



## Circuit Development Plan 2024 – 2029

### Introduction

We endorse fully the Circuit Mission Policy and recommit ourselves to implementing its broad goals and objectives. The Mission Policy was first written in 2015 and has recently been updated to reflect changes in the 'Our Calling' framework (2024). There have been significant changes in our churches and across Methodism as a whole over the past decade; some of these are negative, in that we now have fewer members, fewer local preachers, fewer active supernumeraries and our age demographic is gradually getting older. On the one hand this means we need to focus our energies and resources carefully. On the other hand, there have been significant signs of hope springing up sometimes in unexpected places which have considerably added to the life of the circuit, its churches and members. The purpose of this document is to set out what we currently see as the priorities and direction of the Circuit for the next FIVE years, whilst always being mindful that events and circumstances can quickly change which may require a change of direction or emphasis. We believe any development plan needs to be adaptable and to allow for organic change from within.

As part of the Circuit Stewards' year-long involvement in the Methodist Transformational Leadership Learning Community (TLLC) programme, a full review of the Circuit churches and their relationships to each other, the Circuit, their communities and to other church or Christian organizations was undertaken between September 2023 and March 2024 as part of a Feasibility Study undertaken on behalf of the Circuit by John Hay. This report can be used as a platform for future development. We do need to ensure that the various action points are discussed and where considered appropriate, then implemented.

### Summary of the nine action points arising from the Circuit Feasibility Study (March 2024)

#### **1. Promotion of mission work already happening**

Action the point raised at B.1 that *"encouragement should be given to those who are involved in their communities in what might be described as "mission" type activities and that the church should embrace and recognize this as part of its mission strategy"* by writing that into our church/circuit development and mission plans, giving space in services for people to give testimony about some of the activities they are involved in and making specific mention in the annual Vocations Sunday service.

#### **2. Developing relations with other churches and community groups**

Action point at B.2 re fostering working relationships with other local churches and organizations by making *"sure the conversations continue and be willing to commit resources when appropriate opportunities arise."* Do this by making involvement in Cytun events a priority, being open and transparent about what doing in our dealings with the other churches and inviting early partnership with any ideas we might have.

#### **3. Deepening our discipleship**

Action point B.3 to foster fellowship and deepen discipleship by promoting more house groups across the circuit and developing further the Time and Space fellowship meetings at café's, to include Amlwch and Holyhead. Someone needed to coordinate this.

#### **4. Acting on Church conversations**

Action points raised in each of the churches conversations as set out in appendices 1 – 5. Each of the church stewards to work through together, and bring any of the ideas for development to their church councils or general meetings.

#### **5. Considering Circuit re-structuring**

Action Circuit consultation on the desirability (or otherwise) of restructuring by moving to a single church circuit per section on Merge for Mission at section C above and appendix 7.

#### **6. Promoting Circuit identity**

Action point C.1 above by forming a small group (Circuit Leadership team or volunteers) to receive and work on ideas for improving Circuit identity and connectivity including the starter ideas suggested in appendix 6. Conversations to be had about this across the circuit.

#### **7. Local Community Audits**

Action on implementing good practice in pursuing Community Audits across the Circuit (per section D): each church to consider if they think this will be helpful and how they intend to go about it.

#### **8. A new role of Lay Worker for Anglesey.**

The feasibility study was initiated to ascertain if there is a viable role for a Lay Worker to support the Superintendent Minister within the Circuit, and if so, where this might be focused and for what purpose. The report conclusion is that there is indeed scope for a part-time role for a Lay Worker and that this should be based on Anglesey, with its unique island identity. It is also fair to say that of all our churches, Amlwch currently needs the most support now that Rev'd David and Liz Jones have stepped back from active ministry. Holyhead, whilst by its nature more self-sufficient with an active supernumerary in Rev'd Sue Altree, also has an exciting new ecumenical venture with the Renew Wellbeing Space.

The main purpose of this role would be to help these churches foster working relationships with other churches and Christian groups on the island and to build on the relationships already made e.g. the work at Hafan Cefni. John found that there is a genuine openness and desire among many different church groups to work more effectively together, but it will need persistence and patience to ensure this grows into action: so many leaders are busy or preoccupied with their own projects that there is a risk good intentions go no further than that. Someone needs to be there to grease the wheels of change.

The role would also be about consolidating the pastoral work at Amlwch and Holyhead to release new energies for mission and service; this may include developing a house group structure across the island based on where people live and developing some of the ideas for new well-being groups based outside of our churches and possibly at different locations. The role could also include Circuit-wide involvement e.g. in leading regular acts of wild worship and assisting with the implementation of other proposals set out above and below e.g. developing a circuit based hospital visiting system.

#### **9. Implementation of an Outdoor Community NPNP project**

An exciting Circuit NPNP project is being developed, which will try to find a common language and space to explore the connections between the creation, wilderness and pilgrimage spiritualities of the Christian tradition and the spiritualities found in the outdoor community of Eryri. Initially, this will be by offering support and supervision to Gavin Mart through the Circuit NPNP group as he undertakes the necessary groundwork to enable the Circuit, with Synod support, to make a formal application for funding later in 2024. If that application is successful then continued support will be provided by the Circuit to further develop and launch the project itself. Along with the Anna Chaplaincy work in the east of the Circuit, the Youth Work and Life on the Breadline projects in Bangor and the Anglesey Lay Worker initiative, the NPNP project will give fresh momentum to the Circuit's Mission and stimulate further creative outreach in years to come.

## Proposed Areas of Development (based on the four key areas of 'Our Calling')

**1 Worship** : The Church exists to increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love.

The Circuit will aim to do this by:

- **maintaining the worshipping life of each of the five circuit churches by weekly services through planned preacher appointments.** We are well-provided currently for preachers but we are also well aware that we need to be actively looking for future preachers and that we may we need to develop more capacity for Local Arrangements and combined services. We would also like to further develop the involvement of non-preaching lay members in aspects of worship as currently happens at St John's on the first Sunday of each month. In other words, the development of a culture of inclusive participation.
- **developing Wild Worship/ Forest Church further by increasing to a monthly basis and advertising beyond the circuit congregations to reach a wider sphere.** We may trial having this on a Sunday morning or afternoon as part of the Plan and at different times and days to ascertain the best model to adopt. We would also like to promote this ecumenically.
- **expanding our digital worship capabilities** by continuing with regular morning hybrid zoom services from St Paul's or St John's, a monthly Zoom evening service and to record services making them available more widely.
- **continuing to resource non-digital worship;** mindful that there are some who struggle with zoom technology and/or with physically accessing church services, we will work to ensure that each week there is either a telephone service or worship sheet available and circulated to those who need hard copies.
- **committing to involvement in Cytun worship events** in each local areas and at key seasons of the year, e.g. at Christmas, Holy Week, Week of prayer for Christian Unity.
- **supporting the Amlwch congregation with its worship at Hafan Cefni, Llangefni** by extending that provision from once to twice a month and exploring how relationships can be built on to increase our work amongst the Hafan Cefni community.
- **developing dementia-friendly worship,** initially at St Paul's, Penmaenmawr and Hafan Cefni, with residents at local nursing and care homes particularly in mind.
- **continuing to promote Messy Church** at St Paul's, which provides a worship and learning environment for children and their parents.
- **continuing with the regular 'Songs of Praise'** by zoom or live at Llanfairfechan. We are looking to trial an afternoon 'Scones of Praise' as an occasional main service at Capel Zinc and possibly as a joint ecumenical mid-week service with the Church in Wales at Amlwch.
- **developing the Café church model** started in 2022 at Amlwch at Clwb Y Gorlan and to focus on this as an ecumenical event which could be used to reach a wider group of people in the town, possibly taking place on a weekday or a fifth Sunday.
- **continuing to encourage and further develop a rich prayer life across the Circuit.** In the past four years the corporate prayer life of the circuit has significantly grown e.g. with regular groups meeting by zoom for prayer specifically to support the Anna Chaplaincy and Feasibility Study, as well as a Facebook prayer meeting and a weekly Circuit Prayer Sheet which is widely circulated.

## **2 Learning and Caring :** The Church exists to help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care.

The Circuit will aim to do this by:

- seeking growth in discipleship and personal faith by promoting the formation of small groups to study the bible and explore important issues of faith. This will be through a combination of working with existing groups (specifically the established Bible studies at St Paul's and Capel Zinc, the two house groups at St John's and the recently formed house group/bible study at Holyhead) and encouraging members to form/join new ones (on Anglesey this may be based on geography rather than church affiliation)
- offering occasional Circuit-wide ad-hoc gatherings to encourage churches to address particular issues e.g. recent workshops on 'Living on the Breadline' which looked at addressing poverty issues and 'A Methodist Way of Life' exploring discipleship
- promoting attendance on District and Connexional courses, webinars and the sharing of helpful materials. This to be done digitally through email, Facebook and WhatsApp groups as well as through more traditional forms of communication such as Circuit Magazine and Church Notices.
- promoting a culture of whole-church pastoral care in each of our churches, ensuring there is effective pastorally coverage for members and adherents and organizing effective on-going training and support for those called to this ministry.
- exploring the setting up of a circuit-wide hospital team, who can look at offering visits and well-being packs for members of our churches, who become in-patients at Ysbyty Gwynedd or other local hospitals.
- continuing the development of well-being and friendship groups across the Circuit to create a sense of fun, and fellowship and to address issues of rural social isolation. In particular, to encourage participation in established groups such as CAMEO at St John's, Friday Fellowship at Holyhead and the Forum at Amlwch, whilst also developing new groups based in community spaces such as cafes e.g. the monthly 'Time and Space' group at Menai Bridge.

## **3 Service :** The Church exists to be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice.

The Circuit will aim to do this by:

- developing the ministry of spiritual care of the elderly work across the Circuit. This will be achieved through continued support and funding for our Anna Chaplaincy work in Penmaenmawr and Llanfairfechan, and through linking with ecumenical Anna Chaplaincy initiatives e.g. run by the cathedral in Bangor. The work in Hafan Cefni is a natural expression of this ministry, as is the Re-Engage partnership operating at Capel Zinc in Llanfairfechan and we hope to consolidate this work over time.
- ensuring continued and creative use of buildings for the promotion of strong local communities; we can achieve this through offering our premises for free or for reduced hire rates (e.g. for uniformed youth groups); through continuing to host the town food bank in Penmaenmawr and in exploring how the buildings in Amlwch and Llanfairfechan might be used to showcase local heritage in conjunction with other groups, local councils etc.
- continuing to develop work with those facing financial hardship. Over the last 18 months the Warm Space and Soup lunches at St John's have met some of the needs of financially challenged members of the local Bangor community and University students. Using the expertise and experience of the 'Life on the Breadline'

researchers at Coventry University we will look to develop the relationships already formed; we will also aim to revive and further develop the running of CAP money courses at St John's and to respond to local needs as they arise e.g. the recent event to hand out warm coats at Bangor. We will encourage members to be involved in practical ways of tackling poverty and hidden hardship (e.g. the food bank at St Paul's and Good Turn on Anglesey) and encourage local churches to build better relationships with their local communities in order to understand their needs.

- **encouraging people to share how they are involved in their communities**; many of us live in villages away from where our churches are located and are engaged in service to the people who live there; we will give space in services for people to share testimony about some of the activities they are involved in, encouraging others to be more active; we will make greater use of the annual Vocations Sunday service and better highlight what is already taking place through the Circuit Magazine and prayer sheets.

- **continuing to support the Agricultural Chaplain for North Wales and the RAF Chaplain at Valley both of whom are based in our Circuit**; we will seek to understand better the work they do and the needs of the people they serve

- **promoting care for the environment**; by participation in the Eco-Church scheme, building on the Bronze Award obtained by St John's in 2022, and by working towards becoming an Eco-Circuit; by looking to improve our carbon footprint and aspiring eventually to be a net zero carbon emissions Circuit. This to be led by the St John's Eco-Group, working with ecumenical partners.

- **working for social justice**; by implementing, as appropriate the insights of the Connexion's Justice-seeking Churches framework and through supporting charities such as All We Can, Christian Aid, Action for Children etc. by periodic fundraising and information sharing; by acting on guidance from 'Life on the Breadline' research e.g. giving support to help the disenfranchised obtain voter registration.

#### **4 Evangelism : The Church exists to make more followers of Jesus Christ.**

The Circuit will aim to do this by:

- **providing opportunities for children and young people to hear the gospel message, primarily by building on the existing work at Bangor** (through Sunday Club, offering a child-friendly worship environment, regular holiday club events, continuing our relationship with Scripture Union and supporting the Cytun-based Open the Book initiative) **and at Penmaenmawr** (through Messy Church and associated holiday events)

- **building up in general our links with the other Cytun churches who have more active children and youth work**; sharing good practice and providing mutual support as appropriate (key to this is the recruitment of volunteer workers and continued training)

- **appointing in particular a full-time Youth for Christ director in Bangor** for an initial 3-year period, which will commence when a suitable applicant is found. This work has been jointly undertaken by three local churches including St John's)

- **supporting the development of an ecumenical Renew Wellbeing Space at Holyhead** being started by members from various local churches under the auspices of Cytun. If this proves successful, it may be possible to replicate similar spaces elsewhere in the Circuit working ecumenically.

- **using buildings and outdoor spaces to promote the gospel message**; e.g. at St John's developing the area known as Mason's Yard to become an attractive space in which members of the public can spend time and

events and activities can be organized to promote the gospel message; continuing to encourage St Paul's and Llanfairfechan to make use of their garden spaces e.g. for the Halloween event in Penmaenmawr.

- introducing new patterns of worship which may connect with non-church members of our communities who are seeking a spirituality they cannot find in regular church worship. This will include further developing wild worship, café church, craft church and 'Scones of Praise' style groups, in addition to the Circuit NPNP project.

- furthering the co-operation with ecumenical partners to work with them on any evangelistic projects and events which arise e.g. Praise by the Pier in Bangor

- exploring the concept of moments of encounter. This may be through existing activities, such as Flexercise, Knit and Natter at Llanfairfechan, but also more generally by the development of a culture of openness amongst our churches to explore the opportunities which thinking outside the box may bring.

- implementing the NPNP project amongst the Outdoor Community of Eryri (see Action 9 of the Feasibility Study report above)

*Draft 3 The Circuit Stewards' Team 22/4/24*

\* N.B. This Circuit Development Plan (2024 – 2029) is necessarily a working document. It has been drafted initially to take the work of the Circuit Feasibility Study (March 2024) and to present its recommendations in a way that links the overarching Circuit Mission Policy (2015, updated 2024) with a five-year planned development of ministries across the Bangor and Holyhead Circuit. In putting the Development Plan together the timetable we have followed has been strict, to ensure this linking work can be done before the Superintendent goes on Sabbatical in June 2024. The Circuit Meeting held in March 2024, which unanimously approved the Feasibility Study report, will be invited by the Circuit Stewards' Team to look at and approve the Circuit Development Plan (2024 – 2029), which is based upon it, at its next meeting.

The ongoing work can then begin in earnest in the Connexional Year 2024/5, to identify an annual programme of activity and responsibility to take the specific elements of the Development Plan and implement them over the next five years. In that time we necessarily expect that some things will change and develop in new ways, but we are confident that the general thrust of these documents accurately reflects the conviction we have within the Circuit that this is the direction in which God is leading us at this time.

*Nick Sissons, Circuit Superintendent, 23/4/24*