

Cheshire South Methodist Circuit (11/08)

5 Year Circuit Mission Plan
24 May 2024 - Review July 2025 - Review June 2026

A Faithful and Fruitful Future

1 Purpose

Our circuit exists to enable mission to the communities we serve through our local churches. Our aims are tied in with the Methodist Church in Great Britain and the main one is the advancement of the Christian Faith through the witness and worship of all our members. We do this in accordance with the doctrines, standards and disciplines of the Methodist Church.

2. Where are we now - June 2026

The Cheshire South Methodist Circuit comprises 21 Societies within South Cheshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire and Wales - see Appendix 1.

The Cheshire South Circuit has been subsidising running costs for at least the last 7 years by the sale of capital assets. During this time the number of members has reduced, and the sense of decline is keenly felt around the circuit, although not everywhere as there are some positive signs of growth in mission activity. This decline should be seen in the context of a wider decline in churches within the UK over the last 100 years.

The societies were placed in one of three Mission Networks in 2022. The Mission Networks aim was to encourage mission activities and mutual support within the Network and the sharing of resources to facilitate mission between the societies as appropriate. In particular the Networks were invited to propose a job description for a missional lay worker in each Network. Continued mutual support between societies within each ministerial section is to be encouraged, but CLT recognises that the formality of reporting Networks has run its course. A Circuit Property Strategy is being developed along with a Staffing strategy. These are aimed at developing sustainability within the Circuit finances.

Some mission activity is carried out within the Societies through a number of lay-workers employed by the Circuit. The activities being supported are detailed in Appendix 2. To be included from September 2025 is a missional pastoral lay-worker based in Sandbach and Alsager.

Additionally there are a number of Circuit Managed Mission Projects

- The Haven (North Street, Crewe) - supervised by the Haven Board
- Poole Quiet Garden - supervised by a Management Group
- One redundant chapel (Hassall Road) being used by Englesea Brook Chapel and Museum of Primitive Methodism (a Connexional Heritage Site organised as a District project)
- One redundant chapel (St Mark's, Crewe) leased to an Autism Inclusive.

- The St Johns, Willaston building is currently being retained for community use whilst the future potential for Methodist mission in Willaston is being discerned.

The Circuit employs part-time lay-workers to support administration functions - Circuit Administrator, Treasurer and Book-keeper, and Layworker Co-ordinator. During 2025/6 the administrative function has been extended to include a Circuit Property Administrator.

In Connexional Year 2025/26 the Circuit has 5 Presbyters stationed within the Circuit. This has been further supplemented by a lay-worker to support the Haven and the Alsager Dinner Hub funded by the District under the New Places for New People Connexional Initiative.

3. Where are we going?

The Circuit Vision statement has a faithful and fruitful future at its centre. This may look as follows:

- Each place in the Circuit having intention and purpose
- Mission at the heart of everything
- Developing centres of excellence
- Sharing resources and providing mutual support
- Working with partners - ecumenical, local authorities and charities - to deliver Kingdom values - Love, Peace, Justice
- Working with financially sustainable budgets - see Appendix 3

During a period of rapid change the Circuit needs to commit to prioritising missional projects going forward. The intention is to use this Mission plan to shape future CLT and Circuit meeting agendas and for it also to be used within the Methodist Stationing process.

4 Mission Plan Priorities and Actions

The following table details the priorities and actions identified to enable movement towards delivering our Circuit Vision.

Note: Each priority is referenced back to elements of the Circuit Vision Statement within brackets.

Priorities	Activites	Who	Resources	Funding	Timing	Fruit in 5 years
1. Enabling people to encounter God in worship and be equipped for mission as followers of Christ, supported by the Holy Spirit. [nurturing and fertilising to enable flourishing]	1. Strategic use of plan to encourage development of worship 2. Training of LPs/WL (new and existing), esp to encourage range of styles and our current context 3. Support for LAs 4. Support for music within worship	Ministers, worship teams LPs, WL, Ministers LPs, WL, Ministers To be identified	Chrestos Learning Network, LP tutors/mentors Computers/AV/online resources Online LA resources	Cost of Chrestos, Minister time Cost of training courses and resources	Following focus on identifying our worship leaders and publicising the material available to help with LAs, during the 2nd year 'Ways of Worship' information about worship in each church has been added to the Circuit website.	Vibrant and varied worship across the Circuit, relevant to its setting. More voices included in worship. More commitment to worship seen by increased congregations and steadier attendance.
2. Enabling societies to engage in mission by supporting governance [nurturing, some pruning]	1. Communicate to Circuit trustees and churches about governance requirements 2. Offer or signpost training related to governance (e.g., safeguarding, church leadership, GDPR, EDI) 3. Supportively challenge non-compliance and questionable viability	Circuit meeting/trustees, ministers, Circuit administrator CLT CLT & Viability and Sustainability Group	Circuit newsletter, Circuit website, CPD, Connexional material Methodist resources, Learning Network CPD, Connexional material	Cost of running training courses e.g. rent, external trainer, refreshments	Every Circuit Meeting Report at each Circuit meeting As required on reports of Society membership falling below 12 or key positions unable to be filled	The Circuit and societies compliant. July'25: The Circuit is compliant with EDI training and GDPR. Safeguarding training continues with requirements for re-training every four years.

Priorities	Activites	Who	Resources	Funding	Timing	Fruit in 5 years
3. Enabling societies to engage in mission through sustainable resourcing [fertilising]	Buildings: 1. Support societies in ensuring their buildings are fit-for-purpose for their missional work by signposting available support, supporting seeking consents and grants. Staffing: 1. Determine a suitable and sustainable staff level (both lay and ordained), including 2. Plan to fund this staffing 3. Determine missional work to be supported by lay worker hours Finance 1. Circuit grants available to support mission work 2. Signpost District and other grants and	Property subgroup supported by Property Administrator Staffing subgroup Circuit Invitation Committee Finance subgroup Staffing subgroup Finance subgroup/CLT Finance subgroup/CLT	Professional surveyor for Quinquennials Annual Methodist Code of Practice for Stationing	Surveyor charges Affordable and sustainable Society Assessments. Sale of redundant properties	Annual programme of Quinquennials and “As required” support to Societies Property Strategy being prepared Annual review of staffing in conjunction with development of Circuit budget. Strategic staffing plan in development. “As required” in response to requests for grants	Mission is facilitated by fit-for-purpose buildings with staffing and funding within a sustainable Circuit budget

Priorities	Activites	Who	Resources	Funding	Timing	Fruit in 5 years
	support application process					

Priorities	Activites	Who	Resources	Funding	Timing	Fruit in 5 years
4. Creating places of belonging and encounter with Christ for those who would not normally come to conventional church [fertilising and nurturing]	1. The work of the Haven and how the Circuit resources and enables the work 2. Poole Quiet Garden 3. St. Mark's and neurodiverse friendly worship 4. Discernment of where we see God at work providing opportunities for developing New Places for New People	Haven Board, CLT Poole Quiet Garden Management Team, CLT CLT CLT & Layworker team		Grants to support new and ongoing work.	Annual review of the Haven and it's forward plan Annual review of the forward plan for Poole Quiet Garden Plans to address this opportunity have not been developed in 2025/6. The Haven and Alsager Dinner Hub to receive NPNP support.	The Haven developing and maturing as community of faith Continued development of a place and community of reflection
5. Supporting societies to discern their future and mission [part flourishing, part pruning]	1. Churches encouraged to prayerfully form realistic mission plans (for growth, end of life, transition or replanting) with reference to the needs of their communities.	Ministers and Local Societies	Connexional resources Local Government statistics		Societies to have prepared Mission Plans by June 2025 with annual review subsequently	Societies more intentional about their mission, and Circuit having a picture of the intended plan for each church

Priorities	Activites	Who	Resources	Funding	Timing	Fruit in 5 years
6. Enable mission by caring for and encouraging Societies through times of change [nurturing]	1. Celebrate good news stories through Circuit Meeting and Newsletter 2. Name our challenges and struggles, lift in prayer 3. Develop plan for improved communication across the circuit	Circuit Meeting, Superintendent, Administrator Ministers and Circuit Stewards Stewards and Administrator			At Each Circuit Meeting Plan to be developed in 2026/7	Societies that are spiritually healthy and reliant on God
7. Enable societies to support local community needs and engage with justice issues e.g. climate change, poverty, refugees [nurturing, fertilising]	1. Engage with Local Authority statistics on local needs. 2. Identify potential partners to meet local needs 3. Engage with justice issues	Mission Networks Mission Networks, CLT CLT, Climate Change Champion	Local Government statistics Connexional resources		There are currently no plans, or resources, to address this priority at Circuit level beyond passing down priorities from Conference that can be addressed by individual societies.	Societies seen as active and relevant within their local communities

Appendix 1: Societies within the Cheshire South Circuit

In Methodism we speak of Methodist Churches and Methodist Societies in an almost interchangeable way. In this document the term society has been used extensively in the “Methodist technical sense”. A Circuit is made up of a number of Methodist Societies overseen by a Superintendent Minister. A Methodist Society is ‘governed’ by a Church Council and Methodist CPD lays down various standing orders governing the minimum requirement for membership of a society and membership of a Church Council.

A Society does not necessarily have to have its own building, and a society may hold the trusteeship of one or more buildings. A society is however subject to a Circuit financial assessment.

The Cheshire South Circuit has the following Societies:

Coppenhall
St Stephens
Wells Green
Shavington with Betley - multi-site society
Nantwich with Broad Lane - multi-site society
Audlem
Hankelow with Woore - multi-site society
St John’s, Whitchurch
Broomhall and Sound
Aston
Lightwood Green
Tallarn Green
Brown Knowl
Crewe by Farndon
Unity, Sandbach - multi-site society
Elworth
Ettiley Heath
Winterley
Haslington
Oakhanger
Wesley Place, Alsager

Appendix 2: Deployment of Layworkers engaged in mission related activities within Cheshire South Circuit

Crewe & Rope Green Network

Society	Circuit Supported Mission/Pastoral Work
Coppenhall	0.25 Pastoral Layworker; Breakfast Club & Toddlers - Mondays term-time; Monthly Messy Church Weekly outreach to Mablin's Lane Primary School Special events
St Stephens	0.25 Pastoral Layworker; Forget Me Not Club
Wells Green	
Willaston	
Shavington with Betley	Messy Church - monthly

Nantwich, Whitchurch & Rural Network

Society	Circuit Supported Mission
Nantwich with Broad Lane	Noah's Ark Hope Journey
Audlem	Audlem Acorns
Hankelow with Woore	

Society	Circuit Supported Mission
St John's Whitchurch	BBT - Toddler Group
Broomhall & Sound	Coffee & Cuddles; Lego Church Winter warmers Book & Brew Twin Group Hope Journeys
Aston	Ukes Aloud - Wednesday afternoons
Lightwood Green	Lightworks - monthly Saturday family workshop and weekly Thursday 'Bench Talk '
Tallarn Green	Friday Youth Club Summer school holiday activities
Brown Knowl	
Crewe by Farndon	Butterflies PlayGroup Also Faith, Fun & Music; Church for all, Forest Church, Easter events, Craft and other events through church year Summer Holiday Fun

Sandbach & Alsager

Society	Circuit Supported Mission
Unity Sandbach	Stepping Stones at New Horizons (Wheelock); Stepping Stones (Wesley Centre) Breakfast Church at New Horizons; Hope Journey at New Horizons Occasional Craft Club at one Primary School
Elworth	

Society	Circuit Supported Mission
Ettiley Heath	
Haslington	Church Mice - Thursday mornings Toddler Group
Winterley	
Wesley Place, Alsager	Sparkz Kids Club - Thursday tea-time Ablaze Youth Club - Thursday evenings; The Ark - Tuesday morning toddlers; Craft clubs in three Primary Schools Fun days - School holidays Hope Journeys Special church events 3Generate - Circuit wide
Oakhanger	Support to Oakhanger Project Taster sessions Kayaking/Canoeing activities

Appendix 3: Approach to financial sustainability

Moving forward the element of the Circuit budget raised by assessment will be based on covering ministerial and administration costs.

Missional work supported by the Circuit, currently carried out by lay-workers, will be funded by the sales of redundant properties, seeking external grant funding and local fund raising.

Where appropriate, following the sale of property, the CLT will seek to develop 'replacement projects' to minimise the levy applied by the Connexion on the sale of property.

The Circuit will prepare a plan for the sale of properties, with approximate timescales to support a 5-year financial plan.

The number of ministers stationed in the Circuit should be dependent on what can be afforded through the assessment. Any adjustment of the number of ministers in the circuit will be subject to Methodist stationing processes.

All new missional posts within the Circuit will need a financial sustainability plan before they can be approved.