

## **Planning for Growth: First Steps** **Circuit Leadership Team Report Summer 2022**

### **Health Warning!**

This is a long and detailed paper compared to most which come to Circuit Meeting for attention. However, I believe it is also the most significant paper concerning our future direction and mission as a Circuit that we have considered as the Wharfedale and Aireborough Methodist Circuit. I do encourage you to read it thoroughly and prayerfully, to come to the Circuit Meeting prepared to engage in honest and open conversation about its contents, and to take it back to your church councils for active consideration.

The paper seeks to do four things:

- Provide a reminder of how we have got to where we are today.
- Give a clear understanding of staffing levels and oversight for the coming year.
- Report on the thoughts of the Circuit Leadership Team as we develop our understanding of what it might mean to be a “Transformational, Missional, Sustainable” community of churches.
- Offer some practical priorities for us to move forward on.

Rev Tim Perkins (On behalf of the Circuit Leadership Team)

### **1. Background**

This is the third paper the Circuit Meeting has received in a series titled “*Planning for Growth.*” The first was presented in Feb 2020 following concentrated time the CLT spent at Beamsley. It identified some key themes, passages, and principles for the Circuit to consider. The second, “*Planning for Growth: Moving from Coping to Calling,*” was presented in Dec 2020 and focussed on trying to establish several Circuit Teams and on staffing models for Sept 2022 onwards.

Before I share some thoughts on next steps, I want to update you on our current staffing arrangements and plans and how they have changed since Dec 2020.

- We were extremely grateful for the ministry provided to the Circuit by Deacon Jenny Parnell, Rev Leonora Wassell and Rev Dr Martyn Atkins as they helped us through to the summer of 2021. None of them have been directly replaced and so the Ministerial Team has been working at a reduced level of 4.5fte for the current year as we plan for Sept 2022.
- To help mitigate this, we have invested in 2 additional part-time lay roles: extending the Guiseley activity coordinator role to include time at Yeadon for the current year; and the 2-year part-time appointment of an activity coordinator at Pool which was set up in Sept 2021.
- Following the resignation of our Circuit Property Officer in Aug 2021, that area of work has been picked up by myself, the Circuit Finance Officer, and the Circuit Steward with responsibility for property. Significant work has been done and continues (we have just completed on the purchase of the new manse in Otley), in this area as we implement our plan to sell three manses and purchase one new one as well as completing the sale of Timble Chapel and helping the Trustees at Otley move towards the sale of the church premises and the identification of a new home. Consequently, some of the more routine elements of Manse maintenance have had to be put on hold but we are working to ensure all manse inspections are completed, any urgent work carried out, and a programme of work for the coming year identified.

- We have recently advertised for a new full-time lay role of “Circuit Manager” to oversee much of the day-to-day business of the Circuit in relation to property, finance, administration, and data protection. Interviews are scheduled for the end of June.
- Our part-time Administrator role will change to that of Circuit Communications Officer at the beginning of July, to help particularly with digital provision across the Circuit. We can make this change thanks to now having a volunteer Circuit Secretary in place who will be doing the administration associated with Circuit Meetings and meetings of the CLT.
- Our Circuit Finance Officer has indicated that she will be coming off the payroll at the end of June but is happy to assist on a voluntary basis for several months and may in future act in a consultancy capacity with major issues and end of year accounts. The CLT has authorised her to continue to act on behalf of the Circuit in that voluntary capacity.
- Once the Circuit Manager is in place we will pause for a settling in period and then review what additional lay support staff roles may be needed to fill any gaps in provision which may emerge, particularly in relation to property.
- Deacon Liz Day is due to retire at the end of August. We are immensely grateful for the ministry she has provided to the Circuit, and particularly to Addingham, Burley and Ben Rhydding, at a time when other resources have been stretched. We are equally delighted that Liz will be retiring in the Circuit and in time, will be happy to help as a supernumerary Deacon, along with our other active Supernumerary Ministers.
- I also want to express particular thanks to Rev Alistair Newton for the sensitive and wise ministry he has expressed at Otley across the last two years in support of the various active Ministers he has shared alongside. I am sure he will continue to be available to offer pastoral support as we move forward.
- We are delighted that, subject to the approval of Conference at the end of the month, Rev Cameron Stirk will be joining the staff team in September and will have pastoral charge of Otley and Pool and a new role of Circuit Mission Enabler. This is a change from what we anticipated in Dec 2020, when the role identified was for Otley, Pool, and Bramhope. The pandemic and its effects have revealed the need and opportunity for a sustained focus on Mission and Evangelism, particularly in the digital arena.
- Conversations have taken place with Rev Roger Smith and the Stewards at Bramhope, and we are now planning for Roger to retain pastoral charge of Bramhope alongside Guiseley and Yeadon. The Circuit Leadership Team has agreed to develop Lay Employment provision in that part of the Circuit so that there are two part-time “Activity Coordinator” roles, working alongside Roger across the three churches. One is already in place and hopefully will be extended beyond the initial one-year period, and we anticipate advertising shortly for the second.
- The Circuit Leadership Team has agreed a request for funding from the Circuit Model Trust Fund from Christchurch for £5000 a year for three years to help with the costs of their Youth and Children’s Worker post. We are anticipating further grant applications from Menston and Burley to support a continuing Lay Employment role and to help establish a new one respectively. Details will be circulated to Circuit Meeting members once they have been approved by CLT. We shall also be encouraging Addingham, Ben Rhydding and Hawksworth to consider what support may be beneficial alongside Shannon, particularly given Deacon Liz’s retirement and we want to encourage an application to the CMTF for such a role.

- Finally, you may recall that Otley has a restricted fund that, with permission from Cliff College, can be freed up for use for a missional appointment. The Otley Trustees are considering what the focus for such a role might be but wish to get Cameron's input into that once he is in post.

## 2. Pastoral Charge for Sept 2022

It is anticipated that Pastoral Charge for the coming year will be held as follows:

- Superintendent Minister with Pastoral Charge of Burley and Menston – Rev Tim Perkins
- Minister with Pastoral Charge of Addingham, Ben Rhydding and Hawksworth + Chair of Norwood Management Team – Rev Shannon DeLaureal
- Minister with Pastoral Charge of Bramhope, Guiseley, and Yeadon – Rev Roger Smith
- Minister with Pastoral Charge of Otley and Pool + Circuit Mission Enabler – Rev Cameron Stirk
- Minister with Pastoral Charge of Christchurch LEP, Ilkley – Rev Dr Roberta Topham
- Trinity LEP, Rawdon – You may be aware that Rev Helen Lambert has resigned from her position as Minister at Trinity. The church is embarking on a process of discernment as to its's future and any future Ministerial appointment.

## 3. Next Steps

The CLT gathered for two days at Beamsley in March to continue developing our thoughts around planning for growth. Our time was focussed on the key themes previously identified and offered to the Circuit for reflection, namely, what does it mean for us to be a **“Transformational, Missional, Sustainable”** Circuit? Each of our sessions was grounded in a time of worship and prayer as we sought to discern something of God's will for us. We have previously expanded on our three themes in the following ways:

- By **“Transformational”** we mean the intention to be people and churches who allow Jesus to work in and through us in ways that enable God's mission to “make all things new.” We recognise that God is constantly at work in our lives and in our world and we seek to embrace the dynamics of change and transformation in the pursuit of spiritual growth and formation.
- By **“Missional”** we mean always holding in our minds the need to think first about how we share the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ with those outside our church communities. If we have love for God, then that will be expressed through love for our neighbour. What will that look like and what resources will it require? What do we need to learn to become more confident in sharing our faith with others?
- By **“Sustainable”** we mean developing ways to: sustain our churches as vibrant communities of Christian faith and love; make whatever buildings we require for our mission as environmentally and financially sustainable as possible; working to ensure that our lifestyles, our local communities, and our wider world are as environmentally sustainable as possible; looking seriously at the structures we need at circuit and local church level to work as effectively and efficiently as possible. For example, considering the Conference paper on Oversight and Trusteeship, what is the minimum number of trustees bodies we need in the Circuit to fulfil our calling and implement our Mission Statement? We also include working to ensure that our models for ministry and oversight and our staff team workloads are sustainable and enable our staff team to enjoy and thrive in their roles.

One session was spent considering each theme using the following questions:

- *What Bible passages speak to us about this theme and what do they say?*
- *What have we learned about this theme during the last two years? What has enabled it? What has stifled it?*
- *What might need to stop?*
- *How as a Circuit can we encourage opportunities for growth with this theme in and through our local churches?*
- *What should our priorities be in this area of circuit life?*

Our final session was spent considering the Conference report on Oversight and Trusteeship ([Oversight and Trusteeship: Proposals for changes to Methodist Church Structures](#)) and trying to tie it in with our key themes by considering how we might move forward in a transformational, missional, and sustainable way.

I will seek now to offer a summary of our thoughts in each of these areas but as I do it is vital that we recognise that each of our three key words cannot be expressed in isolation from the other two. We cannot be a transformational community without engaging in mission and working for sustainability in its full meaning. Equally, we cannot be a missional community without experiencing the transformation that Christ brings in our lives through the power and witness of the Holy Spirit and the recognition that it is God's Spirit that calls and equips us to be good stewards of all the resources he has called us to care for and use wisely. And we cannot be a sustainable community without working for the transformation of our lives, our buildings, and our world – that should be a key part of our missional activity as we seek to partner with God in God's mission to *"make all things new."*

## **Transformational**

### ***What Bible passages speak to us about Transformation and what do they say?***

(The specific passages considered under each of our three themes are listed in the Appendix at the end of this report. They are included as a resource for potential theme preaching and/or housgroup study material to help local churches develop their own understanding of these key themes)

All the passages speak of how when a person meets with Jesus, transformation takes place in some way – lifestyle, direction, healing, new calling, the work of the Spirit within and through us. This transformation should be replicated in our church life and in our mission. There is a recognition that God often acts as an irritant/agitant in a significant and positive manner to bring about change (e.g., a pearl by sand, waters at Bethesda, overturning the tables in the Temple). Ultimately, God's mission is to make all things new (See Revelation 21).

### ***What have we learned about Transformation during the last two years? What has enabled it? What has stifled it?***

#### **Enabled**

Much of what we have learned about transformation over the last two years relates to the use of technology. It has enabled people to engage in opportunities for worship, study and fellowship which would not have been possible without it. Used well, the resources which different technologies can bring to our opportunities for worship can add a new dimension and bring creativity and variety. It can make accessing resources from across the globe easier, providing us with a greater breadth of resources for worship. It can enable people to participate when they are away from home or when they are restricted to home due to health issues. As

such, it can be a tool for greater inclusion in the life of our churches. It can also be a tool for mission to our communities. Platforms such as Facebook and YouTube can enable people to experience worship who might not yet be ready to cross the threshold of a church building.

Distribution of resources such as newsletters and service sheets via email has also helped us to improve our communication, with several churches sending out weekly emails as well as enabling the distribution of Circuit Pastoral Letters. This has made us work hard to ensure contact details and GDPR records are up to date and is also more environmentally friendly than printing and distributing large amounts of hard copies.

Some churches have found that more people were willing to engage in doing readings or leading prayers online than had previously been the case in church buildings and that it was easier to share in conversation about services online than it is in church buildings. Both are areas that we might be able to build on. It also raises the possibility of creative ways to address the shortage of preachers we currently face.

More generally, we recognised that being forced to stop most things has provided space to try and see what the new things are that God might be calling us to. It has forced us to reconsider what role our church buildings might play moving forward and whether they are up to the task, and it has made clear to us that churches can no longer rely on income from external bookings to ensure that they are financially viable. This places a challenge before us about our understanding of financial giving as part of our discipleship and witness.

### **Stifled**

Sometimes we have found that negative attitudes have restricted the ability of groups to explore possibilities of transformation. This can be due to differences of opinion in what we should be focussing on, or how to do it. It can be in attitudes which seek to maintain what has been at the expense of what could be. It can be through an unwillingness to offer help or personal gifts and experiences. It can be through focussing resources on maintaining buildings at the expense of engaging in mission (that is not to say that buildings can't have a missional purpose, just that sometimes there is an imbalance in how we choose to use our limited resources. Mission and evangelism sometimes seem to come last in our priorities in comparison to time, energy and resources put into worship, pastoral care and building maintenance.) It can be through fear of the unknown leading to an unhealthy need for security and the preservation of what we know.

We recognise that there is a digital divide which needs to be overcome, both in terms of access to equipment and knowledge of how to use it. This is often more acute with those of older generations who are sometimes less familiar with new technologies and less able to adapt to the pace of change in the digital world.

There may be a need to develop more technological training for preachers and others. Those operating technology may need more time for preparation. However, there may be opportunities to better involve younger people in the provision of technological resources in worship.

Transformation and growth in faith, spirituality and a sense of discipleship is often related most closely to peoples' involvement in small group settings which enable focussed study time and easier conversation and discussion. The last couple of years have proved difficult to establish or maintain widespread participation in such groups but where people have been able to participate it has been greatly appreciated both for the input but also for the connection and maintenance of human relationship.

### ***What might need to stop?***

- Meeting in person all the time – zoom saves time and travel
- Separate church councils and officers for every church – given the struggle to fill voluntary positions across the circuit and the churches and the decline in membership figures but not churches, is it realistic or efficient to continue with the model of a separate church council for each congregation?
- Expectation of minister/preacher every Sunday – there are no longer enough Ministers or Local Preachers to fill the number of appointments required. We only have one preacher in training and no Local Preacher Tutor.
- More flexibility in worship needed – this might relate to the number of hymns, or length of sermons or other aspects of a traditional pattern for worship but there is also a growing sense that local arrangements and/or teams of preachers familiar with a particular congregation may better enable the sort of worship each congregation wants to develop and build confidence in inviting people along.

### ***How as a Circuit can we encourage opportunities for growth in Transformation in and through our local churches?***

- Offer more frequent Zoom Study groups on a circuit wide basis.
- Establish a Circuit Youth and Children’s Team to enable better networking and circuit-wide events/groups.
- Encourage greater consideration of lay ministry, either paid or voluntary as evidence strongly suggests that they can be catalysts for new vision and coordination
- Better engagement with district/connexional initiatives which offer greater expertise than we have at local levels.
- Provide training for the better use of technological resources for worship.
- Give serious consideration to both the state and number of church buildings and of the Oversight and Trustee Report to identify what the minimum number of Trustees bodies is which will enable the mission and ministry of both the Circuit and the Churches to flourish.
- Encourage better sharing of resources and experience across the Circuit – where one church is experiencing growth in any area, could this be offered as a model to other churches or supported as a Circuit initiative located in a particular location. Would that be more effective and efficient than 12 separate churches all trying to do everything themselves?

### ***What should our priorities be in this area of circuit life?***

- Serious consideration of whether our buildings enable/stifle what we are trying to do, including an environmental audit (see Eco-church resources).
- Establishing a Circuit Youth & Children’s Team to facilitate an audit of provision across the circuit and develop ways of working more closely together.
- Look at how we can develop small group/housegroup provision across the Circuit to better support personal spiritual formation.
- Developing provision for technology and digital media and providing training for local church volunteers.
- Serious consideration of the Oversight and Trusteeship report by all local church councils to identify what models will best enable each church to thrive.

## **Missional**

### ***What Bible passages speak to us about “Mission” and what do they say?***

The passages identified helped us to reflect on what *Mission* means for us. As Methodists, our Covenant Service reminds us that the most important thing is the call of God and the equipping of the Spirit and how we respond to them. Mission and evangelism can fit with our natural inclinations, but may not, and that is no excuse for avoiding them. They can and should take us to new places physically, but also in our thinking and attitudes. The Great Commission reminds us that our call is to “*Go and make disciples of all peoples...*” This often takes us outside of our comfort zones (Peter getting out of the boat) but when we are prepared to fully trust the Spirit, sharing our faith in both word and action, begins to flow more naturally from us. It becomes more overflow than overwork. Mission can be understood as being both overt and covert. It can be like Peter preaching at Pentecost, but it can also be like Dorcas serving her community. This then reminds us that there is a clear place for chaplaincy in and to our communities as part of our understanding of mission. Perhaps above all, the motivation for engaging in mission is the frequent repetition of the phrase “*Jesus had compassion...*” in the Gospels. We are to imitate that as a fulfilment of his command to love God and love our neighbours.

***What have we learned about Mission during the last two years? What has enabled it? What has stifled it?***

**Enabled**

- We have rediscovered something of the importance of good pastoral structures to enable regular contact with people in our congregations and wider spheres of influence. GDPR and Covid have caused us to be more proactive about ensuring contact details are up to date and are used appropriately. Wider use of email has helped to keep in contact with people. Hand-delivering or posting information and service sheets, especially in the early stages of lockdown has been greatly appreciated where it has taken place. Conversely, in places where it has been harder to do this it has then been easier to lose contact with people.
- Offering practical assistance where possible with shopping, collecting prescriptions, providing transport has increased the awareness of the work of local churches in their communities.
- Finding creative ways of working with schools has been much appreciated, whether it be offering assembly input via video, live-streaming end of term services or providing more of a chaplaincy approach to staff who have been working under great stress.
- Ministerial involvement in local covid planning groups has developed our reputation and built confidence in what the church has to offer to local communities.
- An increase in concern for refugees, asylum-seekers, and other vulnerable people has made a clear statement of what we believe to our local communities and valuable social partnerships have been developed.
- The use of digital platforms to host or stream services and other events have enabled some churches to share what they have to offer with their wider community in new ways, though it is often difficult to tell exactly who is using the facility and from where, particularly with Facebook and YouTube.

**Stifled**

- Throughout the pandemic it has been hard to get volunteers to participate in either the planning or delivery of missional initiatives. However, this has perhaps led to us doing fewer things but more creatively and perhaps better. Where people have volunteered, they have been determined to make a success of what they have been doing but

numbers of people who have been prepared to volunteer have understandably been limited by the context we have lived through.

- There has been an increased concern for the financial viability of our churches and a subsequent tightening of budgets which may have impacted on some church initiatives.
- A greater workload than normal has fallen upon our Ministers and Lay Workers due to the difficulties in finding volunteers and getting together to plan. Whilst the staff have all done what they can, and often more, the ability to have more voices involved in planning would have developed more creativity and spread the load more.
- A reduced staffing level over the last year has undoubtedly impacted our ability to deliver missional projects or to plan for the future.

### ***How as a Circuit can we encourage opportunities for mission in and through our local churches?***

- Offer training opportunities for volunteers to develop confidence in what they are volunteering for.
- Share opportunities for youth and children's work across the circuit
- Offer grant funding from the CMTF for new and creative missional projects or appointments in the local churches.
- Ensure our buildings are cost-effective and environmentally friendly.
- Encourage each church to identify one community led initiative that they could get involved in.
- Encourage church members to make time to experience different styles and forms of worship in other churches from time to time to freshen up our own understanding and experience of worship.
- Establish a Circuit Mission & Evangelism Team to help plan events and offer ideas to local churches.
- Consider using alternative premises for some or all events.
- Develop or provide high quality resources for small group use to increase faith and confidence to share it.
- Ask churches to identify one or two particular social justice issues on which they could take a lead in their local community.
- Raise awareness of all the District and Connexional resources available to help with mission planning.
- Encourage each church to develop a realistic, achievable growth plan and to keep it under regular review.
- We recognise that there are lots of things we could do but also that, at present, both staff and volunteer resources are limited. We may need to make hard choices about where best to prioritise the use of available resources.

### ***What should our priorities be in this area of circuit life?***

- Establish a Circuit Mission & Evangelism Team
- Provide more and better opportunities for training
- Be focussed in identifying how we can best use limited resources and don't shy away from the difficult questions
- Actually plan for growth rather than managing decline

## **Sustainable**

### ***What Bible passages speak to us about sustainability and wise use of resources and what do they say?***

There are numerous themes which flow from the selection of Bible passages we looked at pertaining to sustainability. Some speak of the balance of spirituality and spiritual exercises which enable life to flourish and an equilibrium to be found between doing and being. These include passages about Sabbath, prayer, using only what you need for each day. There are passages which speak about our call to be good stewards of both the world God has given us to live in and the gifts God has given us to use for building up the Church and witnessing to life in the Kingdom of God. There are passages which address our attitudes to money, giving and generosity. But there are also themes which develop throughout Scripture with passages too numerous to mention.

One such theme considers the question: “where is God located?” It starts with God to be found walking in the Garden. This develops to a God who can be found in a Tabernacle or Tent – a portable, temporary home. The next stage is that God then becomes housed in the building of the Temple in Jerusalem. But then in the New Testament we discover that God becomes located in a person in the incarnation of Jesus – God becomes flesh and blood and speaks of tearing down the Temple and rebuilding it in three days. The curtain is torn in two and people now have direct access to God. The next stage in this development comes with the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost when God becomes located in the hearts and minds of God’s people and we become the Body of Christ on earth. The final stage in this journey is the renewal of all things, the New Jerusalem where God will dwell with God’s people, and Eden restored.

God’s location in the beginning is free and fluid but with time becomes solidified in buildings before Christ comes to relocate God back in a free and fluid context. When asked where people should worship God by the woman at the well, Jesus refuses to state a particular physical location but tells us that God will be worshiped in spirit and in truth. I wonder if, over the centuries we have solidified our location for God once more in our church buildings.

A second theme focusses on our attitudes towards the gifts God has given us, both spiritual and financial, with the emphasis on the need to use them, often in risky ways, rather than trying to keep them safe and secure. Courage to make difficult and risky decisions is a theme which runs throughout the pages of Scripture. We were also reminded of John Wesley’s watchwords in relation to giving, “Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can.”

### ***What have we learned about sustainability during the last two years? What has enabled it? What has stifled it?***

- Our buildings have both an environmental cost and a missional cost due to the resources they consume and yet they can also serve both as a visible expression of faith and a resource for missional work in the local community.
- We have become too reliant on income from external bookings.
- Active mission can make our churches more sustainable as worshipping communities.
- Numbers of members and ministers is declining faster than the number of congregations leading to an ever thinner spread of resources.
- There are opportunities to be had through the eco-church programme in raising our understanding of the impact of our buildings on our finances and our environment. This can lead to cutting our use of expensive fuels and engaging with our local communities for improving our environment.

- Generous giving has been compensating financially in some places for loss of rental income. In other places, congregations are really struggling financially because of the model they have held based on generating income from external sources.
- Zoom has enabled a more sustainable expression of church life in some ways through reducing both heating and transport costs by having online meetings.
- The pandemic has caused us to consider, perhaps for the first time, what church life might look like without buildings, or without owning them ourselves.
- Online platforms can be used in some contexts to engage in both worship and mission, to enable greater inclusivity, and to reduce our carbon footprint.

### ***What might need to stop?***

- The pandemic and the lack of preachers has brought a halt to evening services. Does this provide space for something new to spring up on a Circuit level rather than a local church level where people can come together from across the circuit to share in a range of different styles of worship?
- Do we need a “live” preacher in every church every week? Are there opportunities and advantages for more creative thinking and more engagement by local congregations in planning and leading of worship that fits their direction of travel rather than just receiving what preachers have to offer?
- How best do we review the number and location of churches/congregations? Across many years now we have seen a decline in membership and a reduction in the number of Ordained Ministers and yet, we have almost the same number of churches/congregations, meaning that fewer people are having to do much more. Since 2012, our circuit membership has declined from 1450 to 920 at last October. The actual figure of people actively engaging in worship and the wider life of the churches is considerably lower than that, perhaps more realistically in the region of 600 spread across 13 congregations. Our current model is not working. The Oversight and Trusteeship Report has set a new minimum membership size of 12 for a congregation to exist as a church. We are really struggling to fill all the required offices at both local church and circuit level because of the reduced pool of volunteers to call upon and the increased average age of our congregations, let alone the many other helpful but not required roles. What other models might we consider? Some possibilities might be: fewer churches but more classes; fewer trustees bodies (church councils) so that one church meets in more than one congregation across a number of locations; merging churches so that we have fewer but bigger congregations, selling a number of church buildings in order to fund building one new, eco-friendly, multi-purpose venue; closing churches where offices can't be filled or where there isn't a realistic concern for missional engagement with local communities. As we consider these options, and no doubt more, the key question for church councils to consider will be, “what structure and oversight will best enable the mission we believe God is calling us to engage in?” Of course, to answer that question we will also need to have a clear understanding of the nature of the mission we believe God is calling us to engage in, in each location.

### ***How as a Circuit can we encourage opportunities for improving or challenging the sustainability of our local churches?***

- Provide support/training to small groups in churches to tackle Local arrangements with confidence and creativity

- Provide live-streamed/pre-recorded services for church communities and care homes to access services
- Engage in an environmental audit of all churches and manses and ensure that all churches sign up for the eco-church awards scheme. The District Synod recently agreed a target to become carbon neutral by 2030 and we will all have a part to play in meeting that target.
- Work to make our Manses environmentally sustainable by ensuring availability of energy certificates, improved insulation, solar panels, EV charging points, as appropriate.
- Encourage the sharing of knowledge and skills re. practical issues e.g. heating, music, technology, finance, property maintenance to continue the sustainability of congregations whilst avoiding over reliance on one or two individuals.
- Encourage churches to develop stewardship campaigns to identify and increase both spiritual and financial gifts.

#### ***What should our priorities be in this area of circuit life?***

- To develop a culture of change management not crisis management by becoming more proactive than reactive.
- Consider what it would look like for us to return to being a “movement of disciples” rather than a Church – where would buildings sit in such a model? Would we own any buildings or rent? Might we focus on three or four buildings rather than 13? Could we just have one new, carbon-neutral building to provide a central gathering place?
- Ask all churches to consider what the minimum number of trustees bodies is that is needed to enable the mission and ministry of the churches and the circuit?
- Commit to an environmental and financial audit of all our buildings.
- Move towards eco-circuit status.

#### **4. Initial Priorities**

- Develop a themed preaching series on “transformational, missional, sustainable” to better engage congregations with what our future mission and ministry might look like. Establish a small team to work on resources for services and small groups for a 6-week period in Jan/Feb 2023.
- Trusteeship issue be brought to circuit meeting in June 2022 for information to be aired/shared and disseminated to church councils in summer.
- Ask Presbyteral staff to look at structuring agendas for church councils in a transformational, missional, and sustainable manner/model beginning in September 2022.
- CLT members to begin to collect stories/examples of other circuit models from around the connexion.
- Establish a Circuit Youth and Children’s Team to develop our approach to this area of work.
- Identify ways to develop Digital capacity at both Circuit and church level to be led by our Circuit Communications Officer and Circuit Mission Enabler.
- Provide training opportunities for potential and current worship leaders and small group leaders to bring a fresh impetus to provision of worship and study opportunities.
- Examine how LEP’s would fit into any new trusteeship model?
- Properly establish Circuit Teams to drive development in different areas.

- Work towards the stationing process for Sept 2024 (which begins in May 2023) 3 of our current 5 presbyters are due to go into the stationing process and our membership numbers probably will not justify maintaining 5 presbyteral appointments.

## **Appendix: Bible Passages on our three key themes for consideration in worship and small groups**

### ***Transformational***

Matthew 4:	Calling of first disciples
Matthew 6:	Being different to the world around us.
Matthew 9:	Calling of Matthew
Mark 1:	Healing of man with leprosy
Mark 5:	Healing of haemorrhaging woman and raising of Jairus' daughter
Mark 10:	Healing of Bartimaeus
Mark 15:	Centurion's confession at the cross
Luke 4:	Jesus' teaching in the synagogue at Nazareth, "good news to the poor, freedom for the prisoners, sight for the blind, freedom for the oppressed."
Luke 15:	Prodigal Son
Luke 19:	Zacchaeus, "Here and now I give half my possessions to the poor..."
John 4:	Samaritan woman at the well, "Come and see..."
John 10:	Knowing the Shepherd's voice leading to life in all its fulness.
John 11:	Raising of Lazarus
John 20:	Doubting Thomas
Acts 9:	Damascus Road
Acts 9:	Raising of Tabitha
Acts 10:	Peter's vision transforms attitude towards Gentiles
Acts 20:	Raising of Eutychus
Rom. 12:	"Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."
2 Cor. 5:	"The old has gone, the new has come..."
Gal. 5:	Fruit of the Spirit
Phil. 4:	"Whatever is true, whatever is noble..."
Rev. 21:	"I am making all things new!"

### ***Missional***

Jonah and Amos:	being sent out from their own community to elsewhere
Matthew 10:	Jesus sending out the disciples
Matthew 25:	What you do for others
Matthew 28:	Great commission
Mark 4:	The Parable of the Sower
Luke 1:	The Magnificat
Luke 4:	Jesus' manifesto
Luke 10:	Good Samaritan
Luke 15:	Seeking the lost
Acts 2:	Pentecost
Acts 3 1-10:	Peter and John healing
Acts 8:	Philip and Ethiopian
Acts 9:	Tabitha/Dorcas
Acts 10:	Peter's vision & Cornelius

Acts 13: Commissioning of Paul and Barnabas  
Rev. 21: Making all things new

### ***Sustainable***

Genesis 1: Goodness of creation and importance of Sabbath for sustaining life  
Exodus 16: Manna from heaven – only take enough for each day – see also Lord’s Prayer  
Matthew 7: The wise and foolish builders – unless we build on Christ we build in vain  
Matthew 25: Parable of the talents – what will we choose to do with what God has given us?  
Mark 4: Parable of the Sower – how do we ensure good soil to grow  
Luke 9: 10: Doing & Being  
Luke 10: 38f: Mary & Martha  
John 4: 14: Living water  
John 15: Abiding in Christ – feeding from the roots to grow fruit that will last  
Acts 2: 42f The marks of the early church  
Rom. 12: 3f: Importance of identifying gifts and using them appropriately  
Eph. 4: 11: Appropriate service is an aspect of a mature faith