

APPENDIX 1A – STEPS FOR DEVELOPING YOUR GAP

1. Begin with Prayer: Ground the entire process in prayer.
2. Decide on an approach that works best for your church's situation. Remember to think about how you would involve children and young people, if you have any
3. Utilise resources and address core areas: Make use of recommended resources; engage with your church's Financial Check and discuss the given questions on Our Building, Our Volunteers, Our Community, Our Growth
4. Set GAP priorities: Identify the most important goals and outline steps to achieve them (Keep it simple - one or two per heading). Remember to use the given template (Appendix 3)
5. Gain approval: Church Council or Trustees meetings to adopt your GAP
6. Communicate the plan: Share the agreed plan with the wider church community. The whole church must own the GAP
7. Review current mission statement: Ensure your mission statement reflects the new priorities

APPENDIX 1B: RESOURCES TO HELP WITH FORMULATING YOUR GAP

- Our Church's Future Story (Cards): [our-church-s-future-story.pdf](#)
- 3 YouTube Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...>
 1. Introduction to growth | Our Church's Future Story (4:43)
[Introduction to growth | Our Church's Future Story](#)
 2. Growth Planning Cycle | Our Church's Future Story (14:07)
[Growth planning cycle | Our Church's Future Story](#)
 3. The church thriving by listening to their community | Our Church's Future Story (4:26)
[The church thriving by listening to their community | Our Church's Future Story](#)
- Our Calling: [Our Calling - The Methodist Church](#)
- Northampton District Mission Statement: [Northampton Methodist District | Home](#)
- A Methodist Way of Life • Strategic Guidance for the Use of Property in Mission: [strategic-guidance-for-the-use-of-property-in-mission_vH0j5mQ.pdf](#)
- New Places for New People: [New Places for New People - The Methodist Church](#)
- Church at the Margins: [Church at the Margins - The Methodist Church](#)
- God for All: [Explore the God for All strategy - The Methodist Church](#)

APPENDIX 2 – QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

We recognise and deeply appreciate all the effort put into outreach and community activities throughout the Circuit, from hosting various groups and events to supporting worship and children's work. Your dedication - whether up front or behind the scenes - strengthens our church families and builds the kingdom of God. Thank you for all you do.

Please make sure you are well-informed about your church's financial status and viability, by engaging with the document: Our Church's Financial Check (attached).

The questions that follow are organised into four main areas of church life: Buildings; People; Community and Mission. We believe that by thoughtfully and prayerfully considering these questions, your church can reflect openly on its current situation and be receptive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as you plan for your Church's future together. Please find creative ways of involving your children/young people and their parents in the consultation.

A. OUR BUILDINGS

1. How do we feel about the size of our current building?
2. What significant changes or improvements do we foresee will be necessary for our building(s) over the next five years?
3. How do we assess the cost-effectiveness of continuing to maintain our current building versus hiring a different space or using a smaller worship area?
4. If our church were to continue its mission and community work without owning its own building, what new opportunities or possibilities might be created? How might this affect the way we serve our community?
5. If church owns more than one building, what are our thoughts on whether all of them are still necessary? How might leasing or selling one or more of these buildings benefit our church's mission and sustainability?
6. If we decide to keep our current building(s), what steps could we realistically take to reduce their carbon footprint? Is there a financial plan in place to support these efforts over the next ten years, and what challenges or opportunities do we foresee?

B. OUR LAY VOLUNTEERS

1. Which key roles within the Church Council/Trustee body or wider church life (e.g. Pastoral Visitors; property maintenance; Health and Safety) are proving most challenging to fill? Why?

2. What succession plans or strategies have we put in place to ensure that key roles and responsibilities can be maintained into the future?
3. What do we see as the main benefits and challenges of working collaboratively with other churches in the Circuit or with Ecumenical partners?
4. How does our church support members who are housebound, and what further steps could be taken to ensure they feel included and valued?
5. What practices or resources are in place to support individuals experiencing illness or other personal crises, and how might these be strengthened?
6. How does our church welcome and support people who are new to the congregation (children and families; adults; neurodiverse); and what additional strategies could enhance their sense of belonging?
7. What initiatives or support systems are available for individuals who are new to faith, and how could these be developed to nurture their spiritual growth?
8. How could roles such as Methodist Local Lay Pastor or Pastoral Support Workers help our church in delivering effective pastoral ministry? What specific needs might these roles address within our context?

Methodist Local Lay Pastor (LLP): A Methodist Local Lay Pastor (LLP) is a trained layperson who can provide spiritual leadership, preach, conduct worship, and offer pastoral care.

Pastoral Support Workers PSW): A team of pastoral support workers could be explored further to ensure consistent pastoral care. While this role does not address worship leadership or missional outreach in the same way as LLPs or Mission Enablers, it remains vital for congregational well-being.

C. OUR COMMUNITY

1. What are the current needs of our local community, and how could our church respond to them?
2. What feedback or perspectives have we gathered from our congregation about our church's role in the community?
3. What have we learned from interactions with those outside our church community, such as hirers, users, local residents, and ecumenical partners, and how might these insights inform our church's future activities?
4. In what ways does our church actively engage with the local community, and how might these efforts be developed further?
5. How do we practise being the church within our community, particularly in supporting those in need and sharing our faith?

6. By what means do people learn about our church's activities, and how could communication be improved?
7. What approaches do we use to invite people outside our congregation into meaningful conversation, and what else might we try?
8. When people attend events or use our church building, how do they find out what we do/offer and what more could be done to make this more visible?
9. How do we currently offer practical help and prayer support to people, and in what additional ways could we offer support?
10. What opportunities exist for people to explore what it means to follow Jesus, and how might these be enhanced?

D. OUR GROWTH

1. In what ways are we intentionally planning for our congregation to grow both in discipleship and in numbers?
2. What missional activities are currently taking place in our church, and how do they impact the wider community?
3. What new opportunities for mission can we identify within our local community?
4. Can we describe a place or situation outside of our existing church life where we sense God may be calling our church to begin something new? (New Places for New People - NPNP)
5. How might God be prompting us to establish new Christian communities among those who are struggling financially or living in poverty? (Church at the Margins) (Church at the Margins is a core specialised priority stream of New Places for New People, receiving 60% of Connexional funding for districts and circuits. At the margins means being alongside people, not doing things to or for them. It's about mutuality, dignity, and shared leadership.)
6. In what ways do we think the role of Mission Enabler (see below) could support us in exercising ministry and furthering the church's mission?

Mission Enablers: Mission Enablers are individuals or a team tasked with driving the Circuit's missional activities, focusing on outreach, community engagement, and innovative worship. They would work closely with the minister to ensure the Circuit remains outward-focused and responsive to local needs.

APPENDIX 3 – TEMPLATE FOR GROWTH ACTION PLAN

CHURCH GROWTH ACTION PLAN

Church Name:

Mission Statement (Reviewed after formulating GAP):

PRIORITY The main area of focus (1 or 2 per heading)	ACTIVITY Specific action or initiative to be carried out	PERSON/S RESPONSIBLE Who will take the lead on or provide support for this action or activity?	TIMESCALE When it would be completed by	OUTCOME How will we know the goal has been achieved?
WORSHIP				
The Church exists to increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love				
LEARNING AND CARING				
The Church exists to help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care				
SERVICE				
The Church exists to be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge in justice				
EVANGELISM/OUTREACH				
The Church exists to make more followers of Jesus Christ				

Date approved by Trustees/Church Council:

Date to be reviewed:

APPENDIX 4 – SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYERS

God of the Journey, whose servant Abraham travelled in faith,
grant that we might find within ourselves something of his courage,
enabling us to reach the destination you intend for us, for our community, and this world.
Amen.

O God of the ages, in Jesus Christ you called your Church into being,
through Peter the foundations were laid,
and through women and men of every generation it was established wherever the Gospel
was proclaimed.
Today we pray for the Church in every corner of the world,
that together we may stand in the rich tradition of saints and martyrs
and freely and wholeheartedly commit ourselves to your will.
Amen.

We pray for the Church in all its traditions,
for our partners in Christ,
for those with whom we neighbour,
and for the church community to which we belong,
that we may be faithful and diligent in all the tasks to which we are called.
Inspire us afresh, O God,
with renewed understanding and insight,
with deepening courage and conviction,
and a love for those about us that is unbeaten.
May we sense your moulding and energising Spirit within us
that our joyful faith be infectious and everlasting.
Amen

For the Methodist Churches in this the Wantage & Abingdon Circuit,
for their ministers and officers,
for their members and friends,
for those who are part of our church family,
that we may together sense belonging and purpose.

In Jesus you have set before us the example by which we should live,
in him we see what your love for us truly is,
in him we need not fear, for in him is all truth and life.
For his death and resurrection, we praise you,
for those who follow him, we praise you,
for your claim upon our lives, we praise you,
for all that you will accomplish through us, we praise you.

May others come to know of your love for them,
through the mission and ministry of your Church,
and through our commitment and dependency upon you and your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Holy God, in Jesus Christ, you came among us,
healing the sick and challenging injustice,
may we who seek to follow him,
be so empowered to bring change to our homes, community, and world.
Holy God, through your Spirit, you dwell within us,
within our Church Family and everywhere about us,
may we see you at work
and strive to be ever more effective and meaningful in our discipleship.
Amen

In a time of change and challenge,
chaos and uncertainty in our world,
we seek your guidance, O God,
that we may be true and faithful to our calling as disciples of Jesus.
May we look for the growth points in our church communities,
may we identify what it is that we too can accomplish by your grace,
and may we be ever mindful of your abundant love for us.
Amen.