

Denby Dale and Clayton West Circuit

Circuit Review 2022

Christian Mission as a Circuit

Christians are both disciples and missionaries: as disciples, Christians are called to worship God and learn more about God's love; as missionaries, Christians are sent out as witnesses to God's love by caring locally and globally for all that God has made. Christian mission is therefore outward facing – it is God's love directed towards all things. It is our hope that the witness we offer also attracts other people into this Christian way of life.

In the Methodist Church, we share our resources as a circuit as we are moved to mission by the Spirit of Christ. A mission plan establishes where we believe God is directing our churches in mission and draws together the resources that God has placed in our hands so that we may move well together as a corporate witness to God's love.

Our ten-year plan seeks to set out where we are endeavouring, by the grace of God, to move forward in mission as a circuit of nine churches in "Denby Dale and Clayton West". It also identifies the physical resources that we have and need and how we will sustain those resources together financially, physically and spiritually.

Introduction

Our last Circuit Review in 2015 was extensive and set us on a ten-year mission path which has seen some significant changes in our churches. The circuit meeting has tasked our present Circuit Leadership Team with another less substantial, but no-less-important Review for presentation to the Circuit Meeting in November 2022. This allows us to assess how faithful we have been in following where God has directed us in the last 7 years; how actively engaged our churches are in mission work at the present time; and where Christ may be leading us into the future so that we are able to plan how we fund and allocate the resources we share as a circuit of churches.

I am grateful to all our congregations for engaging well with the questionnaires and mission conversations that have taken place over the past few months. I am also grateful to our Circuit Leadership Team for the time they have taken to undertake this review and for offering a lead to the circuit.

Please read the report – especially the conclusions and recommendations - and consult with one another and your circuit representatives to confirm that what we are recommending is a sensible use of our resources and a positive way forward for the circuit beyond 2024/25. We have tried to follow the same format used in 2015. To that end, and so that you can follow our train of thought in coming to the conclusions and recommendations we do, we have offered "Reflections" on the way through. Some of these have been selected for inclusion by the CLT as final conclusions and recommendations for us to work with from 2024/25 as a new ten-year plan. This will be reviewed regularly and modified as we find need, as with the 2015 plan.

Please feed comments back to Stuart Merry as Senior Circuit Steward or to Rev Nick Biggar or Rev Philip Bee, before the circuit meeting on November 22nd, 2022, where we will discuss and vote on the proposals contained in this document.

Above all, continue to hold one another in prayer:

Lord God, we pray for one another in love.

We thank you for the companions with whom we travel on this journey of faith.

May your Spirit challenge us, energise us and strengthen us as we walk.

And may Christ lead our circuit of churches into a future

where we meet joy, confidence and hope.

Be with us we pray.

In Jesus' name

Amen.

Part 1: The 2015 Review and the Ten-Year Plan – Where Are We Now?

The Recommendations that we sought to implement from 2015 have worked out in the following ways:

Worship

1. ***The circuit should no longer have all our services on a Sunday morning at the same time.*** Initially, some churches moved their service times to accommodate ministers taking two services on a Sunday morning and others attempted to worship jointly from time to time on the plan.
 - a. We currently have two joint services each month at Denby Dale and Lower Cumberworth.
 - b. West Bretton meet at 9.30am once per month to accommodate an 11am service at Clayton West.
 - c. Thurlstone and Millhouse Green meet at 3pm in the afternoon once per quarter.
 - d. We additionally meet one morning per quarter for a circuit service.
 - e. **REFLECTION 1 – Churches need to consider again whether they can adjust service times or join together more frequently for worship to make it possible for their ministers to be present with them more frequently. This is important for pastoral oversight and care as much as to meet the needs of the quarterly Circuit Plan of Services.**
2. ***We should develop, learn and use more appealing hymnody and “Singing the Faith” should become the standard hymn book across the circuit.***
 - a. Singing the Faith has been adopted at all churches except West Bretton where the Church of England hymnbook provides a relatively up-to-date hymnody.
 - b. **REFLECTION 2 – Churches need to continue to develop their knowledge of newer songs and hymns. To support this, the Circuit should identify and introduce popular new hymns and songs that have emerged since Singing the Faith was published over ten years ago.**
3. **The Circuit should make available funds that assist local churches to access the internet and obtain modern IT equipment.**
 - a. All of our churches have installed multimedia equipment that make it possible to use images, videos and music during worship. Denby Dale has the technology and capability to stream services from time to time. St Andrew’s is close to being able to do the same.
 - b. This has had the unintended effect of making it possible to develop the use of Video Sermons to supplement arrangements for Own Arrangement and Readers’ Services. It also makes presbyters virtually present to their congregations on occasions where they cannot be physically there.
 - c. **REFLECTION 3 – The Circuit should look to developing regularly streamed services that could be screened in other churches, to church members who are unable to attend and as a way of developing new online members and adherents.**
 - d. **REFLECTION 4 – Our preachers, most especially Presbyters who have oversight of churches that they cannot get to regularly, should look to further develop video sermons as a way of better resourcing Own Arrangement services and as a further opportunity to nurture congregations.**

Mission

4. **The Circuit should employ a half-time Lay Worker to develop a deeper engagement with people in the “third age” – those who are relatively young, active and retired.**
 - a. After unsuccessfully exploring third age ministry in 2015-16, the circuit approved a change to our ten-year plan where we spent the half time resource on expanding the role of the Administrator. There are now clearer templates for what a Third-Age Worker would

contribute, however, and an offer to voluntarily develop this work in the circuit, expanding it to include older people

- b. REFLECTION 5 – The circuit is now ready to develop, encourage and support volunteer-led lay work among older people in our churches and communities. See the section on work with older people below (part 5).**

5. The Circuit should employ two Family and Children Workers to one and a half full-time equivalents to develop work with Families and Children in our churches.

- a. It proved difficult appointing self-starters to these roles within the circuit. We had several abortive attempts to appoint and when we did successfully fill the roles, COVID interrupted the work significantly. It also interrupted the assemblies work that presbyters were undertaking to support this aspect of mission. When contracts with our F&C workers came to an end, we appointed our Administrator to a half time role as F&C Worker, reduced her hours as Administrator accordingly and appointed an Administrative Assistant to undertake some of the more mundane office work. This arrangement is working well now. Overall, we have seen some significant new work with families at Cawthorne, which is resulting in new younger members.

- b. REFLECTION 6 – We should continue this work, targeting the F&C worker’s more limited hours to those places where there are opportunities and local church support for working with children and their parents.**

6. The Circuit should employ and Administrator for ten hours a week as administrative support for the ministers.

- a. This has been a hugely successful appointment for the circuit. Our ministers have been freed up for tasks appropriate to their vocation. However, administrative assistance has also expanded rapidly to include support for local churches which are struggling to find officers who are willing and able to do what is needed to make the church function well. This was an unexpected but well-received outcome and we subsequently expanded the role to be a full-time equivalent, using funding from the Third Age worker, as above.

- b. REFLECTION 7 – we need to clarify the job descriptions for the Administrative staff so that churches know what functional help they can expect and what roles they need to fulfil locally.**

7. The Circuit should continue to support the Denby Dale Centre financially and support grant applications for its work with the broader Methodist Church.

- a. This has happened.

- b. REFLECTION 8 – we should continue to support the Denby Dale Centre as fully as we are able.**

Finance and Budget

8. The circuit should budget to use windfall money from renting out unoccupied manses, money from church sales and money made generously available by Thurlstone and Millhouse Green Church.

- a. We have faithfully used windfall money for mission as above. As well as money from the sale of Ingbirchworth chapel in 2014, we also added funds from the sale of the manse in Tenter Close and Springvale Methodist Church.

- b. The circuit remains especially grateful to Thurlstone and Millhouse Green Methodist Church for the congregation’s generosity in making funds available for mission work to supplement windfall money as above. We can no longer expect extraordinary contributions like this**

from Thurlstone and Millhouse Green, as their reserves have been substantially reduced by their giving.

- 9. The circuit should help churches struggling financially be reducing their shares to a level which makes contributions sustainable. Local churches should then encourage new giving annually to maintain this as the circuit moves forward.**
- a. We set budgets to make local church contributions sustainable and stepped these down halfway through the ten-year plan, to further ease the share burden overall.
 - b. The local churches are always generous with one another in sharing the financial load with one another. This is a sign that the circuit is working well. At least some of the churches encourage new giving annually.
 - c. COVID has adversely affected the finances of local churches.
 - i. Letting income has been well down, but most churches have seen income from regular giving generously maintained by their members.
 - ii. Furloughing of F&C workers who could not sensibly engage in hands on work with families and children saved some mission money. With circuit permission, this was reapplied for more general circuit expenses to help churches out with their share contributions over a two-year period from 2021-23. We hope this sees church finances and budgets back on a more secure footing.
- 10. REFLECTION 9 – The principle that we primarily use windfall money from the sale and rental of properties to stimulate mission work is important. We need to continue to set a circuit budget that encourages mission activity, while recognising the stretched resources of local churches to meet their share obligations for the employment of ministers and to pay for their general expenses. We need carefully to consider whether funding for administrative work should be placed within the mission budget or under more general circuit expenses that includes the deployment of ordained ministers. We need carefully to consider what balance of ministry – lay and ordained – best suits the mission needs of the circuit.**

Local Church Obligations to the Ten-Year Mission Plan

- 11. Churches councils should establish three recommendations that encourage positive cultural change and make use of the mission resources created in the ten-year plan.**
- a. We encouraged churches to set new recommendations annually. Some focused on eco-awards. Others focused initially on introducing new hymnody and installing multimedia. These tended to be short items on church council agendas rather than prompting extensive discussion or prayer.
 - b. All churches responded in Summer 2015 as to how they might use the resources the circuit was allocating to mission. However, some churches seemed to misunderstand the mission plan as a circuit initiative that bore little relation to their own activity.
 - c. **REFLECTION 10 – the CLT and local church leadership may need to do more to encourage churches to consider more fully and more frequently how they should best use the mission resources that are available for all.**
- 12. Local churches need to find ongoing ways of embedding the values and ethos of the ten-year plan into their structures. The circuit should appoint a small group to organise events and training sessions to enable churches to examine their culture and activity with a view to changing – to include alternative forms of worship, working in small groups and making contacts with schools.**
- a. We did not formally organise a small group to spearhead this work.
 - b. **REFLECTION 11 – we need to do more formally to understand for ourselves and then encourage and lead culture change in our churches.**

Part 2: Our Churches and Mission in 2022

We begin with a brief review of our churches and local mission activity, 7 years on from the first Mission Review and in the wake of COVID. Membership figures are for Oct 2021. Average adult attendance is for 2022, with the exception of Denby Dale.

Cawthorne

Membership 15 (25 in 2015)

Average Adult Attendance 16 with 4-8 children on occasions (14 in 2015)

Mission Activities:

1. Two Sunday morning worships monthly which is attracting new families and children, with around 5 new members being welcomed in October 2022
2. Weekly Thursday coffee mornings of up to 35 people from the village that have fundraised £20,000 for local charities in recent years.
3. Significant work with the local C of E Primary School, where assemblies, Prayer Spaces and Messy Church are focused activities

The church is well maintained and in a central position in the village. There are well developed links with the village Anglican church and regular joint services particularly around church festivals. The church's finances are slightly stronger than they were in 2015.

Clayton West

Membership 28 (29 in 2015)

Average Adult Attendance 14 (19 in 2015)

Mission Activities:

1. Monthly Messy Church alternating venue and working with the C of E is attracting up to 50 parents and children on Saturday afternoons.
2. Holiday Club attracts up to 30 children 3 times a year.
3. Monthly coffee mornings on both Tuesday and Saturday attracts people from the local community

The buildings are in good physical condition. There are strong ecumenical links with two local Anglican churches. Church finances are balanced but reserves are low. The church has talented musicians who support lively worship and new songs.

Denby Dale

Membership 30 (40 in 2015)

Average Adult Attendance 22? (25-30 in 2015, with 11 on the Sunday School roll)

Mission Activities:

1. Kids Kingdom (Sunday School)
2. Holiday Club runs annually ecumenically
3. New weekly Toddler Group includes children's worship songs and prayers
4. Monthly coffee morning raises funds for good causes and is well supported by the community

5. The Denby Dale Centre serves local social needs.

The church is well kept and well used. It is, however, a listed building which can be expensive to keep up. There is a strong Churches Together group. Finances are secure for the time being.

Emley

Membership 25 (31 in 2015)

Average Adult Attendance 17 with 2 children occasionally (20 – 24 in 2015)

Mission Activities:

1. Craft café meets fortnightly
2. Coffee mornings and other fundraising events attract local people.
3. Emley Play School use the premises and have a voice on church council.

The church is well-kept. Finances are improving after COVID, which made it difficult to keep up fundraising activities. This church is a stable traditional church.

Lower Cumberworth

Membership 17 (19 in 2015)

Average Adult Attendance 5 (10 in 2015)

Mission Activities:

1. The church is a community anchor for the village.
2. The church aims to provide a Christian presence in Lower Cumberworth.
3. Monthly coffee morning is well attended by the community and includes a Traidcraft stall

The church owns a property which is rented out. Finances are secure.

St Andrews

Membership 56 (69 in 2015)

Average Adult Attendance 34 with 4-16 children occasionally (49 and 4 children in 2015)

Mission Activities:

1. Inspire craft café
2. Toddler group is enduring and well-attended
3. CAMEO (for people feeling isolated) is well-attended
4. Foodbank Collection Point and Distribution Centre
5. Funday Sunday for Families and Children meets at 9.45am monthly with up to 8 parents and children attending
6. Clangers Hand Chime group for children practises weekly and performs at festival services when parents and grandparents also attend
7. Members run monthly services for older people in the local Care Home.

St Andrews is a URC/Methodist LEP. The buildings are in good condition but there is a serious lack of parking. It provides a relatively large proportion of circuit officers and local preachers. There is an active Churches Together group, which organises some joint services and activities. Under normal circumstances, it struggles to run financially without deficit. Covid lockdowns from 2020-22 significantly affected income from church lettings and bookings.

Skelmanthorpe

Membership 35 (*66 in 2015*)

Average Adult Attendance 19 (*30 and a few children in 2015*)

Mission Activities

1. Wives' Group twice a month
2. Christmas Tree Festival with up to 70 local businesses contributing a tree.
3. Prayer and Care Group.
4. "Thinking of You" monthly newsletter to all members too elderly or sick to attend.
5. Monthly Community Coffee Mornings
6. Open the Book

The premises are a little out of the way from the centre of the community and the structure is somewhat intimidating. The downstairs facilities are not easily accessed from the church. There are strong and well-developed links with the local Anglican Church. Finances remain satisfactory.

Thurlstone and Millhouse Green

Membership 17 (*19 in 2015*)

Average Adult Attendance 10 (*17 in 2015*)

Mission Activities

1. Knit and natter group
2. Toddler group
3. Luncheon club (not yet started again after lockdown)
4. Significant involvement with Millhouse Primary School – assemblies and Governor roles

Ecumenical links locally with St Saviours, and through Churches Together. Finances: have been running at a significant deficit because of contributions over the past five years towards Mission Work in the circuit

West Bretton

Membership 19 (*27 in 2015*)

Average Adult Attendance 12 (*14 in 2015*)

Mission Activities

1. We retain a connection with the local Primary School for assemblies and special occasion services in the church where the school choir sing.

The church is about to celebrate 40 years as an LEP. A newly signed constitution guides the life of the church. Finances are satisfactory but declining.

West Bretton is a small village and it is difficult to see many possibilities for mission growth. The building is itself a special place which lends itself well to Church retreats, especially given the proximity to the Sculpture Park.

Part 3: Mission Questionnaires – What Do Our People Think?

Members of all congregations in the circuit were invited from March -July 2022 to respond to questionnaires that asked about their personal spiritual well-being and where they believed their local churches were at in relation to mission and ministry after COVID lockdowns. They were also asked about the mix of ministry that they felt the circuit needed moving forward from 2024 and 2025. There are profiles available for each church, but our overall analysis of responses shows the following important things:

1. Discipleship and Vocation

- a. A welcoming church is not necessarily an inclusive church – how do we develop our confidence and skills to present ourselves as being inclusive?
- b. While the faith of our congregation members is generally strong, there is a reluctance to engage with learning for discipleship – should we develop a programme of high-profile speakers across our churches to encourage deeper learning as an alternative to “Bible study”?
- c. **REFLECTION 12 – we should put in place learning to be inclusive (as evangelism) and high-quality speaker events to engender discipleship and spirituality for the congregation and beyond.**

2. Congregational Well-being and Long-term Viability

- a. Our mission focus on Family and Children’s work has been limitedly productive - 2 of our churches are showing improvements in their age demographic, with some younger people becoming involved.
- b. Overall numbers are declining – this was expected by writers of the last Mission Review – we need to change the demographic before we will be able to see increases in congregation size.
- c. Churches are generally stretched by a shortage of people who are able and willing to serve as officers who sustain worship and oversee the management of resources.
- d. While local churches are often well-used by community groups who contribute financially to rental income, we are weak at generating crossover into church life. It sometimes feels as though we are maintaining our premises for the community at considerable personal cost to church officers.
- e. **REFLECTION 13 – We need to review radically our ministry to the community, especially with costs spiralling?**

3. Circuit Staffing

- a. Our 2 presbyters are due to move or extend their appointments in 2024 (Philip Bee) and 2025 (Nick Biggar). With income in the churches declining and a connexional shortage of ministers, their replacement is not guaranteed by either circuit finances or the stationing system.
- b. Our shift, since 2015, towards employing lay workers to cover administration (1 FTE) and Family and Children’s Work (1.5 FTE declining recently to 0.5FTE) is funded primarily through windfall money.
- c. This throws up the question of what mix of lay and ordained staffing we need to serve and support a circuit of 150 members stretched across 9 churches.
- d. **REFLECTION 14 – assuming there is a need to step down circuit costs, can we afford and are we best served by:**

	<u>Ordained Ministers</u>	<u>Administration</u>	<u>Lay Missioners</u>
Present	2	1	0.5 F&C
1	2	1	0
2	2	0 - 0.5	0.5 F&C
3	1 - 1.5	1	0.5 F&C

Part 4: Climate Neutrality – How Do We Respond Positively?

An emerging issue that our circuit of churches will need to address is that of carbon neutrality. The Connexion and our District have acknowledged a climate emergency and committed the Church, aspirationally, to climate neutrality by 2030. District Policy guidelines and a practical framework for urgent action will be in place by the Summer of 2023. Corporately, we will need to work out how to make our church buildings carbon neutral and our manses will also need modifications to help ministers transition to a carbon neutral lifestyle. There will be significant costs associated with these changes. Many, however, will reduce costs and save money in the long term, especially if energy prices continue to stay high.

- 1. REFLECTION 15 – We should embrace the need to change as a matter of Christian care for God’s creation and social justice which addresses those whose lives are being and will be most adversely affected by the impact of climate change. Churches will need to think seriously whether to:**
 - a. Spend money retrofitting churches to make them climate neutral**
 - b. Close and amalgamate their congregation with others close by**
 - c. Close two or more buildings to create a purpose-built, climate neutral worship space that is an eco-friendly community anchor for the future**
- 2. REFLECTION 16 – The circuit will need to consider creating a financial reserve that helps local churches to undertake the above changes by way of grants and loans, and will need to help churches draw down on similar financial help from the District.**

Part 5: Mission and Ministry with Older People

We are grateful to Alison Caswell for offering thoughts on our work with older people after her two-year course at Cliff College in Mission and Ministry; and for her offer to spearhead work with older people in our churches. She makes the following key points:

1. Our congregations largely consist of older people whose main source of spiritual sustenance is Sunday worship. Adopting patterns of worship more appropriate to younger people may be detrimental to the spiritual well-being of our older people.
 - a. **REFLECTION 17 – we should support the spiritual nurture of older people outside of Sunday worship –**
 - i. **opportunities for prayer, fellowship, study, spiritual conversation and worship alongside our weekly activities**
 - ii. **the provision of devotional material for use at home**
 - iii. **pastoral care through periods of transition – retirement, loss of a partner, life-changing illness**
2. Our understanding of mission needs to be broad. It is not just about bringing individuals to faith. It encompasses our involvement in God's plan and purpose for the whole of creation, to include climate justice and social justice. The latter are attractive issues for the Baby Boomer generation, who make up newly retired people entering the 3rd Age. People are looking for an integrated worldview which makes sense of all their experience.
 - a. **REFLECTION 18 – the Circuit Plan needs a clear statement of our broad understanding of the mission of the church. In response to this, a section is included at the very start of this mission document.**
 - b. **REFLECTION 19 – the Circuit should establish an unpaid lay position of “*Champion for Mission and Ministry to Older People*”, with a support group that puts together and then implements a plan of mission and ministry to older people.**
 - c. **REFLECTION 20 – work with older people should build on existing work e.g., coffee mornings; the work should be targeted at areas where newly retired people are choosing to live – especially Penistone and Denby Dale.**
 - d. **REFLECTION 21 – External groups regard the social spaces in our church buildings as “sterile”. We need to do more to differentiate our space from that in other community buildings. Good quality wall displays with colourful posters would support Family and Children's work as well as our work with Older People.**

Part 6: The Quarterly Preaching Plan and Covering Services (2015 vs 2022)

An approximate comparison between the autumn quarters for 2015 and 2022 is as follows:

	<u>2015</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Churches	10	9	Springvale closed 2019
Attendance overall	209	133	(inc Springvale 2015)
Extra early F&C svcs	0	8	2022 figure not inc in 125 svcs below.
Joint / shared svcs	14 (St A , Svale, TMG, Em, Skelm, DD, L Cum)	13 (DD, L Cum and Circuit)	
Extra afternoon / evening svcs	1	5	Inc in the overall svcs below
Overall svcs on the plan	126	125 (133 with F&C)	Inc aft and eve but not early F&C
Covered by:			
Ministers	25	30	Partly due to aft and eve svcs but also due to time changes at Bretton C West
Lay employee (F&C)	0	8 (16)	16 includes the extra early svcs above
Supernumeraries	11	15	
Local Preachers	40	21	(not inc lay employees or supernumeraries)
Readers	17	3	
Guests	7	3	
OAs	8	17 (16 video scripts)	

REFLECTION 22 – Regarding Worship

- Attendance has declined substantially faster than church closures.
- Voluntary lay leadership of worship by LPs and Readers has declined substantially (51 to 24)
- We are increasingly dependent on ministers and supernumeraries (36 to 45), with ministers also covering video sermons and scripts.
- Our F&C worker (who is counted as Lay Employee but is also not counted as a LP in this record) covers 8 F&C services, 6 of which are early children's work followed by all age worship. We might see this as 8 or 16 services.
- Joint services are around the same level but the mix has shifted towards semi-circuit services in two places and L Cum with Denby Dale only.
- OAs are up substantially, primarily because the number of readers have declined. But are covered well by video sermons and scripts to be delivered locally. *We should perhaps offer some training to stewards to deliver these well.*
- NOTE ALSO THE REFLECTIONS (1-4) ON WORSHIP TOWARDS THE BEGINNING OF THIS DOCUMENT

Part 7: Conclusions

1. Worship

- a. A shortage of LPs, reduced attendance in the circuit as a whole and the same number of slots for Sunday worship on the plan, means it is critical to agree what mix of the following allows us to match resources with needs:
 - i. Circuit services with all local churches unplanned
 - ii. Joint services locally so that one or more churches are unplanned
 - iii. Different times for Sunday services
 - iv. Own Arrangements
 - v. Video / Scripted Services
- b. We should consider the further development of streamed services to meet some of the above needs
- c. As a principle it is important that presbyters lead their congregations regularly in worship – this is a matter of pastoral care as much as of mission and learning
- d. Where OAs and video and scripted services are being used, we may need to offer training to stewards who bear this additional responsibility on Sunday mornings.
- e. While we have done well embedding Singing the Faith in our churches, we need to continue to develop our knowledge of newer songs the Circuit should identify and introduce popular new hymns and songs that have emerged since Singing the Faith was published over ten years ago. Where possible, also ensure that we balance our use of organ, piano and other musical instruments to accompany the singing well.

2. Mission

- a. We need to propagate and understanding of mission in broad terms. Mission embraces evangelism, social justice, care for the earth and community engagement.
- b. Work with Older People – we should broaden our mission to older people to include the pastoral care of our elderly and the spiritual development of newly retired people. We should take up the offer of a voluntary lay “Champion” to spearhead this work.
- c. Work with Families and Children – since 2015, our mission focus on families and children has been strong. Our work with schools in particular is increasingly well-respected and valued by headteachers. While less resource is now available, we should continue targeted work using a Family and Children’s worker. That may mean withdrawing from places where the prospects for productive mission work are limited but also keeping an eye to new opportunities as they arise.
- d. Administration – our employment of an administrator to allow presbyters to focus on mission work has been well-received. We might regard the increasing administrative support given to local churches as mission-drift but it is well-received by local churches and still functions not to weigh down clergy with administrative duties. This may also function to keep churches open for longer than would otherwise be the case. We need to clarify what help may be expected by local churches and where they must support themselves in order to keep a focus on mission and not slip into maintenance models of ministry. We should clarify which church officer roles are expected locally and which may be supported by the circuit.

3. Finance

- a. Windfall money available for mission is dwindling, though the principle that we use windfall money for mission and not maintenance is important.

- b. However, dwindling congregations, the impact of COVID and higher energy costs are leaving our churches generally weaker financially and we will be conservative in setting our next ten-year budget to create more room for local church finances to recover.
- c. We will consider the impact on local church finances of becoming carbon neutral and set aside money to assist churches in making the transition. We must see our response to climate change as part of our mission obligations to future generations and to God's creation. We await district support in developing costings and patterns for progress with this.
- d. Local churches should establish budgets for 3/5 years to help the Circuit to budget sensibly for the new plan.

4. Local Churches and the Circuit Ten Year Plan

- a. All but one or two of our churches have experienced continuing numerical decline since 2015. This was expected. Our aspiration to develop churches with a younger demographic has developed in one church only, however.
- b. Although it was a recommended part of the 2015 Plan, we never established a small group to spearhead change in our churches. We will develop a support group to help churches to embed the values and ethos that drive mission over maintenance in our churches and develop local church plans that reflect and support the Circuit mission plan. We may need to have a rep from each church on the circuit support group for this to work well.
- c. Some local churches acknowledged that a welcoming church was not necessarily an inclusive one and wanted to develop ways of becoming more obviously inclusive. We will explore ways to develop inclusivity through discipleship, spirituality and learning.
- d. Local churches often function as anchors for the community at excessive cost to church members – we need to review this relationship? At the very least we need to differentiate our spiritual space from other community spaces with professional displays which promote our Christian spirituality, ethos and values as a way of trying to engage local people in our work.
- e. We will review our social media presence and web content under a circuit/church communication strategy
- f. Taking in the reflections on addressing carbon neutrality by 2030, churches that believe they have a longer-term future need to programme in retrofitting their buildings over the course of the next few years. Some churches may benefit by amalgamating with other churches. Churches that see no future beyond 2030 should consider carefully from a missional perspective whether to initiate property schemes beyond ongoing maintenance work.

5. Future Circuit Staffing

- a. 2024 and 2025 are opportunities to reassess what level of ordained ministry is justifiably required by the circuit, given dwindling resources and the identified mission needs for Administration and F&C work in particular.

Part 8: Final Recommendations – A Ten Year Plan

1. Worship

- a. As a principle, we will try to make it possible for presbyters to lead their congregations regularly in worship – this is a matter of pastoral care as much as of mission and learning
- b. To be able to make the quarterly plan, we will include a mix of:
 - i. Circuit services with all local churches unplanned
 - ii. Joint services locally so that one or more churches are unplanned
 - iii. Different times for Sunday services where that is possible
 - iv. Own Arrangements
 - v. Video / Scripted Services
 - vi. New streamed services from one church for use in other churches
- c. Where OAs and video and scripted services are being used, we will offer training to stewards who bear the responsibility of delivering these.
- d. We will continue to develop knowledge of newer songs. We ask that church musicians use an appropriate balance of organ, piano and other musical instruments to accompany singing.

2. Mission

- a. We will establish a voluntary lay officer to champion our mission with older people, to include the pastoral care of our elderly and the spiritual development of newly retired people.
- b. We will continue targeted work using a part-time F&C worker. That may mean withdrawing from places where the prospects for productive mission work are limited while keeping an eye to new opportunities as they arise.
- c. We will clarify what administrative help may be expected by local churches and where they must support themselves in order to keep a focus on mission and not slip into maintenance models of ministry. Local churches should understand clearly what officers are required locally.

3. Finance

- a. The principle that windfall money is for mission and not maintenance is important. We will move the costs of administration into the normal budget, but will still maintain a second budget for mission activities, to include developing a budget to aid the transition to carbon neutrality (see 3c. below), the F&C worker and other mission expenses. This will be funded by windfall money (e.g., church closures, manse sales and grant aid for mission work).
- b. The CLT will take care to set circuit budgets that make room for local church finances to recover gradually from the COVID pandemic.
- c. We see our response to climate change as part of our mission obligation to future generations and to God's creation. We will consider seriously the impact on local church finances of becoming carbon neutral and will aim to budget money that assists churches as they make this transition, under advice from the Connexion and the District. For their part, local churches should consider amalgamating with other churches to address this issue.
- d. We ask local churches to establish budgets for the next 3/5 years to support the Circuit's budget for the new ten-year plan.

4. Local Churches and the Circuit Ten Year Plan

- a. We will develop a circuit support group, made up of one representative from each of the churches, to help embed the values and ethos that drive mission over maintenance in our churches.
- b. We will develop new learning for discipleship and spirituality that helps our churches to become inclusive and welcoming.
- c. We will support churches to create professional displays that promote Christian spirituality, ethos and values as a way of trying to engage local people in our work. We will also review our social media presence and content and develop a new circuit / church communication strategy.

5. Future Circuit Staffing

- a. The CLT assessed the budget implications of the following permutations for ministry in the circuit. We have concluded and recommend that the level of ordained ministry that is justifiable financially for 2024 / 2025 onwards, and which meets the identified mission needs of our churches for Administration and F&C work in particular, is option 3. We should therefore aim at presbyteral staffing from 2024/2025 of one and a half presbyters, and a balance of employed administrative and mission staff totalling one and a half workers. We may consider, for instance 0.75 for administration and 0.75 for F&C work, but the cost will be the same.

	<u>Ordained Ministers</u>	<u>Administration</u>	<u>Lay Missioners</u>
Present	2	1	0.5 F&C
1	2	1	0
2	2	0 - 0.5	0.5 F&C
3	1 - 1.5	1	0.5 F&C

IMPORTANT

This plan and these recommendations approved at

Circuit Meeting at Denby Dale MC on 22nd November 2022

with an additional request of local churches in relation to the faithful stewardship of our resources:

The circuit meeting is concerned that nine churches serving a total worshipping congregation on Sundays of 140 people is a poor use of our resources. It means that ministers lead worship less frequently with their congregations; it stretches local preachers and means more own arrangements; it means more meetings and time spent on administration across the circuit; and all this increases costs while weakening mission. In addition to agreeing our Ten-Year Plan with the above recommendations, the circuit meeting therefore urges all church councils to consider locally:

Should we close our church building and amalgamate our congregation with another church close by as a better stewardship of the mission resources that God has placed in our hands?

Please, therefore, give serious consideration to the above question in church councils during 2023 and feed back your responses to the Circuit Leadership Team in due course.