

# The Birmingham Methodist District

## Church Without Walls

*The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. It does this through worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism.<sup>1</sup>*

## Mission

In the power of the Holy Spirit we seek to grow disciples of Jesus Christ.

Growing...

- in numbers of new disciples,
- in depth of discipleship,
- in the transformation of communities and society.<sup>2</sup>

## Vision

We have a vision for a growing, evangelistic, justice-seeking and inclusive church without walls.

## Cultural Shifts

If we are to offer the life-giving transformation that we believe lies at the heart of the good news of Jesus Christ, the church itself needs to be prepared to undergo significant ecclesial/cultural shifts that will undergird any transformation that we experience. These shifts are crucial for the entire District.

- From **Anxiety and Fear** to a **Confidence Centred in God**
- From **Paying Lip Service to the Vision** to **Living it Out**
- From **Welcoming Church** to **Inviting Church**
- From **Maintenance Fatigue** to **Refreshment and Renewal**
- From **Trying to Do Everything** to **Doing a Few Things Well**
- From **Decline Management** to **Missional Risk and Growth**

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<sup>1</sup> In 2000 the Methodist Church, after a consultation on the purpose of the Church adopted the statement Our Calling. Word on this was revived in the 2018 conference through a discussion paper entitled "Reaffirming Our Calling".

<sup>2</sup> In 2015 the Birmingham Methodist District adopted a growth focused policy.

# District Objectives

The Birmingham Methodist District seeks to be a network of communities where people are included and grow, being transformed by the love of God and sharing their story of God's grace.

In collaboration with others where possible the District is committed to creating safer spaces and working for a just and sustainable world.

The District is committed to working towards reflecting the diversity of the District in the membership of Synod, all Circuit and District Leadership groups, and representatives to the Conference.

## New Places for New People

In addition to challenging and supporting Circuits to start new places for new people the District will continue to model the planting new churches, prioritising marginalised communities, which are accountable directly to the District. This will create an "incubation" space which will enable the growth and flourishing of new churches by providing:

- A flexible, supportive and enabling environment
- Coaching for pioneers when appropriate
- A forum for conversation and relationship with other new projects
- Governance
- Finance (DAF) on application
- A link to the connexional NPNP programme

### Objectives:

- To continue to establish new churches bringing the combined weekly attendance at the primary worship gathering to a total of 500 people. *(September 2026)*
- To participate in the Connexional God for All NPNP funding programme by discerning and supporting suitable projects. *(September 2021)*
- Working with circuits to participate in future tranches of God for All to establish NPNP across the District. *(September 2024)*
- To implement a sustainable, long term structure to hold and govern new congregations. *(September 2022)*

Lead officer: Mission Advisor

## Church Growth Support

The District will focus resources on supporting congregations, as identified in conversation with Circuits, which with the greatest potential for growth in both an online and offline context. A Church with potential for growth will meet the following criteria:

1. Indicates a clear desire for, and openness to, change
2. Can articulate a sense of identity and vision

3. Has capacity to start new work
4. Receives the support of the Circuit

This support will be in the form of:

- Leadership coaching
- Specialist input from District Staff, District Officers and Learning Network Staff – particularly around models of hybrid church
- Facilitation through the MAP process

The programme will prioritise:

- Locally owned, consistent worship
- Discipleship development through small groups
- Leadership civic and community engagement
- Development of lay leadership
- Lay testimony in worship
- Engagement in #TogetherInMission week
- A strong online presence

**Objectives:**

- Initial two church pilot project delivered and reviewed – *September 2023*
- First main cohort completed – *September 2024*

Lead Officer: Mission Advisor

## Circuit Strategic Planning

The District will support local Circuits to encourage the formation and implementation of Mission Action Plans in the light of the COVID pandemic.

- Emphasis on the District Priorities will be encouraged
- The process will be integrated with stationing
- A shift towards lay ministry (paid and voluntary), and diaconal ministry will be encouraged
- Continued emphasis on NPNP
- Accountability for the property strategy
- Encouraging online and hybrid (definition required in footnote) models of church

**Objectives:**

- Collation and sharing of Circuit Mission Action Plans. (*April 2021*)
- Annual reflection on progress and implementation of Circuit MAPs (*yearly*)
- Production of a set of tools and templates relating to local lay pastors (*September 2022*)

Lead Officers: Mission Advisor / In collaboration with the Learning Network

## Social Justice

Working with the Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury District to promote social justice across the West Midlands including through community engagement models such as community organising.

### Objectives:

- Establish three task groups (Eco, EDI, Community Engagement) to embed good practice across the Districts and to support, encourage and resource activists and practitioners. *(September 2021)*
- Delivery of regular events or engagement opportunities on a range of subjects related to the task groups. *(Reviewed yearly)*
- Completion of an audit of diversity across all levels of the leadership within the District and the identifying of more subtle dynamics of power. *(September 2022 then annually)*

Lead Officers: District Chair, District EDI Officer, Eco Co-Ordinator, Deputy Chair, Learning Network Aligned Officer

## Youth Engagement

The District continues to prioritise work with younger generations.

### Objectives:

- Reach a point of sustainability for regular District Youth Services *(January 2022)*
- To change structures and processes to enable full participation of youth people within the District *(September 2022)*
- Offer opportunities for young people to explore and develop their Christian discipleship *(September 2022)*

Lead Officer: Youth Engagement Coordinator

## Continuing District Work Beyond Congregations

The District will continue to support, review, develop, and grow projects that that promote the priorities of the District:

- Adavu, supporting survivors and seeking justice and transformation in relation to modern slavery
- Developing a Link with Kadoma District of the Methodist Church of Zimbabwe
- Chaplaincy support
- Birmingham International Student Homes (BISH)

# Appendix 1 – The Context

The Birmingham District is diverse in race and ethnicity, social and economic status, sexual orientation and gender identity, age and background, theological and political belief, called to explore and live the way of Jesus.

- 130 churches grouped in 10 circuits across Birmingham, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Herefordshire and Staffordshire, with congregations in rural, suburban, inner city, and city centre locations
- Committed to planting and nurturing Pioneer congregations (eg. Inclusive Gathering Birmingham and Jazz Community Church)
- Actively involved in work around social justice and transformation, for example, through district project, Adavu, which supports survivors and seeking justice and transformation in relation to modern slavery
- Linked with partners in worldwide Methodism especially with Kadoma District of the Methodist Church of Zimbabwe and Germany
- Responsible for the oversight of Birmingham International Student Homes (BISH)
- Home to the Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education
- Nurturing of World Church congregations / fellowships (Cameroonians, Zimbabwean and Chinese)
- Home to two Methodist primary schools
- Supportive of chaplaincies eg. NEC Group chaplaincy, hospital, health care and university chaplaincies
- Re-energising Districtwide youth ministry through Global Mission Fellow and new appointment
- Offering worship online during the Covid 19 Pandemic that has strengthened District identity
- Promoting a culture enabling individuals and congregations to have confidence to try evangelism
- Working to become an Eco District
- Supportive to individuals eg. conference reps or to circuit stewards through stationing
- Supportive of circuit mission planning
- Preparing to receive funding from the first tranche of the 'God for all' funding' with a particular focus on 'Church at the Margins' strand)

## Appendix 2 – Circuit Mission Action Plans

Circuits are at different points in the Mission Action Planning process. Some have final agreed plans which they are now working to implement, some have reached draft stage and others are just beginning the process. Attached are their plans, or reports of the process as of April 2021 in the following order:

- 5/1 Birmingham
- 5/4 Birmingham (Sutton Park)
- 5/6 Birmingham (West) and Oldbury
- 5/9 Tamworth and Lichfield
- 5/10 Coventry and Nuneaton
- 5/12 South Warwickshire
- 5/16 South Worcestershire
- 5/18 Bromsgrove and Redditch
- 5/21 Blackheath and Halesowen
- 5/24 Herefordshire (South and East)