



ANNUAL REPORTS

2023-2024

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

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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.

If you wish to receive these reports via email to access the live links please contact Sarah: chairspa@sdmc.org.uk

FROM THE DISTRICT CHAIR

Rev Andrew de Ville

As you begin to read the Reports I'd ask you to offer a prayer of thanks for all that these represent and the individuals and teams who have prepared them and are mentioned within each Report. The Reports share something with us of the work of many people in the life of the Church but, more than this, they share with us something of the work of God across our District which we celebrate and give thanks for as a Synod. I'd like to offer my personal thanks for all those whose ministry is contained within these Reports and assure you of my ongoing prayers for you all and the Rev Rachel Bending as she prepares for her new role as the Chair of the best District in the Connexion!
Every blessing, Andrew

DISTRICT ARCHIVIST

Geoffrey Goodman

Due to Covid 19 much of this work stopped or was put on a back burner. Places to deliver records were kept closed and it was thought best not handle records due to risk of infection. Our local Church/Circuit Archivists have all worked hard since then and I have appreciated all the help they have given me. Records are being kept in good order and delivered to County Record Offices.

Some might ask, why do we do this. I find it really sad when a church closes that there is no sign of many years work that has taken place by dedicated people. It happened to me when I moved to Parkstone, near Poole. A chapel which had been open for 100 years closed and I could find no photos and no records, but I did find preachers who had preached there and Stewards (still alive) who gave great leadership.

I am often contacted by churches who ask where do we find the records for our Church Anniversary? There are many things church records are useful for, so archives are important in the life of the church. Could I ask Church/Circuit Archivists that if a new person is appointed could they please let me know who is taking over?

I have attended Connexional Meetings this year and there is still much to learn about the subject, and things are forever changing.

Thank you to all to all those who give their time to keep this work going.

DISTRICT GRANTS COMMITTEE

Bryan Coates

Most of the work of processing – and agreeing - Grant Applications for both Personnel and Property Schemes is done by email contact with the Committee members. We aim to have a very speedy turn-round period, although we do need at times to ask for a clearer statement of the Mission objectives of the intended work.

Our grants for Property Schemes in the first six months of the current Connexional year have varied from £10,000 to £322, the latter being for one of the smaller churches in our smallest Circuit. We have been able to help with grants for some essential repairs to churches where there is a very clear Mission emphasis in the ongoing work.

We did meet as a Committee in early January and agreed the following three points:-

1. On the District Grant Application Form – Policy Statement – under Church Projects, the phrase ‘Up to 10% of the cost with a maximum for £30,000’ should be replaced by ‘Up to 30% of the cost’. (The Grant Application Form has now been amended)
2. The District Grants Committee can now accept applications for grants, on the same basis, that are in line with the ‘District Environmental Policy’ and commitment. Any such application should involve consultation with Dr John Evans, our Eco Champion.

We were gratified to learn that this statement made a significant contribution to the District’s Eco Bronze Award.

3. Recognising the immense, invaluable work of Methodist people over many generations who, through their commitment and dedication, had built and maintained Church premises in missional outreach, any application for the sale of Methodist property should include an answer to the question under the Building section, ‘How are the sale proceeds to be used for the direct and creative role of Mission?’

These three points were submitted to the District Policy Committee and agreed by that Group.

As ever, I am grateful for the wise and supportive contributions of members of the Grants Committee as we work on behalf of the District.

DISTRICT POLICY COMMITTEE

Paul Yarrien

The District Policy Committee (DPC) has met three times since the last scheduled Synod, in September 2023. We have had two in-person meetings and one on Zoom. We continue to use this hybrid approach that allows us to cover the business required while being mindful of reducing travel where possible. We have also completed some business through email consultation.

With the three meetings DPC have had the opportunity to look across the District so they are better informed about the strengths and challenges. Each Circuit Representative has had the opportunity to share this information and provide insight into the strategies for the coming years.

DPC continues to receive many church closure applications, with almost all Circuits seeking to sell the properties following closure. Circuits are encouraged to contact the DPC Secretary early in their deliberations, to ensure the correct paperwork is completed in a timely manner, that ensures passage through the various stages of the process (see DPC Business for Synod action).

As the District Trustees we are informed at each meeting about all financial matters concerning the District. There has been detailed discussion on how we fund District employees from the resources available and provide the support Circuits require to function effectively (see Finance Report).

DPC receive regular updates on stationing and were delighted to hear that all appointments for 2024 have been filled. The work for 2025 has started with two briefings planned for May. Please ensure participation in these events.

DPC have continued to be regularly informed about many aspects of District and Connexional life and include:

- Methodist Council
- Lay Employment Matters
- District Grants
- District Property
- MWiB

DPC has several sub-groups that take on key pieces of work on behalf of DPC. Their work is reported to DPC prior to any formal business being brought to Synod. The result of this work is reflected as follows:

- Lay Authorisation (to preside at Holy Communion) for 2024/5
- Proposed boundary changes effective from 01 Sep 24

(See separate reports and appropriate recommendations).

As part of the preparations for the arrival of our new Chair of District, we have sought to appoint two Deputy Chairs, effective from 1st September 2024 (see separate report).

Finally, at our last meeting on 16th March 2024 we said a huge thank you to Andrew de Ville and Sandy Coates as they attended their last DPC. Their contribution, leadership and commitment to the life of the District has been considerable! We wish them well and look forward to the next chapter of District life.

ECO DISTRICT

John Evans

The Eco District steering group has sought to follow the guidelines for the Denominational Awards agreed between A Rocha and the Methodist Church. Accordingly, an Environmental Policy was drafted in 2023, and adopted by the District at the Spring Synod. This is being revised to provide more guidance for churches to follow the Action of Hope pathway towards Carbon Net Zero.

A second approach has been to offer training and development opportunities that are open for all. There have been three stages in this. Six evening webinars, called 'Creation Mondays', have been arranged from October to March in partnership with the Learning Network. Most of these have been recorded and videos of them mounted on the District's website and YouTube channel. A summary of each webinar is being published within the new newsletter, 'Creation Matters'. These also include good news features from the District called 'Active Hope', and some general information on the climate and biodiversity crises.

A key aspect of Eco District assessment is the level of activity in our churches. Currently 46 of our churches are registered with the Eco Church program, and 23 have received awards. Included in that tally are 6 churches to Silver awards with 2 of these progressing to Gold. The assessors were also pleased to see amendments had been enacted to the guidelines for District Advanced Fund grant applications to allow for developments along the Net Zero pathway. Southampton is the third District to have successfully applied for a Bronze Eco District award.



In 2024/25, we plan to continue with Creation Monday webinars and to utilise the materials curated from the current year's webinars. Training packages are envisaged to provide resources, guidance and training to Circuits, Churches and groups for their Eco church journey along 'Action for Hope Step 4: Go for Gold'.

Introductions to the Eco Church surveys are envisaged, starting with the 'Worship and Teaching' strand.

We will be pleased to receive comments and queries at ecodistrict@sdmc.org.uk and the updated District Environmental Policy can be found here: <http://www.sdmc.org.uk/ministries-across-the-district/eco-church/>

FINANCE

Christine Holland

During the 2022-23 financial year (1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023) the District received total income of £428,464 (2022: £368,068) and spent £434,584 (2022: £310,381). At 31 August 2023 the District had funds totalling £1,256,310 (2022: £1,336,203). The District's funds decreased during the year primarily due to the revaluation of the District manse and an increase in the commitments for grants payable in future years.

At 31 August 2023 the District held the following funds:

- General funds £129,187 (£118,888 at 31 August 2022)
- District Development Fund £49,595 (£54,848 at 31 August 2022)
- District Advance Fund £177,517 (£222,036 at 31 August 2022)
- Portsmouth University Chaplaincy -£78 deficit (-£335 deficit at 31 August 2022)
- Property Reserve (District Manse) £735,000 (£800,000 at 31 August 2022)
- Benevolent Fund £381 (£681 at 31 August 2022))
- MIH Fund £123,747 (£129,655 at 31 August 2022)
- A balance of £28,846 against our New Places for New People connexional funding (£846 at 31 August 2022)
- £432 on behalf of Churches Together in Hampshire and the Islands (£607 at 31 August 2022)
- £11,683 of Mission Alongside the Poor funds.

In 2022-23 the District paid grants from the District Advance Fund that totalled £136,245 to churches, circuits, university chaplaincies and ecumenical groups. At 31 August 2023 grants totalling £362,455 have been committed from the District Advance Fund that are payable in future years. The balance on the District Advance Fund as at 31 August 2023 after taking into account commitments against the fund is £177,517.

GROUP FOR LEARNING AND DISCIPLESHIP (GLaD)

Fran Jenkins

We are very happy to have Rev. John Yarren as the new Chair of the group.

The remit of the group is:-

'GLaD' (Group for Learning and Discipleship) is responsible to the DPC (District Policy Committee) and reports to it.

GLaD continues to fulfil the following functions:

1. Agree sabbatical prospectuses and receive the post sabbatical report
2. Approve grant applications from lay and ordained with respect to learning*
3. Champion discipleship, learning and vocation in close partnership with the Learning Network.

GLaD provides a focused space for a two-way conversation between the District representatives (e.g., MWiB, LP/WL) and the Learning Network. The conversation should permit intentional and creative communication between the deliverers and recipients of learning.

Conversations at meetings continue to look at how best these functions, particularly point 3 can be implemented.

We continue to benefit from 'Dwelling in the Word' as our opening devotions, listening to and sharing what the Bible passage has said to us.

This past year we have agreed grants for various training courses and the purchase of mission resources (Youthscape Manuals).

* The reviewed Application Forms for Grants, now in the new format, are available from myself, Sarah Pothecarry or the District website.



Mark Tizzard

Wow! Another year has gone by.

Some of the highlights from the year have been:

Youthscape Essentials - Along with Jon White from the Learning Network, I have helped deliver this amazing course to 3 circuits - Basingstoke and Reading, Salisbury, and Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey. This course is very much about how a volunteer youth leader can feel more equipped to lead and run a youth ministry. The course consists of 10 modules, and we have created a model of delivery where we offer a taster session online and then 3 Saturdays, each covering 3 modules. Please do speak to me about this course. We can come and share it with you. <https://www.youthscape.co.uk/yse>

3 Gen Last year - we had children and young people from 4 circuits attending this weekend. It was a great opportunity for these children and young people to explore what faith means for them, in a Methodist context. This year there was a real emphasis on the Methodist Way of Life – with some very cool fridge magnets (the most sought after item!). To find out more you can see this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsiYMhXqlo8&t=6s>

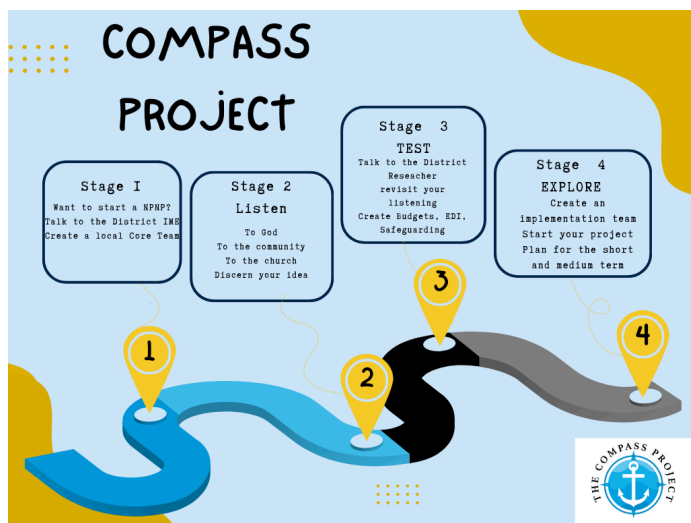
Visiting lots of creative projects. We have lots of creative and exciting ways of connecting with our communities across our District. I get to see quite a lot of them personally, which is great. Not only do I get to learn from them, but I also then get to share some thoughts and examples of what I have seen with other places.

We have many Toddler Groups – some of which have really thrived since Covid. The church as a whole is the biggest deliverer of Toddler groups, and these groups can be a significant first step into the church. We have Messy Churches, and children's groups; we have uniformed organisations; we have youth group meetings creating spaces for young people to explore faith; we have parenting courses, Knit and Natter groups, coffee mornings, computer clubs, art groups, football clubs, and walking groups. All of these things are ways that allow folk outside the church to begin to get to know us, and more importantly God.

Some of the new pieces of work have been around “Warm Spaces” and “foodbanks” and here, our Methodist roots of working with the marginalised, are being shaped for the 21st Century. These ministries are all quite distinct and work in different ways – so if you want to know more then please do ask me and I can help you discern what might work for you.

Personally, I have completed the short course in Pioneer Ministry and I will soon have completed the Church Planting Intensive course. There are many ways that the Methodist Church is seeking to equip people for ministry.

I continue to lead the team exploring what it means to create New Places for New People. As I write this, we haven’t yet appointed the Compass Project Pioneer Evangelist, but hopefully this will happen soon. But, we have been seeing some really interesting and, we hope, helpful work carried out with circuits from Danny Miller, the mission-researcher that we have available. This role helps circuits with the listening stage of our 3 stage NPNP process.



Listen - Test - Explore. This diagram shows the journey we feel is the most helpful way of exploring NPNP.

I am very fortunate to be in a role that I really enjoy and feel privileged to be able to help others to think of new ways of being church – working across different generations – bringing those generations together.

You can get in touch with me in a variety of ways:

Phone or text 07391017548

Email mark.tizzard@sdmc.org.uk

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

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

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

Blessings, Tizz.

LEARNING NETWORK

Thank you for continuing to make space for the Learning Network (LN) to share our updates with you!

In this season of Eastertide, as we reflect on rebirth; on mourning, hope, and new beginnings; we share with you our gratitude for the ongoing invitations we receive from your churches, circuits and district to mourn, hope, and recreate with you. It is our great privilege to journey with you in mission, ministry and discipleship; to be welcomed and trusted by you; to help you make your contexts safer, more efficient and more effective, so you can respond to the Great Commission that we are called to.

The LN continues to shift and change in response to the needs across the Connexion, wider society and creation; we are working mindfully towards our [Net Zero target](#), evolving our [inclusive](#) and [justice-seeking](#) practice, and deepening collaboration. Our online provisions are increasing, with most meetings, training and events now accessible online, yet our team remains flexibly available to you; offline and in person where and when appropriate. We hope you might now be encountering more of the LN team since we have moved to a 'one team' way of working!

Thank you for your engagement with our [Facebook group](#) and the newer [Methodist Resources Facebook Group](#) – we greatly appreciate these Connexion-facing opportunities for conversation, questions and sharing, and thank you again for moving with us, so swiftly, to this centralised model of communicating.

Please be encouraged to stay in contact, or get in touch with us – we are a relatively small team yet with big dreams to develop our relationships with you, to deepen our learning from and with you, and to thereby serve you as best we can. If you would like to know more about our LN team and our work, please visit our new [webpage area](#).

Here are some of the forthcoming LN opportunities available to the Connexion:

- [Positive Working Together](#): Online opportunities in April, June and July for training centering on transforming conflict and managing change and transition.
- [Explore](#): Beginning again this spring, Explore is a nine session course for any member of the Methodist Church in Britain to take a breath, step back, and consider how they are called to respond to God's call through worship, learning & caring, evangelism or service.
- [Circuit Stewards' Communities of Practice sessions](#) continue on the last Wednesday of every month, where Circuit Stewards from across the Connexion are invited to gather online to learn together with members of the Connexional Team, share good practice, ask questions and build relationships.

For more, and to keep up-to-date with how the LN can support and resource you, [please sign-up to our newsletter](#), join our [Facebook group](#), and or contact your aligned officer.

On that note, over to James Devenish for some LN district-focused updates!

With many blessings, Your Learning Network Team

From James: It's a joy and a privilege to take on the role of aligned officer for the Southampton District, a place that I have lived in for over 12 years. It's my aim to connect meaningfully with as many Circuits as possible this year - I'm really looking forward to deepening my understanding of the mission of the Circuits and getting to know more of you lovely folk.

Can I encourage you again to visit our [Eventbrite Page](#) or the [Methodist Resources Facebook Group](#), which lists all the training and learning opportunities that we provide? This includes, but is not limited to: bible month, local lay pastors, lay employees' support and mental health first aid.

That said, there is still scope for much bespoke work for your Circuit's needs, I'd be very happy to have a conversation about this: 07799 902567/ devenishj@methodistchurch.org.uk

LOCAL PREACHERS SECRETARY

Geoffrey Goodman

Local Preachers and Worship Leaders across the Southampton District continue to lead worship and preach (LPs only) with enthusiasm and commitment to their task. Circuits speak highly of their work, and they remain a very important part of worship for our congregations.

The following are recorded as action points for the future (see notes which follow):

- 1. The gaining of more Local Preachers and Worship Leaders across the District.** This should be brought to attention of Circuit Meetings and Church Councils if we are to maintain regular and active worship for all churches.
- 2. Worship, Leading and Preaching (WLP3) Course** – The Connexion has reported that where this is taking place, it is of a high standard, and praise is offered for Tutors and Mentors who undertake this work in their Circuits. The training of Worship Leaders as reported in the 2023 Synod Report it is still an issue which needs reviewing within WLP3 but so far little has been done. Numbers still continue to decline in many Circuits.

Praise to those for the work Local Preachers have done in **CLPD and further development** by many Circuits. Some Circuits prefer to do this in LP Meetings whilst others have dedicated CLPD groups for people to attend. The Learning Network includes additional training on how to do this.

We congratulate those receiving **long service certificates** (40, 50 and 60 years) across the District in 2024.

On-line worship has given people the opportunity to worship from their homes from near and far.

Holy Communion during worship is now being led by lay preachers (according to Standing Orders) in some Circuits.

Bible Month this year is on the Book of Genesis and booklets are available from LWPT, as well as a training day for preachers and worship leaders. This year I have included this series in my house group which has proved there are different ways to present it. An adapted programme to the LWPT one can be found following this report for other house group leaders across the District to use.

The names of local preachers who have died during 2023-24: Veronica Green, Brian Howard, Wayne Marshall, Jan Davis, Audrey Cooper, Kim Kelly, Maurice Scorey, John Phillippo, Esther Alder, Coral Ryalls, William Kendrick, John Slow and Jim Radford.

Thank you to LP Secretaries, the GLaD Committee, Presbyters, and so many more who help me in this work.

Geoff Goodman, District LP Secretary/District Tutor

Notes from a Connexion Meeting with LP Secretaries and Rev. Bob Bartindale (Ministry Development Officer (Worship & Local Preachers):

In a time when the patterns of worship are changing, how does our support and training of Local Preachers and Worship Leaders (and possibly Church Stewards and those leading Local Arrangements) need to change?

Brief feedback was invited to the larger group, which included the following observations:

- For those directly involved in the WLP3 course satisfaction has increased, but still suspicion in circuits with no recent trainees.
- Need for better understanding of support roles for LPs and WLs, especially Mentors. Could induction include more for Mentors?
- Superintendents are often key to provision of support for trainees – is there a need to improve their understanding of the key roles, especially Mentors, noting that Mentors are often hard to find?
- As Local Arrangements increase (in many places) need for training, preparation and resources for those involved, especially Church Stewards.
- Peer review is still an issue for some, and some training and explanation would be helpful.
- The pace of change is greater and LPs and WLs need encouraging and equipping for changing roles

Training

A full syllabus of training is now available (mostly online) to support those involved with worship and preaching. The range of courses continues to evolve, but currently includes:

- **Online Inductions** for new students, tutors and mentors
- **Study Skills** for students
- **Introduction to WLP** for Tutors, Mentors and LP Secretaries
- **Further Skills** for Tutors
- **Further Skills** for LP Secretaries

Full info can be found at www.methodist.org.uk/wlptraining

METHODIST WOMEN in BRITAIN (MWiB)

Chris Stuckey

1. Our Partnership with Romania ended last September. We raised a total of £9,000 in our district for the work in the Orphanages there.

This year until the end of August, circuits are raising money for local projects.

In September we hope to begin a new Overseas Partnership with a Leprosy Mission Project working with women in Nepal. There are many countries where Leprosy is prevalent and in Nepal women are being trained as Health Workers to enable them to identify this dreadful disease at an early stage when it can often be successfully treated.

2. Our District MWiB Team will again be taking some morning worship services. So far we are planned at Barton-on Sea (12th May) and Andover (19th May).

3. The MWiB National Conference will again take place at 'The Hayes Conference Centre' in Swanwick from 19th—21st April. Our speakers will be Rev. Jenny Pathmarajah, a Presbyter in Cambridge, and Becca Byass from All We Can. Our theme is 'Words create Worlds'. 19 women have booked to attend from the District. There is also the option of participating through Zoom.

4. The World Federation of Methodist and United Church Women are holding their 11th Joint Area Seminar in Porto, Portugal on 13th-17th June. The theme for this Seminar is 'Rooted and Grounded in Love'. Four ladies from our District MWiB Committee have registered to attend.

We have a District Day planned for July 11th, 10.30-3.30 to be held at Romsey Methodist Church. Our theme will be "Rooted and Grounded in Love". (as used at the Area Seminar in Porto).

5. The Theme of the Easter Offering Service this year is 'Let Justice Roll' based on the principles of justice in the Old Testament book of Micah. This service offers churches, circuits and districts a celebration of God's just purposes across the wider world. All money raised goes to the World Mission Fund of the Methodist Church of Great Britain.

Connexional website: <http://www.mwib.org.uk>

PROPERTY - GENERAL

Peter Frank

Having been in post as your Property Secretary for several months now, several themes have emerged from meetings and conversations with individuals which are worthy of further consideration.

Net Zero Carbon

The Methodist Church has a target of “becoming a net zero carbon emissions church by 2030”. The already ongoing work of the District is acknowledged: look out for our status as an Eco District, for the series of *Creation Mondays* webinars, and for the advice, encouragement and resources from our Eco Church Champion and Grants Committee. How is this support and resource driving changes to our church buildings?

There are some great examples within the District, and you are encouraged to share both your own success stories and your questions, perhaps even on how to start thinking about this subject, with me. Do visit the Methodist Church’s website at [Net Zero Carbon \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk) to find suggestions about small beginnings and big impacts.

Church Closures

Sadly, across the Connexion large numbers of churches are closing. With many church closures, it is not only the loss of a worshipping community which hurts an area, but also a space which opens during the week for many and varied activities. We are encouraged to consider whether sale of our properties is in the best interest’s of God’s work in a locality, but more work is needed in linking up those for whom redundant church buildings are more a millstone than a resource, with those with the vision and energy to seek alternatives to retreating altogether from a community, perhaps in partnership with other organisations and agencies. The Methodist Church’s current statement on the matter is available at [Property & Mission \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk).

Property Projects and Consents

Many aspects of church maintenance can be completed without it being necessary to seek consent from Circuit and District (and often also the Methodist Church’s Conservation Officer for listed buildings or those in Conservation Areas). The on-line Property Schemes Consent process exists, however, to ensure that major repairs, component renewals, refurbishments or extensions receive balanced consideration and support from others with responsibility for resourcing our work and mission in the Circuits and District. Those projects which require the creation of an online ‘Project’ are as set out on the Consents Flowchart, found at [consents-flow-chart.pdf \(methodist.org.uk\)](https://www.methodist.org.uk). If you are unclear whether you need consent, please don’t hesitate to ask. The District Consents Panel continue to support the process of examining projects and their contribution is appreciated.

Annual Property Returns

Thanks to all Churches and Circuits where these are completed, and a reminder to those yet to do so to please complete your outstanding returns at the earliest opportunity.

Questions and Support: Do contact me. I don’t have all the answers but know many who might help you with your property problem.

PROPERTY - MANSES

Henry Stroud

The District Manses Committee has essentially a pastoral role in ensuring that our ministers have satisfactory manses. We are involved in the proposed purchase of new manses and some of our members are visitors who visit each of our occupied manses every five years.

The number of ministers in the District is decreasing and we now have 38 occupied manses, and about an equal number of other properties let while not needed for ministers. With the changing pattern of ministry several circuits have been active in buying new properties in more appropriate locations. We appreciate the diligent work of circuit stewards and others in this process which is steadily improving our manse stock with more modern and energy efficient properties.

In 2023 initially we planned to visit ten manses, but owing to ministers not being replaced, manses being sold as mentioned above and other factors, we visited just five manses. The process is interesting. Simply making the arrangements for the visit prompts circuits to ensure that the quinquennial inspection has been received and circuit checklists are completed, and we notice jobs get done even before the visit takes place. Then after the visit the submission of the report prompts improvements to be made, indeed some are done before the report is distributed. Often these are small matters which do nevertheless enhance the comfort or maintenance of the manse. It is gratifying to report that most circuits respond positively to our reports and often remedial work is done very expeditiously.

I remind 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. I would also remind circuit stewards that the committee must be consulted when the purchase of a new manse is being considered so that we can advise about the suitability of the property before the process proceeds too far.

SAFEGUARDING

Jane Fisher

We are actively promoting '**God Welcomes All: How faith informs safeguarding**' Study Guide. The study guide is based on the Methodist Church's report the **Theology of Safeguarding 2021**. Safeguarding is integral to the mission of the Methodist Church and a part of its response and witness to the love of God in Christ. The report emphasises that safeguarding is not something we do because we have to or to tick a box but is rooted in and central to our faith. It focusses us all to remember that safeguarding is central to our mission and ministry and vital in creating safer spaces and a culture of Safeguarding.

The **District Safeguarding Group** continues to meet regularly to advise and support the DSO. The group has spent time considering the National DSG Standards and will continue to do this at future meetings, as we prepare for the Safeguarding Audit.

We recognise the weight safeguarding can place on those at a local level. We are increasingly experiencing difficulties in finding people to fill the key roles of Circuit and Church Safeguarding Officers, and to be involved in Monitoring and Support Groups. Some innovative ways of addressing this are coming forward. **We do wish to record our thanks** to all those who faithfully take on these ministries.

We continue to receive referrals about situations of concern. There have been noticeably more in the past year. In many ways this is a positive as it shows people are recognising the necessity of responding appropriately to safeguarding concerns.

The availability of trainers and the willingness and ease with which members are able to attend training, is something that is currently being reviewed. Whilst there is a mix of in person and online training provision across the District it appears many people prefer in person delivery. We offered further livestreamed training and hope to continue with this to enable people to meet together in small groups at local venues for the training. Train the trainer training was delivered and more sessions will be organised. Again, **thanks to those who give their time to deliver training.**

Connexion continued to closely monitor minister DBS's. We remain in a strong position with DBS renewals - those outstanding being primarily for pastoral reasons.

MyConcern – the Connexion Record Management System for Safeguarding cases has gone live across the Connexion. We are working to migrate case records to the system. With in excess of 300 records in the District this will take some time! The focus is on current cases. The system will allow consistency across the Connexion.

We continue to run **Safeguarding webinars** with the LN and Regional colleagues. Recordings of all the webinars and Connexion webinars are available. These are relevant and open to all in our churches.

Andrew's Safeguarding Sunday video was very well received and well used. We will be producing another one this year. Marking Safeguarding Sunday assists with promoting safeguarding to the whole church and in creating a culture of safeguarding across the District. We encourage everyone to begin thinking about what you may be able to do this year. This year Safeguarding Sunday is 17 November 2024.

The DSO continues to explore new ways to disseminate information and resources to our churches and circuits. Including a re-vamp of the safeguarding pages on the District website. We encourage churches and circuits to consider what safeguarding is available on their websites.

NATIONAL REPORTS FOR YOUR INFORMATION

ACTION FOR CHILDREN

Action for Children's work continues to go from strength to strength, impacting thousands of children's lives. We thank you for your immense support through your prayers, tireless fundraising, campaigning, and many other ways. With your support, alongside our regular givers, corporate partners and volunteers, we helped 765,905 children, young people and their families in 2022/2023 - nearly 95,000 more than the year before. Our annual report outlines our 2022/23 achievements – including our Parent Talk online service which supported a staggering 539,842 families. You can read our annual report by visiting:

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/about-us/annual-reports/>

Methodist Conference President and VP visit

Each year we offer a visit to one of our services to the President and Vice- President of the Methodist Conference. This year it was a privilege to welcome the Revd Gill Newton, President, and Kerry Scarlett, Vice-President to our services in Chesterfield.

Gill and Kerry heard from staff working on Build Sound Minds, Young Adults (attached to Building Sound Minds), Space 4 U and the Derby and Derbyshire Emotional Wellbeing Service. Find out more about our services across Derbyshire here:

<https://services.actionforchildren.org.uk/derbyshire/>

Secret Santa 2023 - £1.48m raised

Our Secret Santa fundraising exceeded its £1.4 million target, raising a staggering £1.48 million including gift aid, and we are still counting. We would like to say a huge 'thank you' to our Methodist Secret Santas. Together, we have helped vulnerable children feel the magic of Christmas. Children like Chloe, whose mum Natalia described how much Action for Children's support meant to Chloe as the "the best feeling ever."

Starry Night Gala

Our first fundraising gala was a night to remember with famous attendees and Methodist representatives, and incredible performances, including our very own Young Carers Aloud choir, led by celebrity vocal coach Charlotte Church. We raised over £150k. Held on 30 November, the Starry Night gala took place at the stunning Grade II listed Battersea Arts Centre. It was an extraordinary evening of theatre and heartwarming moments, which raised vital funds to help give more children the safe and happy childhood they deserve.

'Children at the Table' - our general election coalition campaign

Launched on 24 January 2024, our coalition campaign with leading children's charities expresses our concerns that for too long, children have not been a priority for successive governments, or for political parties generally. This means that more children are facing more challenges - babies going without support from health visitors; children growing up in poverty; and young people waiting months on a mental health waiting list. These trends are going the wrong way.

That is why we have come together with other leading children's charities: Barnardo's, The Children's Society, the National Children's Bureau and NSPCC. Ahead of the upcoming general election, we must make sure the next Prime Minister does more to make good childhoods a national priority. On 24 January, 25 young campaigners went to Parliament to tell MPs their vision for a better future. We surveyed 1,000 children and 1,000 adults and discovered that 62% of UK children think politicians don't understand the issues affecting them. Please sign our petition to ask the Next Prime Minister and Chancellor to be champions for children: <https://take.actionforchildren.org.uk/page/142209/petition/>

Action for Children Sunday

We are looking forward to this year's Action for Children Sunday on 14th July, when churches set aside time to pray for us and collect a special offering to support our work.

If your church plans to hold an Action for Children Sunday service or has not held one in recent times, and would like support with planning one, please contact your Regional Support Officer (<https://bit.ly/fundraiser-contact>). They can offer advice and send you the resources you need. We will also place downloadable information and materials on our website here: www.actionforchildren.uk/worship

Please help us to track your funds by adding a reference to payments you make by cheque and through your bank (BACS). It might be your church name or postcode, or even your Constituent ID, if you have it. If you would like an HSBC deposit card to pay at your local Post Office, please contact our Supporter Care Team on 0300 123 2112.

Contacting us

- Your regional fundraiser: <https://bit.ly/fundraiser-contact>
- Supporter Care Team: 0300 123 2112 (open 9am to 5pm, Mon-Fri)
email: ask.us@actionforchildren.org.uk

I wish you an enjoyable and enriching time at Synod. Thank you for your support.

Blessings, Karis

Faith Partnerships Lead - karis.kolawole@actionforchildren.org.uk

FUND FOR HUMAN NEED

Patron: Lord Boateng

The Fund for Human Need has continued its work during the past connexional year, making almost 700 emergency payments to people who are in desperate need. In the name of the Methodist Church we give grants to families and individuals of any background. FHN seeks to relieve hunger and poverty in the UK by making grants to those experiencing hardship, including those who have known domestic violence, are homeless, suffering from medical or mental issues, are refugees or asylum seekers, or are awaiting their first universal credit payment.

Applications come from individuals but most are made by organisations on behalf of their clients. Over 110 charities, NHS trusts, local authorities and Citizen Advice offices apply for grants specifically for food, warm clothing, bedding, essential travel or other urgent need where the £100 to £130 grants we are able to offer will make a difference to their situation.

Over the year 1,460 people benefitted from these payments, 481 of whom were children.

Responding to the increasing number of requests for assistance five years ago, the employment of a part-time administrator and fundraiser was made possible by an initial grant from Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice (MAPJ). Since then the income and the number and total of grants - £73,000 in the past year - has almost tripled and all costs are being met from fundraising. Income in 2022-2023 was £82,453 and total expenditure £91,198.

We express thanks to all who have committed to making donations, many by standing order - £63,393 in the year (77% of income) and to local churches for benevolence fund allocations and fundraising events which raised £15,158 (18%). Other income includes sales of cards and investment income of £3,902 (5%).

- In 2024 look out for our stand at the Methodist Women in Britain Swanwick Conference, the Cliff College May Spring Fest, the Methodist Conference and Greenbelt
- The FHN newsletter, with stories of how our grants have helped, is sent three times a year by email or post to all supporters and interested parties. Please contact the administrator to request a copy
- Many districts now have a *Friend of FHN* who is able to supply you with further information about our work
- Go to the FHN website to access recent years' Annual Report and Accounts
- See our adverts in the Methodist Diary (p 293) and Conference Minutes (p 367)

Please visit FHN's website: <https://fundforhumanneed.org.uk/>

Or for further information, contact Gill Mason (Administrator), 6 Newlands Road, Darlington, DL3 9JL Tel: 07561 717230; Email: fundhumanneed@gmail.com

Please see website for latest leaflet to download: www.sdmc.org.uk under Resources/Synod Resources

MHA

Islay Roberts

Thank you for the wonderful support from our friends within the Methodist Church, your tremendous dedication to Methodist Homes (MHA) and your overwhelming support of our mission, vision and values has again supported our vital work in helping people to live later life well.

Changes at MHA

2023 was another challenging year with the cost-of-living crisis, inflation, massive increases in energy costs and a shortage of workers across the care sector. The biggest changes were announced in May 2023 following a strategic review of MHA's services.

The decision was made to sell ten care homes, place Auchlochan Garden Village in Scotland and its two associated care homes into administration and sell the charity's three remaining retirement living schemes in Scotland. Since the announcement, Hafan y Waun in Aberystwyth has transferred to the local authority.

The sale of eight homes is proceeding well and should be completed by spring. Sadly, the buyer for the tenth home, Cedar Lawn in Stratford upon Avon, withdrew and in January, MHA had to make the difficult decision to close the home.

Revd Crispian Acher

In August 2023, we were shocked by the unexpected and very sudden death of our Head of Chaplaincy South, Crispian Acher, who at that time had just taken on the role of Acting Director of Chaplaincy and Spirituality. Crispian was a much loved and respected member of staff throughout MHA and beyond and is greatly missed.

Celebrating MHA's 80th anniversary

The 80th-anniversary service held at Wesley Church, Harrogate on 23 September was a joyful occasion, and it was wonderful to be joined by so many friends from the Methodist Church. President of Conference Revd Gill Newton preached an inspiring sermon, encouraging us to look back with thanksgiving, and to continue forwards in confidence, knowing that God is good, loving and faithful.

Finding Nana

The children's book, "Finding Nana" was championed by Crispian Acher up until his untimely death in August, and now becomes his legacy. It was developed in recognition that it can be daunting for children when a loved one moves into a care home and seeks to address the anxieties that such young people may have when preparing to visit a friend or relative for the first time. The story has been written by author Jenni Bacon following visits to an MHA home and is illustrated by Sophie Parmenter. It has been published in partnership with Methodist Publishing and BRF. It is now available to order and will be formally launched in February 2024.

MHA Sunday

In 2023, MHA Sunday was themed around our intergenerational work, reflecting on 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, and how we need one another for our wellbeing. Through your generous support, we have raised approximately £160k through MHA Sunday activities and other support from faith communities. This year, our MHA Sunday will be themed around Mark 4:30-32, the parable of the mustard seed, as we reflect on how the seemingly small act of making a regular telephone call has a big impact in our telephone befriending service. In this year's video, we meet Dot and Grace, who were matched through this service, and witness them meeting face to face for the first time. MHA Sunday is held on 9 June 2024, but you are welcome to hold your service on any date that fits with your calendar of activities.

Our dedicated web page has free downloadable resources including an order of service (available in English and Welsh), the video, sermon notes and a fully worked sermon; everything you need to plan your service. You can also order Gift Aid envelopes for your church or circuit. To find all of this, visit <http://www.mha.org.uk/Sunday>.

Thank you for all your support. In faith and kindness, we are stronger together.