

THE METHODIST CHURCH, LEEDS DISTRICT
DISTRICT POLICY COMMITTEE
TOWARDS A RENEWED MISSION IN THE CITY CENTRE OF LEEDS

Background

The District Leadership Team asked a small group to give some preliminary consideration to the creation of a renewed vision for Methodist mission and ministry within the city centre of Leeds, as this is one of the key recommendations of the report on the 'Review of Leeds Methodist Mission'. The membership of the group comprised Rev Anne Brown, Deacon Jenny Jones, Michael Noble, David Quick and Anne Vautrey.

Outline Proposals

This brief paper represents the initial thoughts of the group following its two meetings: these are set out as a series of comments. They have been shared with the District Leadership Team and with the Leeds Methodist Mission Council.

- ◆ Methodism needs to have an active presence in the city centre.
- ◆ There needs to be flexibility to respond as issues, etc. change and arise.
- ◆ There should be an available, appropriately located place/space, accessible to the community at large.
- ◆ This has been described as a 'beacon of hope', a safe space, and somewhere where support, advice and sign-posting to appropriate agencies could be offered. We should not duplicate other provision, but seek to fill holes, and be distinctive.
- ◆ The place/space would also operate as the base for the work of the Deacon and for future ministry.
- ◆ Our work should be explicitly Christian, but not proselytising – open and available to all, without distinction or need for commitment.
- ◆ We also need there to be a prophetic voice which is able to speak to those 'in power' on behalf of those who have no or little voice, arising from the above work.
- ◆ We need to work collaboratively with others (e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau, Leeds Credit Union, St George's), but should avoid formal partnerships.
- ◆ We should, in terms of a funding model, explore the possibilities for some self-sustainability in terms of income generation (i.e. in addition to any District and grant funding) – for example a Christian resource centre or small café.
- ◆ We need to have an holistic view and ownership of Methodism's mission to the whole of Leeds, of which city-centre mission and ministry will form a part.

It is anticipated that the location of a place/space would be close to the shopping, cultural, etc. centres rather than is the case currently at Oxford Place, where the footfall is much more limited, and the location is generally less accessible.

A decision on a Sunday worshipping space is a separate matter, depending on other considerations arising from the Review. However, the 'base' could also be considered for the development of worship opportunities. It is felt to be important that there will be some worshipping congregation(s) within the city centre. In the future, this could afford the opportunity for Pioneer Ministry.

Overall, we need to go to, and be, where the people are: "and go not only to those that need you, but to those that need you most" (John Wesley).

Potential Implementation

The group has also given some thoughts to potential implementation, should the District Policy Committee and the Synod take the view that the above outline, when taken together with the 'Review of Leeds Methodist Mission' report, is an appropriate way to move forward. These are listed below:

- ◆ The proposals will provide a guide for the work of the new Deacon from 1 September 2017, and a basis for the development of a fuller, longer-term vision.
- ◆ The new Deacon should be encouraged to be a part of the Oxford Place Methodist Church congregation, but should not have any pastoral responsibility there.
- ◆ The Circuit Leadership Teams of the Leeds (North and East) and Leeds (South and West) Circuits should be asked to meet to consider this report, with a view to both short-term and longer-term development.
- ◆ The Leeds Methodist Mission Council would be disbanded, with the District Policy Committee itself taking over the Managing Trustee responsibilities for the Oxford Place premises and for the Batcliffe Drive manse. Consideration will need to be given to arrangements for winding up the separate Leeds Methodist Mission charity which is governed by the Council. A number of detailed resolutions would need to be agreed in order to put this into practice, thus amending/reversing decisions which were taken by the Synod in April 2013.
- ◆ A new Leeds Methodist Mission Development Group should be established, reporting to the District Policy Committee, to take forward the new vision. Its members should be chosen for their commitment to city-centre mission and ministry, and should include at least one presbyter from each of the Leeds (North and East) and Leeds (South and West) Circuits, together with a range of lay people.
- ◆ A separate Mission Building Development Group should be established, also reporting to the District Policy Committee, to take forward issues relating to the current Oxford Place building-and any proposals for its development or disposal, and for any potential new place/space.
- ◆ The new Deacon will be living in the District manse currently occupied by the Chair of District. The Batcliffe Drive manse will therefore remain available for letting – currently it provides some income to support the work at Oxford Place, including part of the stipend for the Deacon.
- ◆ Under the new arrangements above, the District Policy Committee and Synod will thus need to commit to continuing to designate the surplus rental income from the Batcliffe Drive manse to support city-centre missional activity. They will also need to consider the options for covering a likely shortfall in the funding required for the Deacon's stipend and for necessary expenses to undertake the role.
- ◆ It is currently anticipated that the new Yorkshire West District will be looking to sell the Batcliffe Drive manse in the early part of 2019, in order to release finance for the purchase of a new District Chair's manse, which will need to be available from July 2019. That being so, there will need to be a commitment by the new District to provide alternative funding to replace the rental income from the manse, for example from the new District Advance Fund or seeking a Connexional Grant. [Should the hotel development go ahead, then it is unlikely that any income for the District would accrue before 2020/21.]
- ◆ If the hotel development does go ahead, then the eventual income stream will be designated exclusively for the support of mission in the city centre of Leeds [Standing Order 440(6)(a)], which should hopefully make the work self-sustainable in the longer-term.

Michael Noble 16.3.17

This version of the document has been produced by scanning the original and then making minor changes to typeface and layout. The content remains identical.