



ANNUAL REPORTS

2020-2021

We will be a District where Circuits, Local Churches and individuals of all ages are accompanied and encouraged to respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ and participate in God's mission in the power of the Holy Spirit.

DISTRICT CHAIR: THE REVD ANDREW DE VILLE

CONTENTS

District Policy Committee	p2
Evangelism Enablers	p2-3
Finance	p3
Group for Learning And Discipleship (GLAD)	p4
Intergenerational Mission Enabler	p4-6
Lay Employment	p7
Learning Network	p7-9
Local Preachers	p10-11
Methodist Homes	p11-13
Methodist Women in Britain	p13-14
Property: General	p14-16
Manse	p17
Safeguarding	p17-19
World Church	p19

SOUTHAMPTON METHODIST DISTRICT VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

DISTRICT VISION

We will be a District where Circuits, Local Churches and individuals of all ages are accompanied and encouraged to respond to the gospel of Jesus Christ and participate in God's mission in the power of the Holy Spirit.

DISTRICT PRIORITIES

1. to give priority in using our finite resources to support Circuits that are engaging positively in the reshaping for mission process;
2. to support Local Churches and Circuits in providing a safe professional and legal environment;
3. to encourage Local Churches to explore and trial new ways of being 'church';
4. to encourage and resource Christian learning and discipleship across the District;
5. to develop partnerships within the District and the wider global and ecumenical context focused on mission, and to engage with the inter-faith landscape.

DISTRICT POLICY COMMITTEE

Mr Paul Yarrien

The District Policy Committee (DPC) has met twice since the last meeting of Synod and on both occasions via Zoom. To ensure business is completed in a timely fashion some decisions have been actioned via email consultations.

DPC have been able to continue with the full range of business. We have received updates on the following areas:

- Methodist Council
- Finance
- Stationing 2021 and a look forward to 2022
- Property
- Grants
- Ecumenical
- Relations with other Districts including the Connexional directed Regional Conversations
- Synod plans
- District Enabling Team

DPC have overseen the work of several District Officers, either through written reports or verbal presentations. In addition, the Learning Network also provided a verbal presentation outlining the extensive training opportunities that have been available during lockdown through online learning.

DPC received a Reasoned Statement from the Chair's Nomination Committee recommending that Revd Andrew de Ville be extended in his appointment as Chair of District to 2024. A recommendation will be brought to Synod by the Synod Secretary.

EVANGELISM ENCOURAGERS

Mr Mark Tizzard

In the past year, like so many parts of the church we have had to do things differently. Our normal practice has been to meet a few times a year, where we share what things we have seen going on in the churches and circuits, and we talk about what sort of things church and circuits are trying to do. We share concerns and seek to learn from each other. However, this year we have used email, social media and the District Website to share ideas.

<https://www.sdmc.org.uk/ime/evangelism/>

Our hope is that as we move into something like a new normal, we might be able to develop a new pattern of working. In the past we have met as two groups of Evangelism Encouragers - based in the West and the East of the District; this might continue, but we have all learnt that products like Zoom can also be used. As we move forward, we will seek to create a place where we can have conversation, share ideas and perhaps have something to eat and drink. We are a group of people who are interested in the idea of how we do evangelism in the Southampton Methodist District. We are not experts, or the only people who can do evangelism. We would welcome more people to join us!

We do recommend the amazing number of webinars that the Evangelism and Growth team have put together over the last year:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/evangelism-and-growth-webinars/>.

We would also recommend the mission planning toolkit:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/leading-churches-into-growth/write-a-great-mission-plan/mission-planning-toolkit/>.

If you want to find out more about these groups or for help with the Mission Planning Toolkit, then please do get in touch

Mark_tizzard@aim.com 07391017548

FINANCE

Mrs Christine Holland

Lockdowns and social distancing restrictions since March 2020 have had a significant impact on church and circuit finances. The reserves held by many churches and circuits in the District reduced in the year to 31 August 2020 and will reduce further in the 2020-21 financial year.

During the year to 31 August 2020 the District received total income of £365,450 (2019: £374,359) and spent £375,508 (2019: £326,777.) At 31 August 2020 the District held funds totalling £1,054,247 (2019: £897,581). The District's funds increased during the year due to the revaluation of the District manse and lower than budgeted expenditure primarily on travel, training and conferences and manse repairs and maintenance.

At 31 August 2020 the District held the following funds:

- General funds £101,894 (£94,847 at 31 August 2019)
- District Development Fund £63,416 (£61,867 at 31 August 2019)
- District Advance Fund £55,260 (£60,815 at 31 August 2019)
- Portsmouth Chaplaincy £720 (£265 overdrawn at 31 August 2019)
- Property Reserve (District Manse) £700,000 (£530,000 at 31 August 2019)
- Benevolent Fund £2,631 (£2,631 at 31 August 2019)
- MIH Fund £129,369 (£146,554 at 31 August 2019)
- £957 on behalf of Churches Together in Hampshire and the Islands (£1,132 at 31 August 2019).

In 2019-20 the District paid grants from the District Advance Fund that totalled £154,461 to churches, circuits, university chaplaincies and ecumenical groups. At 31 August 2020 grants totalling £321,150 had been awarded from the District Advance Fund that are payable in future years.

GROUP FOR LEARNING AND DISCIPLESHIP (GLAD)

Mrs Fran Jenkins

The group continues to work in accordance with our Mission Statement

“To have a strategic overview for learning opportunities in the District and to engender, ecumenically, a culture of learning and spiritual development”.

This we do as we hear reports from the various sections of the District about their initiatives and activities, and discuss ways to encourage discipleship development.

As well as considering Sabbatical Prospectuses and Applications for grants, we welcome and value feedback of Sabbatical experiences, training courses and events from those ordained and lay people who have taken them.

Our May meeting in 2020 being cancelled, we shared information and updates from our respective District aspects via email. Our October and February 2021 meetings were effectively held via Zoom, which will continue for at least some in the future, as (as so many others found) it was beneficial not having to travel.

Grant application forms are available from District website or from myself:

fran.jenkins@btinternet.com

Hopefully there will be more coming in as Covid restrictions are eased.



Mr Mark Tizzard

During this year I have continued to work with my management group and identify new ways of working during this pandemic. I have sought to continue to follow the 4-pronged approach to the work. These being:

- Being a visible presence in the District.
- Developing the Eastern and Western Evangelism Encourager Groups to be more constructive and visible.
- Building up an online/social media presence.
- Developing training.

Being a visible presence in the District.

It goes without saying that travelling around the District has been severely limited during the pandemic. However, like so many, I have learnt and developed a pattern of work which heavily relies on Zoom, email, and Social Media. I have regularly emailed Superintendents, Presbyters and Deacons offering encouragement, prayer and any assistance I can.

I have worked with the Learning Network, and have co-resourced a space for lay-workers to come and chat. Initially I ran an afternoon drop-in for children's, families and youth-workers, as we all sought to rethink what ministry might look like, and I have found these conversations to be extremely useful and creative.

I have also been able to “join in worship” from across the District and have been greatly encouraged by the way so many circuit churches have pivoted from onsite worship to many forms of dispersed worship and many have grappled with the new “on-line” church model. Meanwhile, they have offered written services, phone-in prayer opportunities and on-going pastoral care.

I’m conscious that for many of our pastoral visitors this has been a particularly challenging year. Many have lost contact with those they visit because care homes have been closed, the lockdown has placed very real limitations on home visits and sadly a number of folks have died during this year.

Developing the Eastern and Western Evangelism Encourager Groups to be more constructive and visible.

I have been keeping in contact with these groups by using email, phone and the Website.

At last year’s Methodist Conference, the God for All report was welcomed. For more information visit:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/our-work-in-britain/evangelism-growth/>.

One of the report’s strategies is the exciting New Places for New People initiative. The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth¹ includes a focus on New Places for New People (NPNP) and Church at the Margins (CAM). In both of these areas, partnerships with districts are key to the work. The vision for this work is that in the next three years, every district will launch at least one significant, sustainable, and replicating NPNP and/or CAM project that will inspire, influence, and shape future projects across the circuits of the district.

¹ <https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/19181/conf-2020-4-evangelism-and-growth.pdf>

The Southampton District has been chosen to be one of the pilot projects for this. We are exploring the possibilities of starting a NPNP in the city of Portsmouth.

Revd Andrew de Ville has asked me to head up the District team, and alongside Revd David Muskett, Revd John Mills and 2 lay people from the Portsmouth Methodist Church, we have been praying, seeking and discerning what God might be calling into being. We have also sought support from the District Team, in particular Jane Fisher and Penny Thatcher, and some members of DPC and the DET team. We feel that God is calling us to create a NPNP focusing on Families with Children. We have had a grant from the connexional team of £10,000 to help continue to explore this, and we are hopeful that something new and exciting will emerge later in 2021.

Currently, we are advertising for a Mission Project Development Worker (part-time) to help us listen to what the local community needs and what we feel we can do to meet that need, as well as becoming a worshipping Methodist community.

<https://www.sdmc.org.uk/news/job-vacancy-2/>

The hope then is that the things we have learnt together, especially by the wider District team, will be shared and used to help other circuits and churches explore what God might be calling them to do in the months and years ahead. I think there is a hopeful expectation that each circuit might in some shape or form create a NPNP.

Building up an online/social media presence

More than ever before we have all had to learn and grapple with being “on-line”. Consequently, I continue to be grateful to Jason Elkin for the work he has done to create and maintain the District website. I try to post on this at least once a week with news items, links to resources, and articles to think about.

<https://www.sdmc.org.uk/ime/intergenerational-mission-enabler-news/>

I have been using social media to create online communities. You can find out more at

<https://twitter.com/IntergenMission>.

<https://www.facebook.com/marktizzardime/>

<https://www.instagram.com/intergenmissionenabler/>.

I have also helped some churches and circuits build up YouTube channels and Facebook groups.

Developing training

This year has also changed the way I have been able to deliver training. I have been able to meet via Zoom with individual ministers and churches to help them think through Intergenerational Mission and have been able to follow up on previous onsite vision days with discussions about what now, or next. Obviously the impact, time and uncertainty that the pandemic and lockdowns have brought have meant we have had to reassess what is possible, and what might emerge as a new normal.

I have been able to run 6 webinars with the Southern and Islands Learning Network during this year focussing on Intergenerational Mission. We have had a good number of folk from the District join us in these as well as others from the region and beyond. We have been able to have some great input from members of the connexional team, and authors such as Andrew Root (speaking about faith formation in a secular age) and Rachel Turner (sharing about faith formation in the family). I have also been asked to speak on a couple of connexional webinars around the themes of Intergenerational Mission, Evangelism and Mission Planning.

In conclusion I would like to say thank you to the District Synod, DPC and my management team for the support you have shown me, and all those people called Methodists, during this most extra-ordinary of years.

Blessings, Tizz.

LAY EMPLOYMENT

Mrs Penny Thatcher

This past year has definitely been a challenging time for lay employment in churches and circuits. The coronavirus pandemic has seen the temporary closure of churches and the corresponding drop in income, impacting upon budgets and casting uncertainty on the future of a number of lay posts. Much of my time has been spent wading through the relevant government guidance, helping churches and circuits to understand and apply it to their situations and to navigate a way forward.

That said, I've also been able to provide some online training events with the support of the Learning Network, as well as to attend a number of external online seminars in order to keep up to date with information and guidance in the employment world.

I continue to maintain good and effective working relationships with my fellow District Officers, Superintendents, Circuit Stewards and all those with responsibility for employment in the circuit and church teams.

As ever, I am available by phone or e-mail for advice and guidance on employment issues, and happy to attend meetings where appropriate. Please do not hesitate to contact me, however small or mundane your query may seem!

LEARNING NETWORK

Revd Adrian Roux

We started last year with an almost full team hoping that this would remain the pattern for the foreseeable future. Almost immediately we learned that 'foreseeable future' was a just about meaningless concept with the arrival of the pandemic, the cycle of lockdowns, and all the changes which have come with that. If that wasn't enough change for the team Katie went on maternity leave in November.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed almost everything about how we work. However the team have done a brilliant job of transitioning to a new way of working and adapting to new technology and increased digital working. With some courses the change has been a pedagogical challenge but overall it has had massive benefits in terms of accessibility; it has opened up the possibilities of doing shorter trainings more often (freeing up Saturdays); and we are getting more people taking advantage of what is on offer.

During 2020-2021 we have managed to deliver on our Connexionally- and District-mandated priorities whilst:

- Switching format for events from almost 100% in the room and face-to-face to 100% on Zoom and online
- Reducing our budget by around 48%
- Lowering our carbon footprint significantly by eliminating almost all travel
- Starting a daily check-in for ministers, employed workers and key volunteers in the midst of the pandemic
- Growing the content on our YouTube channel so people can find the highlights of our events at any time (learningnetsi.org.uk/youtube)
- Increasing our blog's audience to 600 visits a month
- Refreshing our resources section (learningnetsi.org.uk/resources) to make it searchable and more easily updatable

The changes have meant greater collaboration within the Learning Network and Connexional Team, and this is a tendency that will only increase and gather momentum. It may be a big fillip to the training in the region. Perhaps this might mean we have more scope to do bespoke work. We are here for you, and with fair notice there is a lot that we can do – more than you might expect.

However it has also brought additional challenges. Traditionally our work has come from the forum, the conference and direct requests from circuits and ministers. Now that we are working more closely with E&G, children, Youth and Families, Mission and Ministries there is another demand on our time and resources.

What We've Delivered in the Last Year

In addition to offering ad hoc support and facilitation across the region and supporting colleagues in the Connexional Team, this year we delivered over 75 events covering the following topics:

- Theological and Biblical literacy on both Ruth and Mark's Gospel
- Supporting pioneer ministers (both lay and ordained), with:
 - Coaching training in partnership with the Evangelism & Growth Team
 - Gatherings for with a rural, new housing or chaplaincy focus
- Volunteering
- Children's, youth and families ministry, including:
 - Detached Youth Work
 - Making CYF ministry more sustainable
 - Managing emotions and dealing with loss
 - A week of training for employed workers and key volunteers
- Intergenerational Ministry in partnership with the Southampton District's Intergenerational Mission Enabler, Mark Tizzard
- Safeguarding in partnership with District Safeguarding Gurus Jane Fisher and Philippa Read
- Connexionally mandated training on:
 - Basic training for transforming conflict
 - Unconscious Bias for Circuit Invitation Committees and more widely
 - Racial Justice as part of the Inclusive Church agenda
- A Q&A for Line Managers of Lay Employees
- Support for Local Preachers and Worship Leaders and their Tutors
- Wellbeing for ministers, focusing specifically on mental health
- Mission Action Planning
- Supporting small group leaders and co-ordinators
- Leadership Development exploring developing teams and overcoming recurring challenges

- Digital and Social Media support, including:
 - Best practice and inspiration for Online Worship
 - Foundation and advanced level social media training
- Support and training for new Ministers (Under 7s)
- Action Learning Workshops (a pilot with superintendent ministers in the South East District)

What's coming up?

There are over 25 more events coming up from us and across the Connexional Team between now and July. Book tickets and find details on **our blog** - learningnetsi.org.uk/events.

Priorities for 2021-2022

Our priority will continue to be to help churches and circuits across the Southern & Islands to live out the Methodist Church's call to respond to the Gospel of Jesus through Worship, Learning and Caring, Service, and Evangelism. Specific priorities are set in negotiation with the regional forum. Nevertheless we would expect it to include:

- **Offering a wide variety of learning and development events** for the region, balancing online and face-to-face delivery as circumstances and need requires
- **Working more directly with churches and circuits** on a bespoke basis: after a year of delivering events aimed at the widest possible audience online, we're keen to support churches with more bespoke work. If there's training you need that isn't on offer, yet, or a conversation in your circuit you need outside facilitators to lead, get in touch on Insandi@methodistchurch.org.uk – we'd love to work with you!
- **Delivering on Connexionally-mandated priorities**, including: Unconscious Bias training, understanding conflict, and anti-bullying and harassment training, support for supervision, safeguarding, candidates and 'Worship: Leading and Preaching'.

Get in Touch

You can connect with us in a variety of ways:

- **Sign up to our newsletter, 'The SiGN'** at learningnetsi.org.uk/subscribe to find out what we're doing and how you can get involved
- **Email us** at Insandi@methodistchurch.org.uk to ask us to come and work directly with you
- **Visit our blog** at www.learningnetsi.org.uk to find new resources, read news from across the region and find our latest events

Adrian Roux (Regional Coordinator)
Jon White (Learning and Development Officer)
James Devenish (Learning and Development Officer)
and (back in September), Katie Deadman-Vernall (Learning and Development Officer)

Local Preachers & Worship Leaders Report

The work of our Local Preachers and Worship Leaders has been greatly affected by the pandemic. With churches closed since March we have been reliant upon the internet to link people to worship, at Circuit level, and using YouTube. The BBC has also produced worship series for LENT and ADVENT which has been appreciated. Thanks to those Presbyters, Deacons, Local Preachers and Worship Leaders who have provided services and these have been much appreciated.

Thank you also for the Annual Returns and Reports to the District from LP/WL meetings. It is clear that the training of LP's & WL's has continued across the District throughout the pandemic mostly via Zoom on the internet. Thank you to Tutors and Mentors for allowing this to happen. An updated version of Worship: Leading & Preaching is now being used by students, known as WLP3. Faith & Worship, the course used prior to WLP, has now finished. Training to use WLP is available through the Connexion and anyone registering for the course will be invited to attend Zoom sessions run by Bob Bartindale.

Local Preachers who have died (18 recorded in the Book of Remembrance at Church House):

Basingstoke & Reading: David Beek (Acc. 1970).

Christchurch & Wimborne: Grahame Downes (Acc. 1969), Colin Stewart-Brown (Acc. 1960), Betty Wise (Acc. 2001).

Dorset South and West: Janet Pulley (Acc. 1966).

East Solent & Downs: John Dowdell (Acc. 2002), Margaret Mason (Acc. 1998).

Isle of Wight: Howard Burford (Acc. 1956), Jeff Ryall (Acc. 1987).

Poole Bay: Stanley Avis (Acc. 1956), Ron Sparling (Acc. 1958).

Southampton: Margaret Jackman (Acc. 1991).

Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey: Valerie Wright (Acc. 1994), Alan Shepherd (Acc. 1960).

Yeovil & Blackmore Vale: Maurice Buckland (Acc. 1954), Joyce Culver (Acc. 1991), John Green (Acc. 1966), Linda Miller (Acc. 1970).

Worship: Leading & Preaching - 'WLP in a year' which was started in 2020 proved to be a success and is continuing this year. This is intended to be a "fast track" approach that can be completed in a year. It will demand a high level of commitment from students and local tutors, but it is designed to meet a real need, especially for those who sense a call into full-time Christian service. Refer on-line to info@cliffcollege.ac.uk. Cliff College are once again holding their Spring & Summer Schools to help student local preachers and worship Leaders with the EXPLORE meetings for WLP. Grants are available from the District GLAD Committee if you feel you need to apply for one of these courses.

Bible month was planned for last year (Ruth), included training sessions, but due to the pandemic was disrupted and other ways had to be found to use the material. This year it is hoped the Gospel of Mark can be used by churches as normal.

Peer Review is being tackled by Circuits. Guidance Notes are available on the Methodist website in the Local Preachers' Secretaries' section.

The Connexional District Officers' Meeting was held in September 2021 on Zoom with an excellent attendance by Districts. There was a lot of discussion about the LP & WL Training Course, and the ways worship might re-emerge after the pandemic. The Connexion is monitoring what costs might be needed if expensive resources are needed to broadcast services to those who have linked up with live worship during the closure of churches. Another meeting is planned for May 2021 on Zoom and this will probably be the way future meetings are held.

Finally, my thanks to Circuit LP/WL Secretaries for all their hard work, with much of their work going on behind the scenes. The work of God in our District has been maintained because of their dedication.



MHA – Our Journey

Our pandemic journey – adapting during crisis

Firstly thank you for all the wonderful support from our friends within the Methodist Church, your tremendous dedication to MHA (Methodist Homes) during these unsettling times, and your overwhelming support of our mission, vision and values has helped our vital work helping those in later life live well.

Over the last year our care homes, retirement living schemes and communities have faced immense challenge. We have had to adapt and in doing so we found new ways to connect and support even more people in later life. Our Communities scheme, formerly Live at Home, has expanded its befriending service through Digital Communities.

We are incredibly proud of our volunteers and staff including our music therapists and chaplains who have gone above and beyond to find innovative and creative ways to meet the needs of residents, their families, staff and members.

MHA has been working hard to administer vaccines to residents, members and colleagues and are enjoying allowing visitors back into our homes. When not in an outbreak situation or under local restrictions, many of our care homes have been able to continue visits by relatives and friends as long as they are carried out in one of our specially-designed visiting pods or booths. These visits will continue as non-contact meetings without the need for visitors to have a LFD test, providing an additional alternative if homes are unable to facilitate the weekly contact visits due to capacity.

We have had one of the highest uptakes amongst care providers in a vaccination program to date*, with almost all residents and colleagues in our care homes, retirement living and communities having had their first dose of the Covid vaccine.

Figures for first vaccine:

94% of care residents

77% of retirement living residents

87% of colleagues in care homes

74% of colleagues in retirement living

90% of colleagues in MHA Communities

These figures give us tremendous hope for the future and we look forward to returning to a safe and positive normality.

MHA Memorial Day

On Friday 4 September MHA held a Memorial Day to remember and pray for everyone who has passed away or struggled during the pandemic.

This beautiful and deeply moving service was attended virtually by residents and colleagues, all MHA sites received a candle and DVD of the service and held a two minute silence to honour those we had lost. You can still view this service on YouTube.

www.mha.org.uk/memorialday

Leave a Tribute - Memory Meadow

To celebrate the lives of those we have lost MHA launched Memory Meadow, a safe space for friends and family to celebrate loved ones in a peaceful and joyful way.

It's easy and free to partake. Whether sharing stories, adding photos and videos or lighting candles in remembrance, our tribute pages are a dedicated and loving place to bring comfort to those grieving and celebrate a life well lived.

www.mha.org.uk/tribute

Launch of MHA communities

MHA's community-based service for older people had a revamp in 2020 changing its name from MHA Live at Home to MHA Communities. Still providing the excellent service MHA is proud of the change encompassed how the scheme works across the communities it serves. Meaning that wherever you are you can be part of the MHA family downloading content for your wellbeing: mentally, physically and spiritually.

During the pandemic MHA Communities has been tackling loneliness and isolation by adapting the way it supports its members. Over the past few months, schemes have welcomed more than 550 new members, delivered at least 38,000 food parcels and deliveries to people shielding and made over 48,000 befriending and wellbeing calls along with many other services and fun activities. Due to the dedication of our staff and volunteers our befriending service has been a great success and will now be a permanent national provision mha.org.uk/communities.

MHA Sunday 13 June 2021

MHA Sunday 2021, our annual event, is an opportunity to come together and give thanks for the wonderful work that takes place and to remember and pray for all those in later life. The theme for MHA Sunday 2021 is reducing loneliness and bringing hope, with a focus on community and supporting each other, inspired by the book of Mark 5:1-20, which is also the theme of Bible Month. Our service picks up the theme of loneliness and isolation, something that so many in our communities are still experiencing, we look at Jesus example in Mark's gospel and how we at MHA can continue to help reduce isolation and bring hope to all those in later life.

MHA Sunday will be held on 13 June 2021 however churches can hold a service whenever it fits with their calendar of activities. You can also join our online service broadcast on YouTube, 4pm on Sunday 13 June, featuring hymns, prayers and readings from our MHA family and special guest speakers.

To order Gift Aid envelopes and download additional free resources including children and youth resources, a video to show in your service, and an Order of Service go to mha.org.uk/Sunday

A BIG thank-you to YOU!

Thank you for your support and for your continued prayers for MHA.
May God bless us as we continue together to enable those in later life to live well.
With kindness and faith we are stronger together.
With every blessing

**figures w/c 01/03/21*

METHODIST WOMEN in BRITAIN (MWiB)

Mrs Chris Stuckey

In September 2019 we embarked on a District Partnership supporting two villages in Fiji, namely Nabuna and Vanuakula. Our aim was to raise £10,000 in a year to enable the local people to buy two boats which could be used to evacuate villagers to higher ground when floods become a reality. The situation there is worsening due to the effect of climate change. The boats would be used for fishing when the floods subside, enabling the villagers to have food and an income from selling excess fish. The effect of Covid-19, subsequent lockdowns and closed churches, have meant our usual platforms for raising money have not been available. We extended the Partnership for a further year to September 2021 and to date we have raised over half the money. We could see no possibility of raising the full amount this year but the District Policy Committee, on hearing of our dilemma, very generously suggested the district should make up the shortfall. This is wonderful news and we are very thankful to Andrew and the DPC that we can fulfil our promise very soon and send the money to Fiji.

Our annual residential weekend at Swanwick was cancelled. This April (17-18) there will be an online Conference when Sr. Imelda Poole from Albania will be our keynote speaker. We shall also be celebrating our 10th Anniversary as MWiB.

Our District Committee produced a YouTube presentation which went live in November. It was well publicised throughout the district and we had over 400 hits. We are planning another YouTube event to go online sometime in May. We are hoping to meet physically for our next Celebration Day on September 25th at St. James Road Methodist Church in Southampton.

We are also hoping to resume leading Sunday worship services in some of our circuits in the Autumn/Winter period.

The Easter Offering Service for 2020, which is produced by members of the MWiB National Executive Committee, was cancelled. This year there is an Easter Offering Service available on YouTube. There is a link which will take you to the service on the MWiB website as well as information about donations for the World Mission Fund. (Please ensure you reference that the money is for Easter Offering 2021).

Connexional website: www.mwib.org.uk

PROPERTY - GENERAL

Mr Mark Bell

As District Property Secretary it is a privilege to work with faithful, dedicated and hardworking people in circuits and churches across our District. During the past year, many have experienced major challenges because of the pandemic and have sought diligently both to ensure premises are safe and secure and to carry out essential maintenance so that buildings can continue to be important resources for mission.

I wish also to place on record the outstanding contribution of colleagues on the District Consents Panel, who offer wisdom and advice as well as exercise careful assessment of schemes submitted.

Property Returns

Thank you to those who have completed their returns for this year, the period ending August 2020. Completions as at time of writing – 79.2% of churches and 5 circuits. May I please continue to urge colleagues in circuits and churches to seek to complete any which are outstanding?

I am aware however, that in some circuits there is a continuing problem where it is not possible for the records to be fully “signed off”, owing to the presence of “ghost properties” – ie those sold in the past, or those which have never existed as Methodist Model Trust Property. Where such issues exist, please contact TMCP or send me details, so that, once again, I can take up the matter with TMCP and Property Support. If a record of sale or disposal can be found in “old” circuit meeting minutes, please include this information in the details you provide, as this will speed up any investigation of TMCP records.

Quinquennial Inspections

Connexional Guidance for quinquennial inspections is now on the website on the Maintenance page under

‘Quinquennial Report’ and ‘Quinquennial – How to Appoint an Inspector.’

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/maintenance/>

May I remind everyone of the need to ensure that these inspections are renewed every 5 years. To date, in all circuits, there are omissions, although some inspections have been delayed owing to the pandemic. I do recognise, that some of those identified as “not done” relate to “ghost properties”, as referred to in the previous paragraph. Again, if difficulties exist, please let me know.

Connexional Property Strategy 2018 – 2020

Over the past couple of years, the strategy has become more embedded in the life of the church. A copy can be found in the property resources area of the Methodist website:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/property-strategy/>

It is a helpful tool in its aims to assist Managing Trustees in developing Mission Plans and considering ways in which Property serves as a resource.

One area of increasing concern (exacerbated by the events of the past year) relates to the burdens placed on congregations by buildings which are too large or require major resources to enable general upkeep or repairs. As, in many churches, numbers are falling and the age-profile is rising, these demands are becoming impossible to manage. Often societies will close and the buildings sold.

The Strategy presents a challenge to us all to discern how best to use the resources we have across churches, circuits, districts (and connexionally for that matter).

Property Projects and Consents

Around the District there are some exciting schemes being considered, which seek to develop church premises as effective resource bases for mission in their communities. Other projects have, of necessity, had to focus on major repairs to buildings, many of which are either “Listed” or in major conservation areas.

Rather than quoting a lot of statistics about Property Schemes in the District, I refer you to the list of Consents given in the papers of every Synod which show the extent and diversity of work done on Church premises and manses. Every Scheme given consent is shown to be necessary and relevant to God’s mission in that place.

I should like to take the opportunity to restate for the benefit of all, and especially those new to the District or starting out, the guidelines on Methodist property and resourcing mission matters:

*The on-line Property Schemes Consent process began operating on 1 January 2010. Synod has delegated to the **District Consents Panel** the responsibility for considering and giving Consent to approved Property Schemes posted to the Methodist Church Consents Website by Churches and Circuits. The DPS manages the process on behalf of the Panel.*

Synod requires all Schemes costing above £25,000 to be given consent by all available Panel members. For Schemes costing below £25,000, Synod has given the DPS delegated authority to give consent and to report such consents to the entire panel. At each meeting Synod receives and is asked to note a report of recent Schemes.

Where premises require structural repairs, or are to be sold or leased, the Property Consents Process also applies.

Trustees are strongly recommended to contact the Connexional Conservation Officer, at an early stage, for advice when maintenance work is required on listed buildings or those in conservation areas.

Members of the District Consents Panel continue to be confident that, in the main, the Process is working effectively. However, as I have said in previous reports, there appears to be some misunderstanding about the reasons why it is important to set up a Project on the Consents Website and for the Consents Process to be followed. I believe, therefore, that it is worth repeating this advice:

Apart from situations as set out on the Property Consents Flowchart (found on the Consents Guidance pages or Property Support pages of the Methodist website), including where circuit, district or connexional grant funding is being sought, the system is useful as a property record for each set of premises. More importantly, by providing checks and balances, it serves to protect Managing Trustees in the event of something “going wrong”.

Managing Trustees are merely custodians of Model Trust property, not the legal owners. Legal ownership rests with the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP).

A range of resources is available to help Managing Trustees on Property Matters:

- The Consents Process online continues to be regularly updated and includes helpful guidance notes.*
- “Property Matters” which replaces the old “Property Points” provides useful information updates for Churches and Circuits.*
- TMCP legal and conservation officers are available to offer specific advice by email or telephone. Details on Methodist Church website: www.methodist.org.uk or dedicated TMCP website: www.tmcp.org.uk*
- In appropriate cases Panel Members are happy to arrange visits to Churches and Circuits to enable informed guidance to be given and to offer “first line support” over the ‘phone and by email.*
- I am also willing to set up training workshops for circuits or groups of circuits, or attend circuit meetings.*

Finally, I repeat sincere thanks to all District and Circuit colleagues who have shared with me in these responsibilities during the past year.

PROPERTY - MANSES

Mr Henry Stroud

The small team of visitors aims to visit each of the fifty or so manses occupied by ministers (there are another thirty or so properties let while not needed for ministers) every five years. Visits are normally planned in the year after the quinquennial, but this depends on stationing and personal factors.

Arrangements were made to visit 12 manses in 2020 but during the pandemic arranging visits has been difficult owing to the lockdowns and the proper reluctance of both visitors and ministers. However, we were pleased to learn that 6 visits had been completed and we hope to carry out the remainder as soon as possible this year. In addition, we have a list of twelve manses that could be due for a visit in 2021 and we are currently working out a priority order based on ministerial needs and the availability of quinquennial reports as these inspections have also been delayed in some cases.

A meeting of the committee by Zoom considered the reports of the six visits and concluded that, to the credit of the various circuits and the occupants, the properties were all well maintained. Common issues are the absence of gas and electrical inspection certificates and simple, but important, items like the need to replace batteries in smoke alarms. The emerging need to consider insulation and other environmental improvements to meet the church's environmental ambitions may become a consideration in the future.

As last year I am pleased to acknowledge the diligent work done by the current small group of visitors. CPD states that *"The district manses committee shall appoint a panel of visitors (at least half of whom shall be women) sufficient in number to ensure that every manse... in the District, is visited by two members of the panel...every five years."* We must recruit new visitors (especially women!) if we are to accomplish this. We have recently tried a more targeted approach to identify new visitors and I am pleased to say this has yielded an encouraging response.

It is worth reminding circuit stewards and others that there is a wealth of information on the Methodist website to help in the purchase and maintenance of our manses. Please contact me if you cannot find what you want.

SAFEGUARDING

Ms Jane Fisher

Lockdown has presented us with both challenges and opportunities. The challenges are around trying to manage some of the difficult situations on line. We have discovered how much we miss by not really being able to watch body language / make eye contact, particularly in sensitive situations.

Challenges

There has been an increase in the number of calls seeking advice. We are trying to plan ahead for how we can support people after lockdown.

Those who do not use IT are not able to engage in a number of the opportunities available. This increase in isolation increases vulnerability for a number of people.

DBS

There was a push by Connexion to get up to speed with DBSs for ministers. A new process for Minister DBS came in at the start of March – essentially Districts nominate a person to initiate the process – which is me in this District! By starting the process earlier, renewals should be completed before a DBS expires.

Opportunities for Training

Given the restrictions on face-to-face training during the past year, extensions have been granted by Connexion but we are increasingly falling behind with meeting training requirements (along with everyone else!)

The Foundation Module is now available on line. We hope to be able to run a number of on line sessions to start the catch up. I have done four sessions – the feedback was positive in terms of both content and being able to do the training on line. The Advanced Module is due to be available on line in Spring.

We will continue with both on line and face-to-face options when we can meet again.

Circuit Safeguarding Officers Meeting

We are looking for ways to develop the Circuit Safeguarding Officer network.

We have a great group of people who do a wonderful job – especially in this past difficult year. We held a meeting with Circuit Safeguarding Officers where we considered ways to support and encourage engagement of church safeguarding officers. A summary of the offerings has been circulated to all Circuit Safeguarding Officers.

In developing the culture of safeguarding we need to make these roles more proactive rather than just reactive.

Webinars

Working with the South East Region (South East District, Southampton District and LN) on a programme of Webinars and Workshops this year. Zoom is proving a very positive way to do this – we aren't limited by numbers, travel distances, etc. It makes no difference whether people are in Jersey / Southampton / Kent / Malta / Isle of Wight! It is our intention to continue with webinars after lockdown ends. Internet Safety ran in February. We had over 250 people across 2 sessions.

In March we ran a session on DBS with DDC – our DBS provider.

In April there will be a mental health webinar. This is being led by a psychologist. We aim to cover some general intro to mental health issues and some practical input on how the church can support people with mental health difficulties.

Future plans include: Safer Recruitment, Domestic Abuse, Safeguarding Responsibilities of Trustees, (Connexion are due to publish updated policies on these three any time now), Lone Working, Record Keeping. There are enough topics to keep us going for a couple of years!

Connexion has run a number of webinars.

Survivor Resources

The PCR challenged the church to provide better care and support for survivors. Connexion has produced Reflect and Respond - to support survivors of abuse of any kind and especially abuse that occurred within a church context.

The survivors group has produced two documents launched in January 2021:

‘Reflect and Respond’ is a four-week study guide for small groups in churches. Based on the four themes of ‘Our Calling’ it provides case study material, theological commentary and challenging questions.

Supporting Survivors of Abuse leaflet

Is a leaflet to be made available in all churches that explains how to seek care and support when making a disclosure, and describes what is likely to happen next and the standards we expect to achieve. Copies have been sent to each active minister for them to place in churches, and in the context of Covid 19 when it is safe to do so.

It has been recognised that we need to do a lot of work to ensure people are properly equipped to deliver the Reflect and Respond material, ensuring pastoral care is in place for all those in church groups who may be impacted by the material.

WORLD CHURCH

Revd Andrew de Ville

We continue to work closely with the URC and our friends in the Lusaka Presbytery and ask that you please hold the people of Zambia in your prayers, under lockdown as we are, but with far fewer resources than we have to cope with it. Pray for the hungry in Zambia and for the tradition of sharing and community to be sustained, by God’s grace. Pray for the churches as they continue to worship without meeting and to care and help without much money or food.

As a District we launched a challenge to raise crucial funds for Christian Aid, as they work to support those in poorer countries who already face suffering and poverty, as well as the challenges and heartbreak caused by the coronavirus pandemic. I am humbled by the response of friends across the District, raising in excess of £10000 within just a few weeks as we give thanks for receiving the vaccines ourselves.

<https://giving.tapsimple.org/online/christian-aid/giving-thanks-for-our-vaccines-across-southampton-methodist-district>

THANK YOU for your generosity.
