Briefing Paper for Circuit Leadership Team regarding Circuit Mission Statement and Strategy

*The issue*

A mission statement and strategy can be seen as just a paper exercise with no relevance to day-to-day church life. What is the point of a mission statement and strategy? The mission statement says what we are aiming for and the strategy states how we are going to get there.

**The Circuit Mission Statement starts with a list of priorities – do you agree with these? If not, what would you put in their place?** One way to explore these with a congregation would be to have a discussion on each theme (Worship, Learning, Caring & Service, Evangelism) looking at each of the bullet points covered in the document.

*Each congregation needs to complete/ review its own mission statement by 31st August 2024.*

**Start by asking – where/what/how will this church be in 5 years’ time?**

Each aim for the church needs to be specific (not vague or generalized) and should lead to a strategy.

For example, if the vision is of a growing church by 2029 then the mission statement might be “We aim to double our membership by 2030”. The strategy would then need to identify how this might happen. E.g. “In 2024 we will undertake a community survey to see what is needed in our area” or “In 2025 we will run two Alpha courses”

It might be that some congregations will struggle to see a sustainable future. They still need to be encouraged to see that endings are as much part of God’s plan as beginnings. Helping a congregation to plan a celebration of the life of their church can be a valuable way of identifying changes to a mission statement.

If the congregation feels weighed down by concerns around it’s building, there may be room to explore what it might mean to be church without owning a building. The mission statement would then need to capture this change e.g. “We aim to explore what it means to be the Methodist Church in this place”. The strategy could then include such ideas as “In 2024 we will visit two churches in other Circuits that use community facilities instead of church buildings.”

Or it could be about positive endings e.g. “We aim to cease to meet by 2030 having had the opportunity to celebrate the completion of the life and witness of this church”. The strategy might then include a variety of activities including former Ministers/members and their stories and memories in newsletters.

*The important thing to emphasize is that doing nothing is not an option.* For the Circuit Leadership Team to properly represent all the churches in the Circuit, we need to have feedback from all the churches about their views and visions of the future.

It would be most helpful if the two questions in **bold** were answered by the May Circuit Meeting. This, at least, would give us a starting point for conversations.

If the Circuit Mission Statement is to be a living document, then it needs to be reflected in all the agendas of meetings around the Circuit. That is NOT just an *item* on the agenda but the framework for the agendas.

For example: using the headings of Worship, Learning, Caring & Service, Evangelism rather than Membership, Finance and Buildings.

The outcome that we need is for everyone to engage with the Circuit Mission Statement in a meaningful way, from Circuit Leadership Team to Ministers and Congregations.

A further opportunity for members of congregations to influence the Circuit Mission Statement will be at a Circuit Prayer Day that will be held at the beginning of Lent 2024.