

# District Mission Policy

Version 1 issued following approval by District Leadership Team 08-09-2020

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to describe the Bolton and Rochdale District's mission and the policy that it should adopt to accomplish it.

It is an inescapable fact that the District has limited resources, such as personnel and funds, with which to accomplish its mission. Therefore, resources must be focused on circuits and churches where there is the most potential for delivering the District's mission.

This policy describes the information that will be used to identify the Circuits and churches where the potential is greatest; and the additional resources, assistance and training that is needed in order to support and equip those centres. It also describes how the information will be collected and used. The data will also be useful to measure the ongoing missional health of the District and whether it improves or declines.

The District's mission policy will be implemented in these three phases:

1. Prepare this Mission Policy document and obtain approval for it.
2. Prepare a Mission Plan, including an assessment of the mission effectiveness and potential of Circuits and churches across the District, as described below.
3. Improve the missional health of the District by assisting Circuits and churches to increase their mission effectiveness.

## 2. An Introduction to the Bolton and Rochdale District

We are a District that is confident in the Gospel. We accept the centrality of local mission and ministry, encourage collaborative work, and are proactive in sharing positive stories whenever and wherever we can. We rejoice in the rich diversity of people within our District and celebrate the gifts that each person brings whilst striving to unify the Church and promote a culture of inclusion.

We recognise the privilege of working with the eleven Methodist and Anglican/Methodist Primary schools within our District and are committed to sharing our faith with the staff and pupils in each of the schools as we offer support which is contextually appropriate to each establishment. This support comes in varied forms of clergy, lay people and our dedicated District school's officer.

We very much aim to design structures which serve our local churches and schools, minimising bureaucracy wherever possible, whilst providing the support needed to further the Kingdom of God in church and society.

We commend Fresh Expressions of church, alongside other models, and support the development of online Christian communities which serve to explore and expand faith outside the parameters of our buildings.

We recognise that in some of our communities there is a culture of low self-esteem and lack of worth. As a District, we strive to support those who teach and show that God loves all people and Christ died for them. Relatedly, some of our communities feel that they have been neglected and abandoned by many institutions. We therefore are committed to supporting and resourcing those who genuinely and appropriately try to engage with their locality.

In our engagement with Churches overseas, we have a focus on mission projects in South Africa which as a District, we uphold and support.

**We are currently focussing on the following:**

- Discerning the will of God
- Improving evangelism and mission
- Achieving spiritual growth
- Releasing ministers for ministry
- Learning to cope with fewer presbyters and discovering new models of ministry
- Reducing undue pressure on some lay and ordained leaders
- Restructuring of Circuits for worship, evangelism and mission, if needed.
- Ecumenical co-operation, as an expression of Mission.

### **3. The Mission of the Bolton and Rochdale District**

The mission of the Bolton and Rochdale District supports the stated calling of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, which is that the Church exists to:

- Increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love
- Help people to grow and learn as Christians through mutual support and care
- Be a good neighbour to people in need and to challenge injustice
- Make more followers of Jesus Christ.

The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth (God For All) reminds us that the calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the Gospel of God's love in Jesus Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. It does this through ***Worship, Learning and Caring, Service, and Evangelism***. Convicted by the Holy Spirit, who is bringing to the surface a profound honesty about our current reality and stoking a new passion for more people and the whole world to be transformed by

God's grace, the Methodist Church has claimed evangelism as an imperative dimension of our mission and identity in the 21st century.

In response to this, it is the Bolton and Rochdale District's stated intention to support projects that:

- Offer the Good News of Jesus; and
- Encourage bold ventures where churches seek to deepen discipleship

The District recognises that mission is predominantly done at church level and that God calls individual churches to a specific mission, which is likely to differ from church to church. The District's policy is therefore to support and enable Circuits, churches and individuals within the District in the following ways:

- Provide resources of finance, personnel, training and expertise to Circuits and churches where there is the greatest potential of accomplishing the District's mission;
- Provide District level leadership that allows the effective sharing of good practice;
- Encourage and inspire all members and the wider communities in Christian Faith.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is at the heart of the Christian gospel, as faith in Jesus Christ resists all forms of inequality, monoculturalism and exclusion. Therefore, joining with Jesus in mission today means that EDI must be at the centre of the District's mission at all levels. Affirming equality of all people irrespective of their race, colour, gender, sexuality, status, faith-practice, etc. must be enacted and put in practice, so that all are welcomed into our churches.

Multiculturalism is part of our society in the Bolton and Rochdale area, where people of all faiths and no faith co-exist today. The mission of our District must include engaging with people of different faiths to strive to build justice and peace in our communities.

**The District anticipates that its mission policy will be manifested in the following ways:**

- Churches will be seen as a key part of their community, the "heartbeat" of their area, identifying local needs and encouraging the development of partnership working with existing organisations. They will be well placed to respond to needs, in work with refugees and asylum seekers, food banks, street pastors, credit unions etc., and actively share effective practice in such work across Circuits.
- People are encouraged to evangelise by being open about the gospel, and unashamedly saying that the love of God revealed in Christ inspires us to engage in mission.
- Differences are rightly valued and the variety of our District is celebrated.
- Active and valued contribution by local churches, ministers and lay people into our Methodist and Methodist/Anglican primary schools, as well as other local maintained and independent schools. We would expect to see this especially borne in mind in the stationing process

- A commitment to the command from Matthew 28 to “Go and make disciples”, even if this means employing different methods. Circuits and churches recognise that change is not simply a cherished ideal but an absolute necessity in engaging with lost generations.
- Courses such as Disciple, Step Forward, Inspiring Discipleship, Alpha, etc. are given priority in order that people are supported to learn more about God, revealed in Jesus through the Spirit.
- There is a commitment to ecumenical co-operation, recognising that we are stronger together.
- Churches prayerfully consider whether their notion of stewardship is undermined by too many buildings.
- Our churches are recognised as safe spaces in which people and groups can meet outside of formal worship, whilst ensuring an intentional focus on mission
- Ensuring that we are culturally relevant and supportive in our work with our communities and those who use our facilities, nurturing them and seeking to bring them to Faith.
- Churches and Circuits review themselves regularly to encourage deepening discipleship and obedience to God’s calling.

#### **4. The need for a Mission Plan**

The District has limited resources at its disposal with which to implement its Mission Policy. In particular, there is a limited availability of ordained staff and limited funds for employing lay staff, improving buildings or other capital expenditure. Additionally, some church congregations are sadly becoming smaller and more elderly, often resulting in those churches having reduced potential for mission.

Therefore, the District needs an information-led plan to enable it to focus resources on Circuits and churches where the potential for accomplishing mission is strongest. This plan will show where additional resources would most benefit the mission of individual churches and the type of resources required. Resources may be financial, stationing of ministers, training, outside expertise and information.

This plan is needed at District level to support decision making processes related to ministerial stationing and grant applications. It is also needed to help to identify where things are going well within the District, which will assist with the sharing of ideas and good practice. The plan could also assist with restructuring the District to be more mission orientated.

The information from the plan will also help Circuits to identify how best to allocate resources and to restructure to improve their ability to accomplish their mission.

Furthermore, the information in the plan will provide a method by which the mission-effectiveness of each Circuit and hence the whole District is measured. Regular reassessment will enable trends in mission-effectiveness to be observed and responded to.



## **5. How a Mission Plan will be Created**

The Mission Plan will be based on quantitative indicators of the potential for mission that each church in the District has, taking into account:

- a) Evidence of current mission-effectiveness;
- b) Firm mission-orientated strategies that are in place; and
- c) The location of the church, e.g. if it's in an area where there are no other active churches (of any denomination).

These indicators will be based on a score of 1 to 5 and combined to give a single combined indicator for each church (or group of churches whose mission is inseparable). The churches' indicators will be rolled up to give a single indicator for the Circuit (based on weighting for each church according to staff allocated to each church), which in turn will be rolled up to give a single indicator for the District (weighted by District assessments). This will allow the overall mission effectiveness of the District to be tracked year by year so that trends can be identified.

In addition, each church (or group) will be asked whether additional resources would realistically increase its 'score' and, if so, what additional resources would be needed to increase its score by one point, specifying both type and amount of resource.

Key to the production of the plan will be the gathering of accurate information about churches from each Circuit, with consistent scoring across the District to ensure that a true picture is obtained. This will need to be done without putting an undue workload on the Circuits. Therefore, a small team of people will be established and carefully briefed, to ensure consistency, and sent in pairs to assess each Circuit by "interviewing" representatives of the Circuit. This method will avoid Circuit staff having the responsibility of 'scoring' their own churches and facing possible repercussions if a low score for a church becomes known. People from the team will not be sent to their own Circuit.

The following indicators will be used, with equal weighting, to determine the mission-effectiveness and potential of each church (or group):

1. The church has a current mission/vision plan that is being implemented.
2. There is an active prayer life in the church that includes regular opportunities for collective prayer, and support for individuals to deepen their own prayer life.
3. The church is serving its community and demonstrating the love of God.
4. The church is making and nurturing disciples.
5. The church is the only Christian presence within its neighbourhood or one of the most active ones.