

A Circuit shaped for discipleship and mission



August 2017

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From James

Dear Friends,

With joy and excitement, I welcome you to our vision for the future. God is not finished with us yet. While we are alive as Christians we are called to discover what God is doing where we are and to join in.

In faithfulness to this calling, the Circuit Meeting is inviting us to discover afresh - with the help of the Holy Spirit - God's purpose for us; willingly offering all we have and are to serve Him as, where and how he chooses. These words, echoed in our Covenant prayer, remind us that what we are embarking upon is nothing new. It is what the followers of Jesus have always been about. What we are doing here is putting into words that calling, so that we can all own it and become part of it.

I believe our calling as **magnetic missional movements** is to be about the business of making new disciples and nurturing existing ones.

Reading the gospels, we cannot help but be struck by Jesus' magnetism – people in all kinds of need found welcome, acceptance, love and inclusion as they encountered Jesus where they were. There was challenge and an invitation to transformation, too. Who he was grew out of a living relationship with his Father.

Jesus' words in Luke 4:16 - 21 speak of the purpose of his coming – enabling people to encounter the love of God and respond - mission!

Most of us, if we are honest, are unsettled by the prospect of change, but change is part of the very DNA of our existence. Whether we resist it, or embrace it, change will happen to us and around us, with us or in spite of us. Our churches are called not to be monuments, but movements – keeping company with God, reflecting Jesus' love, empowered by the flow of the Spirit.

As you read this document please do so prayerfully and with open minds and hearts. In common with those who have gone before us, we are seeking to work out what God is asking of us in these days and to respond to the glory of God and the flourishing of lives. What would your life, your church and your wider community be like if the vision outlined here became a reality?

If this vision enthuses you – and I pray it will – what part will you play in bringing it to birth?

May God give us his grace to listen, faith to act and courage to follow.

Love and prayers,

James

From the Circuit Stewards

Discerning the way forward

As followers of Jesus, our aim is to maximise the possibility for people to encounter and be nurtured in the transforming love of God. Mission is central to the sharing of our faith and so we need to free ourselves from the constraints which limit our outreach capabilities. We sought views from circuit members to guide our thinking and we are grateful for all the ideas contributed to the discernment process. You can see the main points raised in the roadshows summarised in Appendix C. Prayerfully we worked through your comments and we have designed a model for mission tailored to the circuit needs. Together we have recognised that we need: -

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To explore ways of reaching un-churched people in our communities and to provide sustainable and relevant faith sharing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To look at how best to use our people resources, presbyters, outreach workers and lay people
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To develop a flexible approach to times and styles of worship, to plan outreach at key festivals and open-air events
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To build on and expand our outreach ministry with young people and young families through committed and vibrant workers and volunteers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To empower our church stewards and members to be more active in faith sharing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To ensure that our communication, noticeboards, website and Facebook pages are attractive, up-to-date and refreshed regularly
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To make sure that our church buildings are welcoming and in good order
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To train specialist ministers and lay workers for urban and rural communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To empower leadership, training and mentoring
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To discourage unnecessary meetings which absorb time and effort

The resources needed to share the message of the gospel and the love of God in the 21st century are wide ranging and include both presbyters and lay people, time, effort, money and appropriate buildings. The model we have designed is both brave and bold and requires the support from all circuit members. We need to continue to maintain momentum and ensure that there is as much involvement in discussions and decision making as possible. We need a clear action plan and teams of people to cover the implementation and delivery.

Why are we doing this?

Why do we exist? We exist for such a time as this to stand as beacons illuminating God's call for his people to return to their first love: to seek and to love him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, and to show the fruits of their journey by their lifestyle. That illumination happens as we are going, and Matthew reminds us that it is in this context disciples are made, nurtured, taught and empowered:

*"As you are going make disciples of all, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*¹

Faced with the reality of decline and despondency we have a choice...accept it or seek to reverse it! Discipleship will mean different things to different people, look different in different contexts; but at our core what we want to be about is growing disciples – new and existing. It doesn't just rely on us, God invites us to be partners with him in that task and so we need to be proactive and not passive in the process. We travel not in our own strength, but in God's.

The President of Conference challenged us recently with these words:

"What are we doing in our churches to encourage people to talk of God? Do we have a growth plan in place, which includes a series of opportunities for people to learn what it means to share faith?"

Does the structure of our Church maximise the opportunity for people to learn how to be generous with what we have?

Are our churches structured so that we can offer hospitality to all those we encounter and does a cup of instant coffee and a rich tea biscuit after worship speak to you of generosity and hospitality?

...

*I am part at present of a declining Church, but I am not part of a declining gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ is here to stay, but has the time not come of us to be radical to take some risks in order that we can grow?"*²

¹ Matthew 28: 19 – 20, Italics are mine

² Rev'd L. Mellor, Presidential Address, Methodist Conference 2017

Reaching where we are...

- The rigorous and wide-ranging process has helped us to reach the point where we are now. This includes, but is not restricted to, the following:
- Throughout the last year there were opportunities for Circuit-wide consultation on the future – in particular, through workshops with our church treasurers and church stewards, and the autumn roadshows to which everyone was invited. Alongside these ‘formal’ conversations, numerous informal conversations with church groups also took place.
- The Circuit Leadership Team gathered for an extended meeting in November 2016 with the focus of discerning sustainable patterns for mission and growth into the future.
- In January 2017, the Circuit Staff Team, explored change management facilitated by the District Mission Enabler (DME). This was followed up with a meeting between the DME and the Circuit Superintendent.
- Ministerial colleagues have completed their cycles of annual review, and again the focus of these has been on mission opportunities and future possibilities.
- During the past year members of the Circuit Leadership Team have responded to individual churches seeking support and guidance as they have sought to discern their part in God’s mission here and now.

As we continue to go forward we remain committed to:

- **listening to God and one another;**
- **keeping in step with the Spirit;**
- **responding to God’s promptings trustingly and faithfully even when we feel challenged and uncertain;**
- **meeting questions and concerns with openness and honesty.**

Circuit Mission Policy

Context

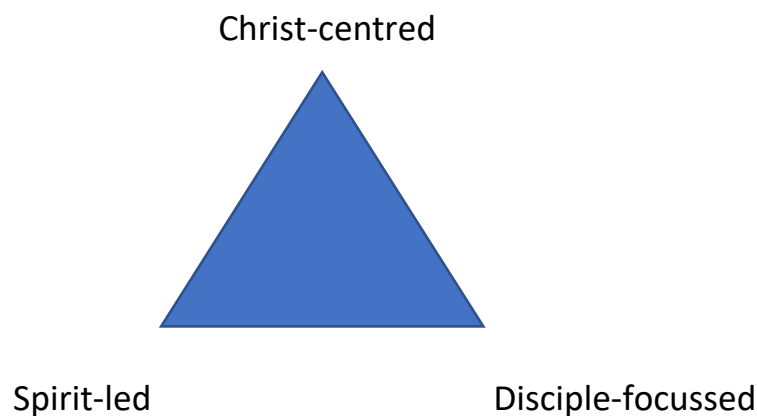
The St Neots and Huntingdon Circuit celebrates, affirms and values the contribution made by each of its fourteen churches in living out the Good News day by day in small significant acts within their communities. Without their faithful service, no mission policy would be required.

Churchgoing as it was once is no more, and how faith is understood, expressed and lived is constantly evolving - as it should - for we follow a living God. This mission policy seeks to respond to these trends in ways which are life-giving and sustainable. We move forward believing firmly that God has not finished with us yet. We need to grasp afresh the truth: "It's not the church of God which has a mission in the world, but the God of mission who has a church in the world."³

The heart of the policy is a desire for people to encounter the life-changing love of God, be transformed and become transformers. It can so easily be the case that unknowingly Christians can, "replace the transcendent vitality of a life with God for the ego satisfaction they derive from a life for God."⁴

Policy

We believe that we are called together by God to be Christ-centred, disciple-focussed and Spirit-led.⁵ This belief shapes our decision making, vision, allocation of our God-given resources and mission priorities.



³ Rev'd Dr Martyn Atkins

⁴ Mike Breen

⁵ This belief could perhaps be the basis for a Circuit-wide Bible Study in Advent 2017

As a Circuit, we will seek to support and resource initiatives which can be church or Circuit led and which meet one or more of the following priorities:

- Undergird all we are, and all we seek to do in prayer;
- Make new disciples and nurture existing ones;
- Offer creative and different opportunities for inspiring worship throughout the week;
- Create authentic, welcoming communities which are accessible to all;
- Embed a culture of teamwork, encouragement and nurture among both lay and ordained leaders;
- Practise radical hospitality;
- Enable effective governance and communication;
- Maintain an outward focus;
- Identify what we do well and do it;
- Empower ministry to be collaborative and affirm the giftedness of all;
- Invest in leaders that they might invest in others.

In enfleshing these priorities - and in common with the whole Methodist Church - we will work in partnership with others wherever possible.

We will encourage each of our churches to shape its life and witness around these priorities.

Moving Forward

A vision without a task is but a dream; a task without a vision is drudgery; a vision with a task is the hope of the world.

At the most recent Methodist Conference (2017) reflection on the Statistics for Mission report led to the adoption of the following Notice of Motion (calling):

- Methodist members to enthusiasm in prayer and acts of personal evangelism;
- Methodist churches to direct their work and wealth to the priority of making new disciples;
- Methodist Circuits to resource the forming of new Methodist societies wherever possible, to offer witness and worship in new places, or in places where Christian presence has long since diminished;
- Methodist Districts to include disciple-making as a priority for forthcoming synods.

Two further Notices of Motion aimed at furthering the mission of the Church were also adopted:

- Each year, every Church Council is encouraged to address and answer the question ‘do you have a growth plan or an end of life plan?’, with the answer to be presented to the Circuit Meeting in order to aid its wider, strategic, oversight of mission and ministry.
- Every local church is asked to launch the new Connexional year with a day of prayer and fasting. The Methodist Council was asked to ensure that the Connexional Team promote such a day with appropriate resources.”

With these calls in mind - and having followed due process - the Circuit Stewards commend the following restructure to our life together shaping us more effectively to inspire worship, pastor people, serve communities and make disciples.

In a commitment to seeing this document as ‘living’ we propose to review the policy and its outworking annually i.e. following its initial implementation in 2018 the first review will be due in 2019. This document proposes what the Circuit Leadership Team believe to be the best structure for **now** – this does not mean it will necessarily be the best structure for always!

Our current Circuit Structure

Section 1

Hilton Rev'd Rachel Larkinson (until August 2018)

Over Rev'd Roger Larkinson (until August 2018)

Sawtry Rev'd Alan Taylor (until August 2018)

Alconbury Rev'd Alan Taylor (until August 2018)

Section 2 – Rev'd Paul Beard

Ramsey

Great Barford

Buckden

Eaton Ford

Tempsford

Section 3 – Rev'd Matt Finch + Children and Families Worker (18 hours)

St. Ives

Brampton

Warboys

Section 4 – Rev'd James Bamber + Children, Youth and Outreach Worker (30 hours until September 2018)

Berkley Street

Ramsey

Huntingdon

Rev'd Alan Taylor also has responsibility for the Discernment Group at Ramsey.

Proposed Circuit Structure from September 2018

Rural Mission Partnership – Presbyter (full-time), Rural Mission Enabler (full-time) + Lay Volunteer Team⁶

Over (7)	Eaton Ford (22)	Buckden (25)
Hilton (10)	Alconbury (10)	Sawtry (42)
Ramsey (28)	Brampton (33)	Tempsford (6)
Great Barford (11)	Warboys (14)	
Total members in 2016 - (208)		

Urban Mission Partnership – Presbyter (full-time) + Outreach Workers

St. Neots (86, 50%)

St. Ives (109, 50%)

Total members 2016 – (195)

Urban Mission Partnership – Superintendent Presbyter (full-time) + Families Outreach Worker

Huntingdon (134, 50%)

plus, Superintendent Oversight (50%) of Over, Hilton, Sawtry, Ramsey, Tempsford, Great Barford, Eaton Ford, Alconbury, Buckden, Brampton, Warboys, St. Neots and St. Ives.

Total members 2016 – (134)

Circuit Administrator (16 hours, 2017 – 2020)

Circuit Property Team – to advise, support, enable property projects and assist with grant application writing.

Circuit Preaching Teams – to encourage those who may be considering becoming Local Preachers/Worship Leaders and facilitate the delivery of consistently inspiring acts of worship.

⁶ Establish at least one lay team of people who are committed to ministry in specific contexts and whose work would complement the work of the Presbyter and the Rural Mission Enabler. The Superintendent would be responsible for ensuring team members received support and supervision.

Rationale for this proposed structure

We believe this gives every church in the circuit the best opportunity to flourish and fulfil its potential and gives a clear message that the Circuit Leadership Team has no policy of enforced closure on any of the churches within its care.

The focus is on discipleship - which is critical if we are to stem the flow of decline. "If you make disciples you will always get the Church. But if you try to build the Church you will rarely get disciples."⁷ Mission can only flourish alongside a commitment to biblical discipleship. We need to be disciplined before we can be disciple-makers. If we model our disciple making on Jesus⁸, we'll see people coming to faith who previously didn't know him. This reflects our existing commitment to intentional faith sharing.

The structure allows for the deploying of "gifted presbyters and outreach workers allocating specialist ministers to support groups of smaller and larger churches."⁹

It creates the greatest potential for "Presbyters to concentrate on preaching the gospel and not on administration and attending meetings."¹⁰

Three Mission Partnerships create diverse and attractive stationing profiles going forward into the future.¹¹

This structure is more likely to attract funding beyond the Circuit for the appointment of a Rural Mission Enabler.

Under this structure, we feel more people can be empowered and equipped to play their part in God's mission, and expressions of outreach can be more contextual.¹² Within our circuit boundaries there is considerable new housing development emerging with more planned. This structure, we believe, provides us with the greatest opportunity to respond proactively as opposed to reactively.

⁷ Mike Breen

⁸ Magnetic personality, Missional focus, shaping a Movement.

⁹ Feedback from Circuit Roadshows, Autumn 2016

¹⁰ Feedback from Circuit Roadshows, Autumn 2016

¹¹ Within the stationing process it is likely an appointment will be considered essential if the profile relates to 175 members or more.

¹² This was highlighted as a goal in the Circuit Roadshows 2016

Circuit Prayer

We believe that prayer undergirds everything – any vision can only take shape and ‘live’ through prayer. Communicating regularly with God ensures that what we endeavour to implement is not simply our idea/agenda.

We invite you to engage regularly and corporately in praying the following prayer for our circuit which could be read in church by 4 voices.

Loving God, you are generous beyond all measure and compassionate beyond our comprehension. You have made us in your image and blessed us with talents and skills. You have given us the Scriptures to read and your Son to show us how to live in your light and love. You have been faithful to us in the past and continue to be with us to the end of time. We praise your holy name.

We give thanks for all those who have gone before us and prepared a place for us in this circuit:

- those who have shared their faith,
- those who have created our church buildings and
- those who have nurtured us on our Christian journey.

We know you have plans for us and that you will support us as we grow in faith. Forgive us when we have doubts and fail to focus on you. Forgive us when we become impatient and anxious about the future and help us to be reassured of your forgiveness.

Root us in your love and strengthen us in the service of Christ, we pray and we ask that your Holy Spirit inspire us

- to be committed to you alone;
- to read our Bibles and pray each day;
- to invite all to come to know Jesus Christ;
- to meet others at their point of need;
- to be creative and productive, with your help, in solving the challenges we will meet in the days ahead;

so, that we play our full part in the magnetic and missional movement of this circuit.

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

To talk about together

The following questions are offered, not as an exhaustive list, but as conversation starters. We encourage you to find creative ways of exploring them together: in Church Councils, in small groups or over coffee after worship. Above all, as you ponder them, please pray about what they stir within you.

- How do you feel about the phrase, 'magnetic missional movements' on page 4?
- What makes your faith magnetic? What would you need to develop this quality of Jesus more fully?
- What is God doing in the community where you are? How could your church be more involved in God's mission in that place?
- What would help you to make more disciples of Jesus 'as you are going' about your everyday life?
- In what ways, do you understand your community of faith to be part of a movement? How is it seeking to respond to the 21st century needs of the community?
- Within your context what helps change? What hinders it?
- As you have read this vision document what excites you? How might you commit to seeing it become a reality in terms of prayers, time, energy, money...?
- We commend the following question to you for your prayerful response: 'What can I do to help grow God's church in our circuit?'

Timescales and key events

- August 2017:** Report presented to churches via an open meeting at St Ives Methodist Church. (19 August 2017).
Copies of the report to be distributed to every member and adherent in all 14 circuit churches.
- September 2017:** Circuit Meeting adopts report and approves new structure

Circuit Leadership Team to put together job descriptions (in consultation with others, including District representatives) for
- (i) Rural Mission Enabler
 - (ii) Outreach Worker – Berkley Street
 - (iii) Outreach Worker – Huntingdon
- Circuit Staff to identify training needs and seek Circuit/District support to attend courses
- October 2017:** Preparation of material for Stir-up Sunday - 26th November
Reimagine Conference – 7th October
Preparation for Advent Course incorporating material in Appendix A
- November 2017:** Circuit Leadership Team Away Day to consider further steps which will be required to implement the vision.
- Spring 2018:** Job advertisement placed for Rural Mission Enabler
Discussion based Circuit Meeting (Sunday afternoon + tea)
Facilitation of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats discussion within each church (See Appendix B)

Appendix A: Questions to help churches develop Growth Plans

We believe that we, the churches in the St Neots and Huntingdon Methodist Circuit are called together by God to be Christ-centred, mission focussed and Spirit-led.

We do this through worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism.

1. WORSHIP

The Circuit churches exist to increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love.

- What helps us to centre our worship on God?
- Where and when do we feel the presence of God? How can these experiences enrich services of worship?
- What motivates us to study the Bible?
- What helps us to express awe and wonder, thankfulness and praise, and love towards God? How can we use resources from the worldwide Church?
- What would help our worship to make sense to people who come only occasionally?
- Can we improve the comfort and decor of our surroundings and the welcome for people with disabilities?
- Is our worship much the same all the time? Should we explore styles and traditions of worship from other denominations and other parts of the world?

Our plans and targets for improving our worship over the next year to 31 August 2018 are:

2. LEARNING & CARING

The Circuit churches exist to help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care

- What church activities help us most to deepen our faith in God?
- How effective are our small groups, in linking faith to everyday life?
- How do we learn about the challenges of Christian life today from churches elsewhere in Britain and the wider world?
- Are there peripheral activities we should stop, to make time for our training and learning needs?
- What activities make it easy for others to join us? What links do we have with groups using our premises?
- What do we expect from our pastors? What do we expect from one another by way of support and care? Do we notice or care about those who drift away or leave?

Our plans and targets for developing our life together over the next year to 31 August 2018 are:

3. SERVICE

The Circuit churches exist to be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice

- How do we discover the needs in our community and respond to them?
- Who is involved in service to the community through charities or community groups? Are there opportunities for more of us to become involved? How do we give attention to the moral issues raised by daily work?
- Do we share with one another our concerns about things which do not seem right, or cause trouble in our community, or appear unjust? How do we challenge injustice in other parts of the world?
- Are we making the best use of our premises and our money for service to the community? Are we wasting resources? Are we spending our time and resources in ways which are consistent with our beliefs and values?
- How does the life of our community, and our involvement in it, feature in the prayers of the church?

Our plans and targets for improving our community involvement over the next year to 31 August 2018 are:

4. EVANGELISM

The Circuit churches exist to make more followers of Jesus Christ

- How do we develop friendly attitudes towards everyone we meet?
- Do we have a clear message? Are the words we use straightforward and meaningful to those outside the Church?
- What attracts others to the Christian faith? Are there initiatives we could take to present our convictions? Can we do this with Christians of other denominations? Where should the focus be - on church premises, or in the community?
- How can we learn about effective witness from Christians in other cultures?
- What can we do to make our premises more welcoming?
- Should we consider planting a new congregation in this locality?

Our plans and targets for making more followers of Jesus Christ over the next year to 31 August 2018 are:

Appendix B: Discerning our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

- What is the church's mission statement?
- How is the church's setting about giving life to the mission statement?
- What this church is trying to do is...
- What are the three strongest points about this church?
- How are these being celebrated?
- What are the three weakest points about this church?
- How are these being addressed?
- What 'Fresh Expressions' of church are being pursued/considered?
- What is the church's financial position?
- What is the condition of the property?
- How is your church developing its work with e.g. children and young people, single people, elderly people, through pastoral offices?
- How does the church relate to the local community?
- In what ways does the church work with others Christians in the area?
- As you explore your life together what causes you to feel afraid?
- Which areas of church life seem tired or declining?
- Which areas of church seem to be thriving and life-enhancing?
- How does your church nurture people in the Christian faith?
- What kind of support would it be helpful for the Circuit to provide? (E.g. training for church stewards, creating safer space/safeguarding/first aid training, Kitchen hygiene training, Circuit study groups...)

Appendix C: Feedback from the 2016 Roadshows

Warboys Tuesday 8th November, Buckden Wednesday 30th November and Brampton Saturday 3rd December. Also, email contributions from members.

1. WHAT SIGNS OF LIFE ARE THERE IN YOUR CHURCH?

The following events take place on a regular basis. Some are predominantly for our church families whilst others are aimed at “unchurched”. There are also numerous commercial lettings to outside groups/charities/community projects which are not included.

Pre School age toddler groups; Café Church; Open the Book; Together Group; Open Door; Prayer Groups; House Groups; Fellowship Groups; Midweek Communion; Coffee Mornings; Messy Church; Junior Church; Alpha and Youth Alpha; Women’s Fellowship; MWIB; Men’s Club; Friendship Centre; Craft Group; Reflexion; Repose Ministry; Informal Sunday evening worship; All Age worship; regular weekly worship; weddings; funerals; christenings; Seniors lunches; Food banks; Charity shop; Samaritans Purse (OCC Shoeboxes); Prayer walking; Holiday clubs; one off events for young people (Pancakes/Harvest/Light Party/Christmas Party etc.); Circuit Events; Village Events (Fete’s, Garden Parties etc.) Churches Together Events; joint ecumenical events especially in villages; walks of witness, passion plays in the towns etc....

2. WOULD SOMEONE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH RECOGNISE THESE SIGNS OF LIFE?

For most events - Yes; because of personal invitation/word of mouth/posters/adverts/Facebook/twitter/internet/local radio/local papers and publications.

But although our intention is to be open, friendly and welcoming, this does not always happen. Our buildings are not always conducive to being warm, friendly/appealing locations. The first step/visit into “the unknown” can be very difficult if people have pre-conceived ideas of what happens within our buildings.

We only get one opportunity to create the all-important first impression when someone comes through our door for the first time. If we get that wrong, we may never get another opportunity.

Social media can help us show that Christianity is relevant in our lives in 21st century and that our churches are an important part of our communities.

Different types of worship and on different days/times all offer a worship/Christian learning style which we think is relevant to a wide section of people our communities.

Groups/events which we provide in a more informal setting offer a non-threatening/non-pressurised way of sharing our faith.

Secular/community, external group meetings and events enables everyone to see the inside of our buildings in a non-threatening, unpressured atmosphere which may allay prejudices and enable new thoughts and experiences to be witnessed.

Doing something for nothing, (Family events etc.) giving gifts at Christmas/Easter are positive ways of serving others in our communities. Most concepts of charitable Christian causes centre on collecting money rather than sharing Gods love for free.

Visiting schools/prisons is a positive way of sharing Christian love in action.

Communities respond especially in villages to local appeals where the church is a central hub (i.e. new chairs donated).

3. WHAT DO YOU FEEL GOD IS SAYING TO US, ASKING OF US?

We all have different gifts but we don't always give them unconditionally to God, either in our own churches or in the circuit.

We need to pray that God will lead us all to give of our best all the time, and through working together and actively supporting all our church families across the circuit, we will provide more wide reaching, sustainable and relevant faith sharing, in our communities.

We need to explore more ways of reaching unchurched people in our communities, i.e. asking for their impressions of us, what they would expect an active and outward looking church to be like in our communities.

We need to demonstrate the gifts of both Mary and Martha because they are both equally important in the furtherance of Gods Kingdom.

We need to provide and offer more Circuit-wide bible studies, prayer groups, prayer chains to help grow a more unified faith and awareness across our churches. Could be at Advent, Lent, Harvest?

We need to offer a more flexible approach to times/style of worship, especially for working people and families with children. Podcasts, online streaming, Facebook etc. are all ways of reaching more people.

We need to be willing to change the way in which we communicate God`s love so that unchurched people can witness true and uncomplicated Christianity in action.

We must be willing to change our own volunteering to take on different and new opportunities, especially if we have done the same job for many years.

We must be upbeat and positive in our faith sharing and not hide our light under a bushel for fear of offending non- believers or being challenged about our beliefs.

A leaflet drop for specific events can be beneficial, but must be good quality and attractive.

Mission is central to sharing our faith, and we need to free ourselves from the constraints we impose on ourselves which limit our outreach capabilities.

To be focussed on using our money wisely on gifted presbyters and outreach workers rather than our buildings.

Stop being too clubby...we need to exist for our non-members first.

4. WHAT HOPES/PLANS FOR THE FUTURE DO YOU FEEL GOD IS CALLING YOUR CHURCH/CIRCUIT TO EXPLORE?

We must not spread our resources/mission outreach projects too thin. Must concentrate on what we can do well and ensure we do it rather than trying to cover every base.

At circuit level, we need to look at how best to utilise our people resources, especially around presbyters, outreach workers, paid supernumeraries. We need to be clear on just what we expect of them. Encouraging, enabling and supporting local volunteers are just as vital as leading and doing.

We have some small church families and small groups of older members where opportunities are more limited. There are also situations where just one or two young people in our smaller churches would benefit from fellowship with groups in our larger churches. We need to work together and support each other so that all our young people can feel an important part of our circuit church family, rather than be left isolated.

We need to build on and expand our outreach ministry with young people and young families through vibrant and enthusiastic workers and volunteers.

We need to build on, support and encourage the areas of Christian life which our respective churches do well, and which our communities are looking for, and not try to expand our vision into areas which we cannot deliver or which are not required. We don't need to think big all the time, but we must ensure that everything we do is God's will and not ours. From small acorns, mighty oaks will grow.

Not all our events should be steeped in Christian content. For unchurched young people and families, we need to show that following Jesus is a way of living which enhances and not diminishes or constrains the richness of life.

We need to ensure that all our websites/Facebook pages etc. are kept up to date and refreshed regularly with clear invitations to all future events, especially those specifically for unchurched and occasional visitors. All our notice boards etc. must be kept up to date and old/tatty and obsolete notices removed or replaced. All main noticeboards must be attractive, posters attractive and easy to read/understand and be relevant to everyone.

There are many large challenges especially on the new and proposed housing/business developments in our circuit. We need to plan prayerfully before committing to new outreach work. For example, can we use the new faith school at Alconbury Weald as a starting base on that large development?

Outreach worship, i.e. at key festivals such as Easter, Harvest, Christmas etc. Possible more open air events. Carols in a local pub is planned in Warboys. Could others plan similar events. What about events at Supermarkets/Town Centres?

5. WHAT RESOURCES DO WE NEED TO REALISE GOD'S MISSION OPPORTUNITIES FOR TODAY AND BEYOND?

The presence of a resident presbyter and/or an outreach worker has a very real and positive impact on a local community, and in particular our churches at Sawtry, Ramsey, Warboys, Hilton, Buckden, Brampton, Over, Tempsford, Great Barford, could benefit in this way if we had a 4th or 5th presbyter or another 1 or 2 outreach workers.

We need to enable everyone to give of the time, talents, gifts and money for the work of God in our 14 church families and our wider circuit. We need to continue to grow vibrant churches where opportunities for members to participate are exciting and challenging.

We need to ensure all our church buildings are attractive and welcoming and that our initial greetings to newcomers are sincere, warm and friendly.

One way forward is to look to shared ownership/shared usage of our buildings to reduce maintenance costs, increase usage etc.

We must look to undertake more joint projects with other circuit churches and other denominations. We can then pool resources and talents. This will both encourage and enable smaller churches to grow.

We must plan to sustain our vision in the short, medium and long term and not just create it and live by it for a short period.

Transport can be an issue where groups or projects meet in other churches in the circuit so we could need more volunteer drivers.

We must encourage everyone to become involved and be inclusive in our approach. We must not ignore offers of help, particularly from new members, even if well intentioned, because this can easily be misinterpreted as rejection.

We must empower Church Stewards to be more proactive in Mission and intentional faith sharing in all of our churches, rather than just performing "Sunday worship enabling tasks!

We must provide training and support to both new and existing volunteers, i.e. welcoming new people, working with young people, vulnerable adults, musicians, singers, worship leaders, local preachers, visitors, administrative volunteers etc. We need to free up presbyters so that they can spread the gospel rather than attending a meeting and filling in a form about it. Training is just as important as doing the job, because we must be properly equipped to give of our best always.

Encourage and equip local preachers to live and share the circuit vision in their services.

We must consider some dynamic opportunities which could include:

- Specialist ministers offering support to groups of smaller churches;

- Asking ourselves at regular intervals why are we here? See 3a), b) and c);

- In villages, especially, encouraging ecumenical work (no use vying with other churches);

- Seeking opportunities for all to blossom;

- Enabling ministers to minister and not be bureaucrats;

- Empowering leadership teams with training and mentoring;

- Funding more youth work/work with specific groups within our communities

- Developing and releasing more leaders in the circuit.

What churches don't need are the unnecessary meetings taking place. Two church councils, one general church meeting is sufficient for our smaller churches and the larger ones can often combine meetings or organising groups which often discuss the same topics!

We need to maintain momentum and keep everyone involved in our discussions and decisions. Once we have an agreed vision for 2017 and beyond we need a clear plan of action to cover funding implementation and delivery. The talking and planning cannot go on indefinitely.

6. WHAT IS YOUR NEXT STEP? WHAT ONE ACTION WILL YOU TAKE AWAY FROM THIS EVENT?

This is a personal question where the sharing of answers was not sought. However, some generic responses are:

- A renewed determination to encourage change and growth;
- To encourage more support for our smaller churches;
- Encourage more people, especially young families to become more committed disciples;
- Encourage more discussions in each church;
- Encourage more people to attend the next 2 roadshows;
- To accept people as they are and not try to change them. That is something God will do;
- To start asking what can I do to help grow God's church in our circuit rather than what do I want from God's church in this circuit;

APPENDIX D – Projected Financial Situation

The following financial information has been prepared to demonstrate that the vision is a viable option for the circuit for the next 5 years.

All figures are based on information available at the current time of preparing the vision document but employment costs may be affected by changes in the rates of national insurance costs or pension legislation set out by government policy, or changes agreed by the Methodist Conference. Detailed budgets will continue to be prepared annually, to calculate the actual level of assessment required and the contribution required from each church.

Income

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Assessments	200,000	205,000	210,500	216,000	221,500	227,000	232,500
Interest	1,440	1,125	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Lettings	6,800	7,150					
Total	208,240	213,275	211,500	217,000	222,500	228,000	233,500

- Income is assumed to grow at rate of 2.5% per annum, the average rate of growth in circuit income over the last 10 years.
- Rental income has been included from the letting of the Ramsey manse for 2016/17 and 2017/18 but not for the following 5 years. It is possible (but not yet decided) whether the manse in Ramsey could be used by the Mission Enabler, enhancing the remuneration package available. Excluding rental income from the budget shows the 'worst case scenario'.
- The circuit has made provisional enquiries about applying for a grant from the East Anglia District of the Methodist Church, to support the employment of a Mission Enabler. Conversations with District Officers have suggested that there is a willingness to consider our application favourably, but the formal application can only be made if the vision is approved by Circuit Meeting. However, it is important to note that grants are not awarded to circuit's looking to simply sustain ministry in a given way, they are awarded to support circuits/churches who are looking to try something different and experimental.

Expenditure

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	UPDATED	3.65	3 + ME	3 + ME	3 + ME	3 + ME	3 + ME
Stipends, salaries etc	119,738	123,885	130,278	133,535	136,874	140,296	143,803
District Assessment	47,435	46,831	48,002	49,202	50,432	50,432	51,693
Admin, telephone, travel etc	15,716	15,716	17,940	18,103	18,269	18,440	18,615
Insurance, utilities etc	9,690	9,845	10,091	10,343	10,602	10,867	11,139
Maintenance on manses	9,000	9,450	9,920	10,168	10,422	10,683	10,950
Other expenditure	6,700	6,700	6,818	6,938	7,061	7,188	7,318
Total	208,279	212,427	223,049	228,289	233,660	237,906	243,518

- Budgets for 2016/17 and 2017/18 have been updated to show the current position, with 3 full time presbyters and assistance from 3 supernumerary ministers being paid equivalent to a further 65% of a full-time presbyter.
- Budgets for 2018/19 onwards (3 + ME) include the salary for 3 full time presbyters and a full time, lay Mission Enabler. All stipends and associated pension costs for presbyters have been based on the rates payable now, with provision for inflationary increases. The salary and pension for the lay Mission Enabler has been based on the living wage and additional salary points for lay employees, as set out on the Methodist Church website.
- District Assessment calculations are based on the number of members within the circuit and the number of staff (presbyters/deacons/lay employees) who are stationed within the circuit.
- Costs of travel, housing, utilities, telephone/internet need to be included within the overall budget but form a relatively small part of the circuit's expenditure.

The overall position is summarised as follows:

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Surplus/(Deficit) from own resources	(39)	848	(11,549)	(11,289)	(11,160)	(9,905)	(10,017)
Grant application			10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Surplus/(Deficit) with grant	(39)	848	(1,549)	(1,289)	(1,160)	95	(17)

The following graph shows that, with the support of a District grant of £10,000 per annum for the 5-year initial appointment, income and expenditure are expected to be closely matched.

