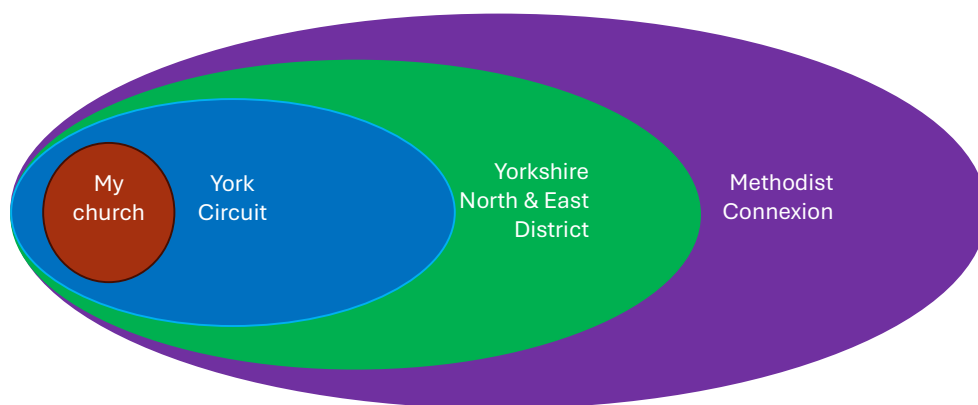


The heart of Methodism is the local church



Connexional – all are interconnected, interdependent and accountable to each other



3

At the heart but are we healthy?



4

At the heart but are we healthy?

People

Key roles remain unfilled

A few key people fill multiple roles

If the 6-year rule was enforced, we wouldn't be able to fill roles

Building

Our building is a burden

Our building is okay but does not suit our needs

Our building is okay for now, but major work will be needed soon

Finance

Finances are a daily struggle and we have low reserves

We manage but are very reliant on a few large donors

We're managing financially but a big bill would cause anxiety



5

At the heart but are we healthy?

Mission

No energy for mission

Great ideas but don't know how to connect to our community

Good ideas & connection but not enough of us

Feelings

Tired

Frustrated

Just about managing

Fragile

Not resilient

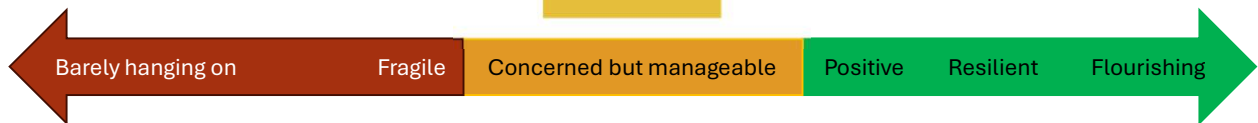
Not flourishing

Not healthy



6

Weighing things up - how do we feel?



7

Discussion

Is continuing just as we are an option for us?

If our church wasn't here, who would miss us?

Before he healed blind Bartimaeus, Jesus asked him:

“What do you want me to do for you?”

As the local Methodist church, what do we want to ask Jesus to do for us?



8

Tipping the balance - what do we need to flourish?



9

Tipping the balance - what do we need to flourish?

What tips us away from flourishing?

- Spending most of our time and energy on 'maintenance'- finance, property and governance;
- Dwindling congregations;
- Unwilling or unable to change;

What tips us towards flourishing as a church?

- Enthusiasm and vision;
- Resilience- not depending heavily on one or two people to sustain activities;
- Outward looking;
- Leadership- both ordained and local lay people;



10

Working together as the body of Christ

Why:

- It follows the pattern of the Church throughout history;
- It is the Biblical model;
- It embraces the Methodist model of Connexion;
- It is done from a position of abundance;
 - We have over 700 Methodist members plus 100s more adherents but our capabilities are spread too thinly
 - Between the individual churches and the Circuit we have cash reserves of almost £2million (excluding Carecent)
- It is necessary due to the reduction in ordained staff



11

Working together as the body of Christ

Advantages to working together:

- Able to do more together;
- Bringing together those in different congregations with similar interests or ideas;
- Greater encouragement from worshipping with a larger group;
- More people to share jobs and responsibility, meaning churches are more resilient and people feel less overwhelmed;
- Jobs feels more worthwhile when you can see the difference they make;



12

We have already trialled it

Case Study: Villages Together Methodist Church

- “It is good to work together as part of a larger group. Some tasks do not feel as insurmountable as they did when dealing with them in isolation.”
- “It can take time for everyone to feel comfortable working together. Different congregations have different ways of doing things and so there needs to be give and take on all sides.”
- “The burdens on individuals can be lighter or certainly change. People can ‘put things down’ that they do not have a heart for, but equally others may take up extra jobs as they feel that there is more positivity and point to doing things. This in turn can spread the load further.”



13

We have already trialled it

Case Study: Villages Together Methodist Church

- “It is possible to continue with activities that were becoming a problem and then to expand these to new ideas.” For example, cream tea events being developed into pop-up cafes.
- Change can take time and effort to manage, but “we recognised that we need to change things if we were to survive as a church.”
- “We feel more able to consider outreach work. We have distributed Easter eggs for the first time this year. We have started small and may build up. We gave Christmas cards out to our Jelly Beans signed by some of our congregation. An Ecumenical holiday club is being trialled in May.”



14

A change of focus – working together

- We want to change where the majority of our time is spent, away from maintaining buildings.
- The church is not a building (although buildings can be very useful!) or a way of doing things.
- Working together will require commitment from churches to a shared way of being- loosening their control over buildings and finances, and working with others to set and work towards Circuit or Mission Area visions.
- We want to release people to do the things that bring joy and build God's Church.
- **Why wouldn't we do this?**



15

Vision for the future of the Circuit

Our aim is to build a **flourishing Circuit** where the **gifts and graces** of all can be recognised, as we **build Christ's church** in York and the surrounding area.

We want our church lives:

- To be a source of joy;
 - To be a source of energy;
 - To make a real difference for Christ.
- To achieve this we need a more collaborative way of working:
- Churches need to work together to pool resources: people, funds and buildings;
 - Circuit needs to provide a wider level of administrative support to churches to free people in the churches for mission;
 - Both churches and circuit need to work together to equip people for mission.



16

What might working together look like?

The radical

One Church, many chapels

- We could shift all trustee responsibilities to one Church Council covering the entire Circuit- property, finance etc.
- Local church communities would then be free to focus on worship and mission, engaging with their community, following their distinctive calling.

The stepping-stone practical

Mission Areas

- Groups of churches working together, either by merging church councils or by looser agreements to share meetings, officeholders, or mission.
- Churches can share roles and expertise; or provide other churches with help with events/projects. Holding joint meetings means less staff time spent in meetings.



17

More collaborative churches

What Mission Areas are:

- Encouraging cooperation, sharing workload and roles ;
- Greater pool of people for trustee roles;
- Moving towards greater working together, encouraging mergers where appropriate;

What Mission Areas are not:

- Not a plan to close buildings, although this may happen organically;
- Not a set formal structure but something we can shape to fit our needs;
- Not 'one size fits all'

With the aim of **mission**, not maintaining the status quo.



18

Mission Area from Sept 2026	Current churches that make up that mission area	Combined Membership	Pastoral staff (The first named member of staff is the one with pastoral charge)	Children's Youth & Families Team Circuit-wide	Support team Circuit-wide
York North	Easingwold, Villages Together, Sheriff Hutton, Strensall	112	Alex Alex Alex Alex	Lorraine: schools work & eco church Victoria: university and young adult chaplaincy Amy: inter-generational	Support Manager (Lois) (including safeguarding) Resources Manager (Angie) Finance Manager (TBA)
North & East suburbs	Haxby, Huntington (with Thornton), Heworth, New Earswick Methodist Community	258	John & Alex John John & Alyson John		
York Inner	City Centre Central Southlands	70	Kate John & Kate Jill & Kate		
South & West Suburbs	Acomb, Bishopthorpe, Acaster Malbis, Copmanthorpe, Holgate	166	Jill Jill Jill Jill & Elizabeth		
South & West Rural	Poppleton, Hessay, Lidgett, West Thorpe, Heslington, Clifton Methodist Community	180 (plus 17 Hes)	Elizabeth Elizabeth Elizabeth Elizabeth Elizabeth		

19

What next?

- The proposed Mission Area groups are not set in stone, and we are already aware that some churches want to work in different groups.
- Just because you are placed in one Mission Area you can still work with churches in another Mission Area, or with ecumenical friends.
- We don't want churches to lose what makes them distinctive, but we believe there are ways to work together to reduce workload while still keeping what makes you special.
- The groups allow us to work out the distribution of staff time and to plan for future ministerial appointments.
- **Does the group your church is placed in feel right? Where do you have a shared calling with other churches?**



20

A more supportive Circuit

- We are employing a **Finance Manager**- to take on the **day-to-day financial duties for Circuit and assisting Churches**.
- This role will also free up time for the **Support Manager** to expand support for **Safeguarding for Circuit and assisting Churches**, especially with church training/ DBS requirements.
- Alongside existing support given by **Resources Manager** on property.
- Churches to look for support within their mission areas- sharing roles, working as a team, or ways to reduce workload, e.g. software, joint contracts for utilities or maintenance. Mission areas may also choose to employ an administrator to handle day-to-day work across the mission area- e.g. bookings, maintenance.
- **Is this something which would benefit your church?**



21

A people equipped for mission

- A commitment to recognising and equipping those who have gifts in all types of ministry- from practical and support roles, through to preaching and pastoral care.
- Providing training;
- Peer-support groups;
- Mission area champions/ working groups on Gospel mission, eco church, justice seeking etc;
- Encouragement to explore individual calling and connection to community, e. g. through volunteer lay pastors, or lay people trained to take baptisms and funerals.
- **What are the opportunities for your church or you individually from this proposal?**



22

Closing Worship

StF410 Lord your church on earth is seeking

Let us pray together

**Gracious God, we,
your pilgrim people,
often come to the changing
seasons of life with trepidation
and fear.**

**Help us to hear clearly your
guiding voice, calling us
from the old and familiar to the
strange and new.**

**May we do this in the
confidence and joy of knowing
that we are going to a place
where you already are.**

**And when we tire and falter,
give us the resilience and
strength to journey on.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

- Paradox Blessing
- The Grace

