

## District Policy Committee – report of the Connexional year 2022/2023

### General matters:

- The Connexional year 2022-23 was the first year of a new way of working for the District Policy Committee. With a reduced membership of 12, the DPC met six times on Zoom, aiming to be a more flexible body with time to address policy and strategic thinking and more time for prayer as well as dealing with normal business.
- The committee seeks to be collaborative across the district and welcomes suggestions for agenda items from anyone, which can be sent to the Chair or the Secretary. Dates for future meetings will be made available via the Synod pages of the District website.
- Membership for 2022/23 is shown below. Attendance for DPC meetings is always high, with very few apologies.

	Role	Name
1	District Chair	Mark Slaney
2	Secretary of Synod	Helen Jenkins
3	Secretary of DPC	Jill Baker
4	Methodist Council rep.	Joe Lambert
5	Property Secretary	Phil Haggis
6	District Treasurer	Peter Mills
7	Two reps. from Superintendents	Nick Baker
8		Imran Malik
9	Our Calling: Worship	Anne Baird/ Carol Reeves
10	Our Calling: Learning & Caring	Janet Bryer
11	Our Calling: Service	Bob Stoner
12	Our Calling: Evangelism	James Garnett

- Deacon Bob Stoner resigned from the membership at the end of the year. Rev. Hilda Warwick was appointed by synod to take the 'Service' seat on the committee from September 2023. Some consideration was given to membership of and length of service on the DPC which the committee agreed to review annually in January.
- The committee began by recalling the responsibilities of the DPC, as shown in SO 431. These include formulating and promoting policies which will advance the mission of the Church in the Circuits and Local Churches and in particular to supervise the use of resources.
- A conversation at the meeting in September 2021 highlighted many challenges for the Methodist Church in Scotland: Declining membership; finding office holders; stationing; management of the district saps energy for mission; challenge of resources (property, finance & human - how best to use); pastoral care across the board (noting that some folk are not able to be either 'onsite' or 'online' so our mission is broader); need for agility; finance; governance guidance with regard to small societies; communication, along with the many challenges of our current context, such as the cost of living; conflict.
- The committee also looked for vision and noted some very encouraging missional things happening and noted the need to capture and tell the stories.

### Ministry and stationing

Throughout the year the committee was aware that several major changes were anticipated in Scotland in the next few years with a number of superintendents retiring or moving on.

During the year the two stationing profiles from Forth Valley were matched, with Adam Stevenson (superintendent) and Natalie Clarke (deacon); Strathclyde Circuit's profile was matched with Brian Magadzire (presbyter).

### **District strategy and future direction**

Further consideration of the forthcoming changes noted above led to the decision in early February 2023 to hold a 'District Discernment Day' on 25<sup>th</sup> February at Stirling Methodist Church for the members of the DPC along with all superintendent ministers (or their representatives) to look at possible future district organisation. It was noted that the district needed to respond urgently to impending ministerial changes and the following timeline was drafted:

- Sept. 2025: major changes expected in personnel, especially superintendents.
- Sept. 2024: circuits need to go into stationing to prepare for the following year in a joined-up way.
- Sept. 2023 – we need to have made a decision about number of circuits and staffing needed.
- Jan – April 2023 is a critical period for having the conversations and making the decisions.

Following that meeting, Mark prepared papers on 'District discerning' which were further scrutinized and commented on by the DPC at the March meeting, prior to being sent to Synod members for discussion in April with the prayerful recommendation of the DPC & Superintendents to the Scotland Synod that we engage in a process that will move us towards a single shared circuit.

Results of circuit and congregational discussions were received by the DPC in the first meeting of the following Connexional year and the DPC has continued to oversee the unfolding process.

**Regular business:** the following areas are regularly discussed at DPC, but report separately to Synod.

- Finance
- Property: The DPC looked at the question of who the trustees of district property should be and recommended to Synod that the DPC itself should take that role. This was approved by Synod.
- Safeguarding
- Ecumenical matters

### **Reports from Methodist Council:**

Joe Lambert made regular reports to the DPC from Methodist Council. The [Methodist Council webpages](#) give full details of their agendas, reports and minutes. Joe brought to our attention that 2032 will be the centenary of Methodist Union, the Council had discussed possible ways to mark this anniversary.

In March Joe reported that the membership of the Methodist Conference is to be reduced by 30% (306 to 225) in 2024. All districts were reminded of EDI requirements when selecting attendees.

### **God for All in the district:**

The implementation of the Connexional God for all strategy was a major item of business throughout the year, discerning which pieces of work across the circuits might encapsulate the aims of reaching beyond current congregations and establishing 'New Places for New People'. During the year the DPC heard about, encouraged and scrutinised various pieces of work:

- Strathclyde – working with a number of partners in Recovery from addiction
- Dundee – commissioning research and initial work amongst sex workers
- Aberdeen – Open House and Open Table work in the community. (Due to the costs required by this work being primarily for building work it cannot be considered for the NPNP funding, but remains a piece of outreach work which has the support of the district).

- Girvan – initial plans to rent a shop, later revised to renovating the current building for a new church Community, ‘Wave’.

The committee appointed a small group representing all these projects to meet with representatives from the Connexional Evangelism and Growth team and discern the way forward.

In May 2023 the full DPC met with members of the Connexional Evangelism and Growth team to hear presentations from Strathclyde, Dundee and Girvan. The meeting discerned that the Recovery work being developed in Strathclyde would become the district NPNP project. A later presentation to the Connexional Mission Committee was well received and the NPNP funding for this work is now in place.

**The Scottish Methodist Gathering** The year began with the first Scottish Methodist Gathering in Perth. The planning group had reported regularly to the DPC, who agreed that the event had worked well, endorsed proposals for a similar event to be held in September 2024 in Stirling and approved the formation of an expanded planning group for the event. A draft budget of £15,000 was later brought to the DPC by the planning group and this was approved.

The committee also endorsed plans for the Gathering in 2026 to be held in Dundee, with more of an arts festival ethos.

**Edinburgh Festival involvement:** The DPC received and scrutinized a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the partnership project: Methodist missional engagement during Edinburgh Festivals. This is an agreement between the City of Edinburgh Methodist Church (CEMC), the Forth Valley Circuit, The Scotland District of the Methodist Church and the Methodist Church in Britain (Connexional Team). The meeting noted and affirmed this partnership, expressing its enthusiasm for this piece of work.

**Appointments:** During the year the Committee reviewed appointments needed across the district and made various recommendations to Synod, detailed in the Directory list of officers. Where necessary, the DPC appointed small sub-groups to focus on job descriptions, safer recruitment and compliance with employment legislation. Janet took on some work thinking about how best to recruit for both paid and volunteer roles, bearing in mind the requirements of Safer Recruiting and EDI. This will inform process going forward.

Jill Baker  
DPC secretary  
Spring 2024