.

Fresh Expressions

- Forms of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church, which will come into being through principles of listening, service, incarnational mission and making disciples. They will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church, for its cultural context.

A Missional Community

- A smaller group of people who identify as a Christian community who unite and share life together around a common calling to service and witness to a particular neighbourhood, human population, or network of relationships.

Generational patterns

- Intergeneration, multigenerational
  - In multigenerational churches, different generations are present together in church services and other activities but are not intimately connected with each other, with the older generations often taking the lead.
  - Intergenerational churches value and embrace the participation of all in their own right and value relationship between people of different ages.
  - Intergenerational relationships are key for faith formation, and such relationships can be hugely formative for young people.

- Unaffiliated, “nones”, “dones”, spiritual but not religious, religious but not spiritual
  - “Spiritual but not religious” is a motto of an era in which institutions, and institutional membership, is viewed with suspicion. Nevertheless, it also shows that many people are open to a deeper dimension in life and thirst for spiritual depth.
  - “Religious but not spiritual” may express a judgment on people who are thought to hold merely to observances, but it can also express a need to be situated within something bigger than individual feelings and insight, to be held within a sustaining structure.
  - The individualistic spirit of the age, the waning attraction of institutional membership, and negative experiences of structured religious community produce numbers of people who are “done” with the church, and others who are averse to affiliation with formal expressions of religion.
  - There will be different approaches to take when reaching out and engaging with people who adopt these different perspectives.

- Research on under-21 as period when 95% of people convert (cf John Finney’s work, which suggests there are different ages when people commit (youth, young parents, empty nesters/retirees).
  - Conversion and commitment to faith usually happens when people are younger. This means that engaging with this age group should be a priority in thinking about evangelism and faith formation.
  - The decline of the church within the UK is due in part to the failure to transmit or pass the faith between generations: about half of young people who grow up in Christian homes leave the faith
as they mature. Focusing on building faith within the home makes it more likely that young people “own” the faith for themselves as adults. “Discipleship within the home” is an important area of development within the Methodist Church.

- The faith of young people is formed and developed when it is supported and situated within a range of supportive relationships, and so it is important to explore ways to embed young people within such networks.

- **Seismic cultural changes and attitudes of society to religion, Church, Jesus**
  - 21st century Western society has been affected by a huge number of changes, some of which have been developing over a few hundred years and others more recently, including the growth of individualism and the idolisation of the self, the domination of a materialist view of the world, an idea of God as distant and often increasingly unreal, and a related weakening of the hold of Church and religion on people’s hearts and minds
  - Secularism within Europe has also shaped the current culture, including its emphasis on “authenticity” (which makes it difficult to commit to a religious tradition), the explosion of different beliefs, and the challenges that today’s culture poses to those seeking to speak of God.
  - There are signs too of greater openness to Christianity, including among younger people who are open and often positive about Jesus and Christians. It can be a challenge to connect that openness to life within the Church.