

Mission Plan

Church: St John's Bangor

Date plan agreed: 27 October 2020 (Church Council)

Our community Context:

St John's Church is located in the city of Bangor, and is one of 10 other churches making up the ecumenical Churches Together group (Cytun), which provides opportunities for the church (as a people) to engage with the local community that they choose to serve. St John's is also the largest of the five Methodist churches which make up the Bangor and Holyhead circuit.

Its community is a university city, so this affects the community makeup itself within the city. When the students are here in term time the community has a high proportion of young adults of all ethnicities and backgrounds, but when they leave for the holidays the community changes dramatically to largely middle aged or elderly people. Bangor is also the location for Ysbyty Gwynedd, the main hospital for Gwynedd and Anglesey, which along with the University, provides key employment opportunities and has led to a large number of teaching and medical professionals living in the locality. The city also provides key retail opportunities and is a draw to people who live in the outlying rural areas coming in to do their shopping. However, in recent years the High Street has suffered from many businesses not able to compete with the bigger outlets which are mostly based on retail parks outside the centre, or with changing market demands, and there are currently many vacant units and a general feel to the main High Street of being run-down. The area has also been hit by some businesses closing or relocating; the University has announced job losses, following the impact of Covid -19 on the number of overseas students taking up places and it is expected that other local employers will follow suit shortly when the Furlough scheme comes to an end; consequently, unemployment and local poverty is rising. The expected job opportunities and boost to the local economy expected from the Wylfa Newydd project now seems unlikely to materialise given the announced withdrawal of Hitachi from the scheme. Additionally, the continued effects of Covid-19 on the hospitality industry and all areas of life suggest the next few years could be a difficult time for the community. Now more than ever, is the time for the church to step up to the mark and offer something positive to the community.

Our Church context

LOCATION

St John's church building is positioned in an elevated and prominent site at one end of the High Street, at a key junction to the city one-way system and next to the popular Lidl store. It is close to student and elderly warden aided flats, and as such is both a very visible presence in, and has opportunities to serve, the community.

OUTLOOK

St John's aspires to be an outreaching church with members of the congregation actively encouraged to reach out to their neighbours and those they meet in their daily lives, to show the love of God. The church seeks to work closely with the other 4 churches in the Bangor and Holyhead Circuit and the 9 other members of Cytun to achieve this. There is a hard core of committed individuals within the church who have given much in time and money in recent years to undertake major development of the church building, and are keen to extend that development into its mission.

Prior to lockdown, members were involved in many ways to build up a sense of community in the church. For example, the Circuit Mission Enabler worked with members of the congregation to enable outreach to our elderly in the homes where they have been moved to; a strength and mobility exercise class led by a member who is a qualified physiotherapist was initiated with a view to encourage all to become more mobile whatever their ages and abilities; monthly lunches after the Sunday service offered opportunities to share fellowship; regular groups such as EWOT and the Bangor Methodist Collective met for friendship and fellowship; there was a regular weekly prayer meeting and a fortnightly Housegroup which met in the homes of members. However, since Lockdown and with Welsh Government restrictions in place all these and other activities have ceased, with the exception of the prayer meeting and Housegroup which have continued to meet remotely, and it is at present unclear when they will be able to resume. Like all churches everywhere, St John's is trying to find ways to respond to its calling at this difficult time.

CONGREGATION PROFILE

a) GENERAL

The church congregation comprises people from many different walks of life including students, farmers, teachers, university lecturers, doctors, hospital workers and retired people. It is a somewhat dispersed community with approximately two-thirds living outside Bangor itself, from the foothills of Snowdon to Caernarfon and Anglesey, which can impact the nature, organisation and

viability of activities. Nevertheless, there is a strong sense of identity and belief all are welcome in the church. The average congregation size prior to lockdown was approximately 45, but the number associated with the church is higher than that. Some members work weekend shifts or are Local Preachers who take services not only at St John's but also at the other circuit churches or elsewhere, which means they are not always present at services. Whilst there are people from all ages involved in the church, the majority fall within the 55+ bracket.

Since lockdown, there has only been one service in which people have come together in person, namely a Harvest Celebration held in a farm field belonging to members. Other services have taken place by zoom, and it is clear that many of those who used to attend in person have not done so for the remote services. However, a weekly worship sheet with hymns (sometimes including youtube links), prayers, readings and sermon notes is available and sent out by email or post to those who wish to receive it, which has gone some way to mitigate this.

The church has a well organised network of Pastoral Visitors. In normal times Pastoral Visitors discuss matters arising via regular meetings where concerns can be raised. Also, and especially during lockdown, the Pastoral Secretary keeps in touch with their activities by phone and/or personal contact. Whilst personal visits have not always been possible during Lockdown, Pastoral Visitors have been keeping in regular touch by phone with those under their care.

b) STUDENTS

During term time there is a small but committed group of students who regularly attend services and are encouraged to participate in worship. The circuit employs a student worker who organises events, meetings, and exercises pastoral care with the student group (known as the 'Bangor Methodist Collective'), and much of this normally takes place on the church premises. The Minister is also a chaplain at the University, so there is a good base for engagement with the student community.

c) YOUTH

There is a small Junior Church with currently one regular attendee, but nevertheless she is a valued part of the congregation, and there is regular engagement with her during services, sometimes with later feedback to the congregation about what the Junior Church Team have been doing. As part of ongoing outreach there are regular meetings of Messy Church and in many school holidays, members organise a Holiday Club at which children from the local community take part. Covid restrictions have brought normal activities to an end, but in August members successfully ran the Wonderzone Holiday Club by zoom. On this occasion Scripture Union

materials were used and found to be highly effective, and this in turn has led to contact and discussions with Scripture Union resulting in links being formed with a Scripture Union Mission Enabler as part of their “Reaching the 95%” campaign. Members also participate within CYTUN to act out and tell bible stories to school children as part of the Open the book project, which sadly has also been suspended due to Covid restrictions.

Our Calling:

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God’s love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

The church exists to:

- Increase the awareness of God’s presence and celebrate God’s love (Worship)
- Help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care (learning and caring)
- Be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice (Service)
- Make more followers of Jesus Christ (Evangelism)

St. John’s Methodist Church, Bangor welcomes in safety all who wish to be part of the life of the Church whether through worship, learning and caring, service or evangelism. In creating places of acceptance for all, no-one should feel any less welcome than anyone else on account of their age, social or economic class, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic. St. John’s Methodist Church, Bangor upholds the discipline of the Methodist Church in the face of discrimination: rejecting and resisting all behaviours which are discriminatory or belittling.

Our calling gives us the big picture of the mission of the people called Methodists. The Church hopes to use the Mission consultation exercise held in July 2020 and the discussions regarding this Mission Plan to figure out what our *calling* looks like “on the ground”. This is an exciting work in progress, notwithstanding the challenges posed by changing Covid restrictions.

Our dream in five years time:

Our hope is a) people will be actively engaged with 'a Methodist Way of Life', in prayer, learning and caring, service, and evangelism.

b) to see church growth with increased membership, increased involvement in community-based activities, increased cooperation with the other churches in the Bangor and Holyhead circuit and Cytun, and a full diary of outside community groups making use of the building.

c) to have good student links, a thriving student cohort, more student-friendly styles of worship and discussion groups, greater student involvement in the general life of the church and to continue to fund the student worker role.

d) to find ways of offering greater support for our elderly community.

e) to expand work with the homeless and those in poverty by focusing resources where there is a need, working closely with other organisations and complementing rather than copying services provided by other local churches or organisations. Specifically, to become a partner church to CAP and promote a CAP money course or Life Skills course.

f) to have a voice in the community, by regular participation in community events such as the Carnival and contributions to the Bangor Aye, use of social media and noticeboard/space at front of church.

g) our listening ear group hopes to expand the Listening ear service to the elderly people's homes within our circuit, and in our local supermarkets and restaurants.

h) to increase a focus on prayer, by fostering the development of 'Prayer triplet groups', prayer meetings, prayer walks and occasional Prayer Days, as the church consider prayer is the key force behind all growth.

i) to increase the number of small housegroups meeting to study the bible and share fellowship.

j) to have significantly improved St John's carbon footprint, become more environmentally conscious as a church community and to have measured this by having achieved at least Eco-Church bronze award status.

k) to use the premises to host themed exhibitions and displays, working with partner organisations.

l) to foster reconciliation and understanding with the Muslim community in Bangor by conversation, liaison and working together where possible with the Mosque.

m) to have established regular youth activities through links with Scripture Union 95 campaign and assistance of SU Mission Enabler.

Possibilities for our building (once it is finished, and Covid restrictions ease to permit)

Sharing our building with other Christian organisations in our area which have no other place to go for worship and prayer.

Use our new building and hall for outreach such as;

Cafe rock (drop in opportunity on a Friday for prayer and chat and a game of scrabble)

Soup lunches (once a month on a Sunday. Soup is served after church in the hall). There is a potential for soup lunch in the week or other styles of lunches, exploring different options of food styles which may attract different people,

The Bangor Methodist Collective Student fellowship (where students can gather together to deepen their faith through bible study and conversations)

Alpha groups (this is an evangelical course which seeks to introduce the basics of the Christian faith through a series of talks and discussions, and is an opportunity to explore the meaning of life.)

Singing for Fun.

CAP Money Course or Life Skills Course.

Explore other options, worship led, which may attract different people.

Hosting themed exhibitions and displays eg Black Lives Matter, working with partner organisations or sections of the community.

Use by community groups, such as Scouts, Cubs, Guides, Carers and Toddlers according to demand and need.

Our priorities this year:

Worship

- 1 Prior to Covid-19 restrictions taking effect it had been expected that the church would this year prioritise the active exploration of different types/styles of worship, with emphasis on more varied hymn/chorus singing and greater use of musical instruments in worship. This would include exploration of student-friendly styles of worship with short interactive discussions, modern hymnody, services organised by the students on subjects relevant to them and possibly the formation of a student led band. However, Covid-19 restrictions have changed the landscape of worship. To date the church has not been open for worship since March 2020, but it is hoped that services will resume again sometime shortly after mid-November. Now, the priority is find how

to get back to worshipping as a congregation in person and together again in an inclusive way, given restrictions which seem likely to continue and which specifically prohibit congregational singing and use of wind instruments, impose a limit on numbers and require wearing of face coverings by all but those leading worship. It is likely that a combination of live streaming services by zoom or some other method, playing musical clips and making better use of all aspects of technology is the way forward. This will involve experimentation, and we shall need to see what works best, but we need to draw back to worship those who have not been able to attend zoom worship to date. Once a way to do this has been found, then the original priority regarding different styles of worship etc can also be addressed within the constraints in which we have to operate.

Learning and Caring

1. More active involvement in Bible study. Exploring our faith deeper through study and conversation.
2. Listen and look to God in scripture and in the world and thinking about how this can relate to our community needs.
3. Listening ear is very active in listening to those in the church who need to talk and in the community via 'Coffee and Chat' at Café Deiniol (the city centres ecumenically run cafe.) For the moment, Covid restrictions and work in the church building have prohibited this taking place face to face, but the work of the Listening Ear has continued by phone, and it is hoped face to face contact will be able to resume shortly.
4. Supporting Charities such as Christmas shoe boxes appeals for people in need internationally (we fill shoe boxes with essential items for those in need.). 'Action for Children' and 'All we Can' are always high on our agenda and funds are raised through events in the year.
5. Offering support to those struggling with anxiety, isolation and financial worries.
6. Offering support to the elderly, many of whom feel particularly isolated due to Covid restrictions. In the past we have offered services at care homes, bringing church to them through the Vintage Church initiative. At the present time the restrictions prevent this – but we should monitor the situation and seek to resume when permitted. We also need to actively explore other ways to offer support to the elderly.

Service

1. To engage with the homeless and those in financial or other difficulties by working closely with other churches in CYTUN and partner organisations such as Digatref and provide help for the Food Bank, Café Deiniol and to monitor need for the soup run to resume when appropriate.
2. We will continue to monitor the possibilities of again reaching out into the care homes, but only when Covid restrictions permit.
3. To become a partner church to Christians Against Poverty (CAP) and start a CAP Money Course initially at St John's building but in time to be offered across the circuit and through other CYTUN churches as opportunity and demand presents.
4. To commit to working with CYTUN more closely in supporting and promoting its events to the membership, particularly Open the Book and Street Pastors, both of which though currently not able to function due to Covid restrictions will need new helpers when able to resume.
5. To commit to development of environmentally friendly church life and to consider making an application for Eco-Church status.
6. To promote the use of the building for themed exhibitions and displays, and use by community groups from outside the church.
7. To work closely with the other churches in the circuit to support circuit mission activities and to promote the same across membership.
8. Engage with the student community and listen to what they would like us to provide for them, and allow opportunity to let them be involved within the life of the church.

Evangelism

1. We recognise that it is everyone's responsibility to speak of the love of God and live our lives in a way that will draw others to Jesus, particularly the marginalised and those on the edges of the church. Singing for fun (when covid restrictions permit) is one way to do this, as are all activities in which we make contact with others on the fringes or outside the church community and which enable us to share fellowship, friendship and faith.
2. We will actively share our faith with those we come in to contact with.
3. We are glad to have both a student worker and superintendent minister who is also a chaplain at the university, which mean there are good channels of communication for events, displays and links with University led initiatives which can be encouraged.

4. The church to have more of a voice in the community, by sensitively addressing current issues (eg Black Lives Matter, climate change) and making Christian values and beliefs clear through use of noticeboard, Bangor Aye and social media.
5. Link to the Scripture Union 95 campaign and explore ways with help of SU Mission Enabler as to how St Johns can be involved in reaching youths in the area.

Our plan of action:

Priority	Activity	Person Responsible	Timescale
<i>Worship</i>			
1. Finding ways to resume worshipping together for as many people as possible by combination of live worship, live streaming of services, playing music or musical clips whilst complying with regulations	Live worship for limited numbers, live streamed by zoom for rest.	Stewards, Tech Team	Over the next 6 months
2. To be more inclusive and provide a worship facility for those unable to attend in person or by zoom	Record services and provide link on website, provide written worship sheet for those with no internet access.	Stewards, Tech team	Over the next 6 months
3. Explore different styles of worship, music, use of non-wind instruments within constraints of regulations and technology	Music group set up to oversee and coordinate, liaison with Bangor Methodist Collective to try more student-friendly styles and student led worship.	Margaret M Izzy	Over the next 18 months

<i>Learning and caring</i>			
1. More active involvement in Bible study	Exploring our faith and deepening our faith through Bible study and conversation. All to be encouraged to participate in The New Testament in a Year programme and blog, to attend housegroups where possible.	All	Over the next 18 months
2. Look to God and listen to God.	Through quiet times and Scripture and looking at the world around us. All encouraged to make use of Methodist Church Prayer handbook and on-line resources available on Methodist website.	All	Over the next 18 months
3. Listening ear	Wear our listening ear badges on all occasions of church activity when we are free to listen. Explore other avenues of expanding the service to the circuit, and the wider public.	TBC	On going
4. Action for Children	Events during the year to raise money and awareness.	Norma C	On going
5. Support for anxious, isolated and those with financial worries	Coffee mornings, friendship groups, CAP money course, Café Rock, Singing for Fun (when restrictions allow).	TBC, John H	Over the next 18 months
6. Vintage Church/Elderly	To resume when restrictions and safety permits and set up Action group to consider other ways to offer support to elderly (EAG).	TBC	Over the next year
7. Engage with racism awareness issues and anti-	Unconscious bias training for all in church office and all members encouraged to participate.	TBC	Over the next 18 months

racism campaign	Engage with Indian Church, University societies and Mosque, to learn more about different cultures, how race issues affect them		
Service			
1. Engage with homeless through existing CYTUN projects, Soup Run	Support Cathedral Food Bank, Café Deiniol, Digatref and other existing ventures with use of human and monetary resources. Prior to lockdown food and drink was taken each Saturday to the homeless on the streets of Bangor by a group from the church. However, as it currently stands the local homeless have been rehoused and no longer on the streets as before. The situation will need monitoring in case they do return to the streets, but in any event other means to the same end can be achieved by working closely with other churches and organisations like Digatref to offer assistance when needed.	Sue E	On going
2. Care Homes	Monitor when appropriate to resume engagement, Listening ear NB Prior to Covid restrictions we had been involved in two Elderly people's homes working with the management to promote Christian learning/teaching through craft work. It had been hoped to expand this to Uxbridge court and Y Gorlan which will be explored.	TBC, EAG	On going

3. CAP	Become a partner church to CAP and start a Money Course, with John Hay and Sue E to be trained as Money Coaches.	John Hay	Within 12 months
4. Increased involvement in CYTUN events and activities	Promote greater awareness of CYTUN events and activities, especially Open the Book and Street Pastors, and actively encourage more members to participate.	CYTUN reps	On going
5. Eco Church	Action group to facilitate questionnaire application and consider steps to make necessary changes to church life to achieve Bronze status.	Action Group	Within 12 months
6. Promote use of building to community groups and for displays/exhibitions	Serve our community by allowing community groups without premises to use. Look to stage and promote displays/exhibitions eg Black Lives Matter.	Action Group	October onwards
7. Circuit involvement	Promote and support Circuit based mission initiatives within church family. Support circuit initiatives and other circuit churches in mission activities, as proposed by Circuit Think-Tank.	Think-Tank members	October onwards
8. Students	Explore ways to welcome to body of the church, engage and encourage, meals with members (when restrictions ease).	Izzy M, Minister, stewards, all	Ongoing

Evangelism

1. Outreach to the marginalised and the people on the edge	Pre Covid restrictions the Monthly Soup Lunch and Singing for Fun group were a good means to engage with those on the edge of the church and to encourage them to become part of the church community, but this will have to be put on hold until such time as restrictions permit and position can be reviewed. In the meantime, other proposed activities such as CAP Money course, CYTUN events such as Good Friday march are a way of engaging people from outside the church.	Jacqueline and Jean O and the Singing for Fun team John Hay, CYTUN reps	On going
2. We actively share our faith with those the church comes in to contact with.	We can use all our groups for this, including visiting our uniformed organisations, with our many and varied skills to support their badge work, again subject to covid restrictions. We can make the church facilities inviting and attractive, with banners, displays and pictures which will be appreciated by users of the premises.	TBC	Over next 18 months
3. Outreach with the students	Explore ways to share faith through workshops, events, displays, link in with University based initiatives as appropriate. Ideas to be considered include a Messy Church type student café/forum to explore issues through discussion and debate.	John Hughes and Izzy and all members of the congregation	Over next 18 months
4. A voice in the community	To make sensitive contributions to the Bangor Aye, on social media and imaginative use of	Action group	Over the next 18 months

	noticeboard and area at front of building to promote Christian values and beliefs.		
5. Link to SU 95 Campaign	Explore ways to reach unchurched youth of area.	Sue E, Action Group?	Over the next 18 months

Making it happen:

Things we will stop doing to make space for our action plan:

Singing for Fun, Monthly Soup Lunch, Vintage Church and work with those in care homes are all sadly impractical to continue given Covid restrictions in place. Other small groups and activities currently proposed to restart may be delayed as restrictions tighten.

Our outcomes: Once the Church development works are completed

Priority	Activity	Outcome we hope for
<i>Worship</i>		
1. As many people as possible Worshipping together again, or able to access by recording on website or written worship sheet	Combination of services with as many physically present as allowed and live streamed to rest by zoom, access to recording or sheet	All who want to worship together can do so and those who are unable to can still part of the worshipping community by catch up or following the worship sheet.
2. Inclusive for all	Within constraints of regulations, more café style church as well as traditional styles of church with new access to those with mobility difficulties or other needs	Worship as community together to grow in our love for one another and the Lord.

3. Exploring different styles of worship	Look at different forms of worship and try them.	More will come and join us and greater student participation.
<i>Learning and caring</i>		
1. More active involvement in Bible study and Housegroups.	Bible studies, Wednesday Housegroup and other small groups meeting together to read learn and discuss, engagement with The New Testament in a Year and blog. Further housegroups to be encouraged to start, by zoom or in person when possible.	We hope that people will deepen their understanding of God and his written Word, and gain fellowship and support.
2. Looking to God	Exploring Prayer and different ways of listening to Gods voice and seeing God in our own story. Encouraging participation in Prayer Triplets initiative and established Friday prayer meetings.	We hope to build ourselves and one another up in the knowledge and love of God. We believe prayer is a key ingredient for growth.
3. Listening	Listening to others and hearing their Journey with 'Where is God in my story?'	People will become whole and find meaning in Jesus.
4. Action for Children	Raise money to give to Christian organisations	Children will be better cared for
5. Anxious, isolated, Money worries	Help to those in need through friendship, sharing and Money Course skills. Café Rock, Singing for Fun (when restrictions allow)	Anxiety, isolation and money worries will be addressed.
6. Vintage Church	Bring church to our elderly where they are.	Our old people will know they are still valued and cared for in their care homes by us.
7. Racism awareness, Anti-racism campaign	Unconscious bias training, meeting for food and worship with Indian Church, engaging with members of Mosque and University Societies to listen to their stories.	Church members will better understand issues of racism, become more open and welcoming of all people.

Service		
1. Homeless	Encourage members to participate in CYTUN churches existing projects and Soup Run when there is need	Our community will be reached and blessed by our working together for God.
2. Care Homes	Visits, Vintage Church etc on hold due to Covid restrictions, but to be monitored and resume when possible.	Sharing God's love, helping elderly feel supported and cherished.
3. CAP	Love all those who come for help, giving support through Money Course and signposting more serious debt issues on to main CAP office.	Facilitating freedom and hope from money concerns
4. CYTUN activities	Promote and support CYTUN activities such as Walk of Witness, Easter Service, Christian Aid service and collection, Open the Book, Street Pastors	Fostering Christian Unity and more opportunities to serve
5. Eco-Church	Apply for Eco-Church status, better focus on environmental issues in life of church.	Expressing love and care for environment and God's creation is part of our calling.
6. Church premises	Exhibitions/ Displays, use by community groups	Opportunity to have a voice within community and work with other organisations in creative way. Supporting community and fostering ties.
7. Circuit involvement	Support and promote involvement in circuit wide initiatives.	Mutual support, greater resources and unity, learning to work co-operatively with others to further God's Kingdom in wider area. Also, will reflect better fact that some members live beyond Bangor itself.

8. Students	Listening to what want, greater involvement, hospitality	A way of showing God's love and furthering Kingdom values, by welcoming the stranger and being open to learn from younger people with their positive energy and enthusiasm.
<i>Evangelism</i>		
1. Reach others through song, (When Covid restrictions allow) CAP	Sing and Chat to support people with Dementia, Stress, Depression, Anxiety and the Burdened The Money Course materials allow opportunity for sensitive faith sharing.	People will be more able to cope with pressures of life and feel part of the church community. People can find hope and meaning
2. Actively share our faith with others	We recognise that it is our responsibility to speak of the love of God to others.	To draw others to Jesus
3. Outreach with students	Encourage Izzy and John H in the work they do in the university, as Student Worker and Chaplain, and make welcome all who come in as a result of this exciting work	Encourage students to grow in faith
4. A voice in the community	Bangor Aye, Noticeboard, Social Media	Make known Christian values and beliefs. Getting noticed, establishing relevance.
5. Link to SU 95 Campaign	Explore ways to reach local unchurched youth with help of SU Mission Enabler	Promote Christian belief and values to youths in area, whilst providing them with safe space and something of interest to participate in.

Date of next review - 31 March 2022

