

PLANNING FOR GROWTH - A MESSAGE FROM CLT TO THE CHURCHES

INTRODUCTION

One of the main issues highlighted during the Circuit Plus workshops is the ageing and declining numbers in our congregations. As I have gone round the Circuit, I have heard many stories of dedicated service, both from the past and present. Your continued commitment to nurturing and supporting God's work locally is truly valued, and the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) is deeply grateful for all you do. We are fortunate to have a diverse group of people—lay and ordained, retired and working, housebound and active—who generously offer their gifts and graces for God's work here. Despite ongoing challenges, churches continue to do everything possible to be good neighbours and support those in need, which is sincerely appreciated.

The CLT remains fully committed to ensuring our Circuit's sustainable future, with a clear view of mission and ministry across the board. We have learnt a great deal from the Circuit Plus consultations, and now we are taking the next significant step: planning for growth.

Having a well-considered Growth Action Plan (GAP) is essential. These plans help us focus on our calling as churches—“to make followers of Jesus Christ” (Methodist Church – Our Calling). Growth Plans also guide the CLT in understanding our spending on mission and church support, provide a strong basis for funding applications, and foster accountability for both Churches and the Circuit. The Methodist Church's 'God for All' strategy, launched by the Evangelism and Growth Team and adopted in July 2019, encourages churches to use Growth Plans as a vital resource for mission and outreach. In the future, Circuit grant requests will require up-to-date Growth Action Plans.

If you already have a plan, that's excellent - simply review and update it as needed. The key is to focus on what you believe God is calling your church to do in your community, and how you intend to use your resources for that purpose in the coming months and year.

We've made things as straightforward as possible by providing:

1. Steps for developing your GAP (Appendix 1A) and links to resources (Appendix 1B)
2. A series of questions to help generate discussion, encouraging you to carefully and prayerfully consider your church's priorities and actions for growth (Appendix 2)
3. A template for each church's GAP, based on the four main areas from the Methodist Church's 'Our Calling' (Appendix 3)
4. Some suggestions for prayers (Appendix 4)

Once your GAP is ready, please send it to Jane Hawes, Circuit Administrator, by the end of June. Our aim is to help churches grow, work together, and serve faithfully for years to come.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for taking the time to engage with this vital process. Thank you for your dedication and contributions as we move forward together, trusting God to guide and resource us in our journey. With great hope and excitement to see what God is doing next in our Churches and Circuit, we conclude with a prayer:

Holy Spirit, we ask for your wisdom, guidance and inspiration as we discern the future of your church together. Enable us to step out in faith and boldness and to follow where you lead, acting in obedience to your call. Amen.