

Principles and Practice:

The Methodist Conference tasked Districts to promote and develop New Places for New People, with priority being given to Church at the Margins. To do this we first adopt the theological foundations and core values of the Connexional NPNP strategy as the key framework for this work. Wherever NPNP's arise within the life of the District, from the outset they will be expected to be grounded in these essential principles and practices. Getting this pioneering mindset embedded within an expectant and hopeful culture of prayer and reflection is a crucial determinant of what will eventually unfold under the Spirit's prompting. It is the initial preparatory task which the District Team will use as a benchmark when considering applications for funding.

NPNP Theological Foundations

NPNP's are God's work: We are involved in the "Missio Dei" for the whole world, we are joining in with God's invitation to reconnect people to the God revealed to us in Jesus Christ, enabling us to live in right relationship to God, ourselves, others, and the whole of creation.

Incarnational: NPNP's involve being with and alongside others – discerning God's presence and vision together by sharing the reality of human life with its pain, struggles, and joys. Incarnational ministry is key to the work of NPNP. As in Jesus, God takes human flesh and enters our world, so we are called to be alongside, not distant, from the people and places we minister in.

Developing new Christian communities: We believe an NPNP discerns God's presence in community and shares God's work in listening for, speaking of and living out the good news, beyond the existing boundaries of the Church. These new communities of people sharing good news will gather to worship, learn, serve God, and be connected to the wider Methodist Connexion.

Nurturing new Christians: An NPNP project is for new people in new places, is rooted in our response to God's love, and aims for all people to know and experience the love of God. The gospel for the whole world.

Open to transformation: The mission of God revealed in Jesus offers us love, forgiveness and new life. At the heart of NPNP is an invitation into a transformational relationship with God and a willingness to be shaped, challenged, and transformed in our encounters with others.

Church for those on the margins: The Bible contains stories of marginalisation, poverty and powerlessness – a demonstration of the sinfulness of humankind and the need, in every age, to be attentive to the processes which discriminate and marginalise. What God does, and how God is discovered reveals a God of justice and an emphasis on our need to care for the vulnerable, the stranger, and those who are impoverished.

The good news of Jesus Christ: Christ sees the extraordinary worth of those who experience marginalisation or exclusion. His example was to restore those who were 'unclean' and share bread with those described as 'outcasts'. Church at the Margins is focused on recognising that people who are excluded and marginalised are not to be abandoned but to be recognised as God's children who are most in need of the liberating, lifegiving message of the gospel for us all.

God's character reveals a God of justice and an emphasis on our need to care for the vulnerable, the stranger and those who are impoverished.

Evangelism and social justice: Evangelism and social justice are inseparable aspects of our Christian discipleship. The good news of the gospel reveals "life in all its fullness" (John 10:10). Every aspect of our lives, our beliefs, ideas, practices and relationships, are transformed by the gospel. Love is at the intersection of evangelism and social justice.

Interdependence: God created us to be interdependent: with God, others, the created (non-human) world, and within ourselves (physical, emotional, and spiritual). We recognise our shared brokenness and our capacity and need to receive from one another, particularly from people who are economically vulnerable or marginalised whose wisdom and gifts we can fail to recognise.

Inclusion: We believe everyone belongs to God. Each person is created in the image of God and therefore has an intrinsic worth, value and dignity. Therefore, whenever we 'other' people because of their economic circumstances, we distort the image of God in them and ourselves. We recognise the gifts of all people and the sinful structures of systemic injustice which lead to exclusion.

NPNP Core Values

Be pioneering: NPNP projects affirm and enable people from diverse backgrounds and ages who are called by God to see new opportunities and respond to God's Spirit at work outside of the existing Church. NPNP projects enable these people to connect and form new gospel communities amongst unaffiliated people, with creativity, imagination, innovation, and sustained commitment.

Develop a 'mixed ecology': We value a diverse range of missional approaches which will produce a variety of new Christian communities among unaffiliated people. These include church plants, pioneering communities of faith, fresh expressions, missional communities, and other new faith communities in rural, estate, urban, inner city, suburban, and village contexts. We will do so ecumenically wherever possible.

Be committed to risk-taking mission: NPNP is the work of the whole Methodist Church, and we are committed to experimenting and taking risks in mission. In a healthy culture of learning and reflection, evaluation will be valued as part of the journey of a fruitful NPNP project.

Ensure contextual relevance: New Christian communities will arise out of careful listening and will always remain connected to the wider community and aware of its needs.

Nurture discipleship in gathered community: Though an individual chooses to become a disciple, faith is nurtured in community with others. NPNP will celebrate emerging patterns of worship and contextually relevant discipleship that resonate with new people.

Seek justice: We believe God loves all people, that God is at work and can be discovered among all people. We recognise the devastating impact of poverty on people's lives, especially children, and are committed to a vision of God's justice for all people. We are committed to listening to, amplifying, and being changed by the voices of those who experience injustice and marginalisation. Working collaboratively and ecumenically, we will seek opportunities to enable those voices to be heard by those with power to instigate change and transformation.

Share power: We believe people with lived experience are the experts in their contexts and are essential partners in co-designing, co-creating, co-delivering and co-leading any project. We will share power and recognise the dynamics and potential misuse of power.

Celebrate inclusion and participation: We will celebrate and value the inclusion and participation of all. We will resist focusing on service-provider models of community engagement based on the rich doing something for the poor. We recognise our need for the gifts of those at the margins of society, and believe the whole Church needs to receive these gifts to be fully transformed by the gospel of Christ.

Enable leadership communities: We will nurture, enable, and develop local leadership within people already present and invested in their local context. We recognise a variety of leadership styles but will resist models of 'heroic leader/ rescuer' leadership.

Aims and Objectives

The District is tasked with:

- a. Establishing an NPNP team to lead on this work.
- b. Prioritising starting a new Christian community in every circuit, by making it an integrated part of the district's mission plan/strategy.
- c. Encouraging and equipping circuits and local churches to launch NPNP's.
 - i. Accompanying Circuits in listening and praying into God's vision for the work.
 - ii. Ensuring that discipleship and evangelism are foundational elements to the work.
- d. Sharing learning and best practice on pioneering with circuits and local churches.
 - i. Including drawing on the experience of practitioners such as the District Intergenerational Lead, the Compass Project Lead and the NPNP Pioneer Deacon.
 - ii. Seeking input from the District FRCO and NPNP Lead Officers upon appointment.
- e. Exploring how the district will support an ongoing, long-term commitment to starting new Christian communities in circuits across the district in a variety of contexts, especially Church at the Margins.
 - i. Including sharing best practice for creating teams and develop realistic project outcomes.
- f. Creating a policy and process to ensure the equitable allocation of funds to eligible projects.
- g. The District NPNP Team will share this vision at Synod (or similar gatherings) to inspire circuits and encourage them to apply for funding

The District NPNP Team are accountable to the District Policy Committee and the Representative Synod, and work under the direction of the Deputy Chair of District. The teams key tasks are to:

- a. Be enthusiastic advocates for NPNP and including Church at the Margins
- b. Build relationships with the Circuits, encouraging them to explore the possibilities for NPNP's in their contexts, with the aim that 60% of these will be Church at the Margins initiatives. An Initial Ideas form exists for this purpose and will be the basis for such consultations.
- c. Work with and encourage development of Circuit NPNP teams and especially those people who are emerging as leaders of NPNP's.
- d. Support the development of local NPNP budgets and the process of accessing NPNP funding grants from both the District and Connexion.
- e. Discern how the most effective oversight and support for any proposed NPNP might be offered. This will be achieved through use of the agreed Circuit Oversight Process, using the Connexionally agreed NPNP fruitfulness markers and District Policy Core Values.

- f. Work with the Connexionally funded dedicated half-time FRCO district lead (upon appointment), who will support to embed Faith-Rooted Community Organising practices aiming to develop teams and effective leaders of change in those congregations and communities, as part of their discipleship and core mission to be justice-seeking.
- g. Work with the Connexionally funded NPNP district lead (upon appointment), recognising the need that to develop new communities requires focused attention and dedicated and sustained local support, the District NPNP lead will accompany the development of vision, and provide the vital support needed in the early stages of a new community forming.

Circuits that wish to launch an NPNP are expected to:

- a. Form a circuit NPNP team of people with the vision and enthusiasm to plant a new Christian community and support its development. Circuit NPNP Teams will initiate the circuit-led projects by discerning a context, vision and focus for the project; playing a role in submission for funding; and leading on any necessary recruitment. The Circuit NPNP Team could be any group of people committed to pioneering an NPNP. It may involve paid and unpaid role holders, who might be lay or ordained. Though it may not always include the Superintendent, the group should have the support of the Superintendent for their project.
- b. Consider how Church at the Margins might best be developed in their context.
- c. Consider how the proposed project reflects the NPNP Core Values.
- d. Identify circuit or church match funding for the connexional NPNP funding allocated to the project (with the District also providing some match funding from the District Advance Fund) Circuits should match fund grants given for NPNP from their own Circuit and Church funds and resources, or external grants, or give sound reasons for the level of support that can be offered if matching is not possible.
- e. Work alongside the District NPNP team to develop the vision for the NPNP, prepare a budget and apply for funding for the project.
- f. Engage with the Regional Officer for Safeguarding to complete a risk assessment for the Safeguarding aspects of the proposed project.
- g. Encourage the Circuit based NPNP projects to themselves become enthusiastic advocates for NPNP projects through sharing in workshops and storytelling at District Synods and more locally focused opportunities where practical.

Grants and Funding

The District was allocated £305,854 in the God For All 1 tranche. Of which £150,000 is committed to the Compass project in Portsmouth. £155,854 remains for Circuit focussed NPNP projects and must be committed or lost by August 2026.

The District has been allocated £244,180 in the God For All 2 tranche for Circuit focussed projects to be committed/spent by August 2032. All sums are available on a match funding basis. It is expected that Circuit focussed NPNP projects and God For All 2 tranche projects will be match funded from the District Advance Fund, time spent by District and Circuit employees on the delivery of projects and from Circuit/local church funds.

As the intermediate group in the connexional funding process, the District NPNP Team has delegated authority to approve all applications for grants from these District funds. In so doing they will be mindful of the total resources available to the District, the purposes for which connexional funding God For All tranche 1 and 2 funding has been allocated and will accordingly apportion such funds with due care and diligence.