



**Yorkshire  
North & East  
Methodist District**

## New Places for New People: District Policy

### PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

The District is tasked by the Conference to promote and develop New Places for New People, with priority being given to Church at the Margins. To do this we first adopt the theological foundations and core values of the Connexional NPNP strategy as the key framework for this work. Wherever NPNP arise within the life of the District, from the outset they will be expected to be grounded in these essential principles and practices. Getting this pioneering mindset embedded within an expectant and hopeful culture of prayer and reflection is a crucial determinant of what will eventually unfold under the Spirit's prompting. It is the initial preparatory task which cannot be skimmed or skipped and one which the District Team will use as a benchmark when considering applications for funding.

### NPNP THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

**Beginning and ending with God:** NPNPs are God's work. We are joining in with God's invitation to reconnect people to the God revealed to us in Jesus Christ: enabling us to live in right relationship to God, ourselves, others, and the whole of creation.

**Incarnation is key:** NPNPs involve being with and alongside others – discovering God together by sharing the reality of human life with its pain, struggles, and joys. Incarnational ministry is key to the work of NPNP. As in Jesus, God takes human flesh and enters our world, so we are called to be alongside, not distant, from the people and places we minister in.

**Developing new Christian communities:** We believe God is at work in God's world and is not dependent on the actions of the Church or individual Christians. An NPNP discovers and joins God's work in listening for, speaking of and living out the good news, beyond the existing boundaries of the Church. These new communities of people sharing good news will gather together to worship, learn, serve God, and be connected to the wider Methodist Connexion.

**Nurturing new Christians:** An NPNP project is for new people in new places, is rooted in our response to God's love, and aims for all people to know and experience the love of God. The gospel is for every time, every place, and every person. God's people are called for a purpose: "to love and praise God so that the world may believe." (Methodist Conference Report, Ministry in the Methodist Church, para 2.3, p.375)

**Open to transformation:** At the heart of NPNP is an invitation into a transforming relationship with God and a willingness to be shaped, challenged, and transformed in our encounters with others. The mission of God revealed in Jesus offers us love, forgiveness and new life – all of which will be transformational.

**God's preferential option for the poor:** The Bible contains stories of marginalisation, poverty and powerlessness – a demonstration of the sinfulness of humankind and the need, in every age, to be attentive to the processes which discriminate and marginalise. God's character – what God does, and how God is discovered – reveals a God of justice and an emphasis on our need to care for the vulnerable, the stranger, and those who are impoverished.

**The good news of Jesus Christ:** The multiple systems which marginalise others are challenged by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ sees the extraordinary worth of those who experience poverty. His example was to restore those who were 'unclean' and share bread with those described as 'outcasts'. Church at the Margins is focused on people who are economically poor experiencing and revealing God – recognising that without the presence of 'the poor', the Church will not see the whole of God's vision for humankind. We hold that to abandon the poor is to abandon the central theme of the liberating, life-giving message of the gospel for us all. God's character reveals a God of justice and an emphasis on our need to care for the vulnerable, the stranger and those who are impoverished.

**Evangelism and social justice:** Evangelism and social justice are inseparable aspects of our Christian discipleship. The good news of the gospel reveals "life in all its fullness" (John 10:10). Every aspect of our lives – our beliefs, ideas, practices and relationships – are transformed by the gospel. Love is at the intersection of evangelism and social justice. "The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love" (Psalm 33:5), "And the heavens proclaim his righteousness, for he is a God of justice" (Psalm 50:6).

**Interdependence:** God created us to be interdependent: with God, others, the created (non-human) world, and within ourselves (physical, emotional, and spiritual). We recognise our shared brokenness and our capacity and need to receive from one another – in particular from people who are economically vulnerable or marginalised whose wisdom and gifts we can fail to recognise. Inclusion: We believe everyone belongs to God. Each person is created in the image of God and therefore has an intrinsic worth, value and dignity. Therefore, whenever we 'other' people because of their economic circumstances, we distort the image of God in them and ourselves. We recognise the gifts of all people and the sinful structures of systemic injustice which lead to exclusion.

## NPNP CORE VALUES

**Be pioneering:** NPNP projects affirm and enable people from diverse backgrounds and ages who are called by God to see new opportunities and respond to God's Spirit at work outside of the existing Church. Furthermore, NPNP projects enable these people to connect and form new gospel communities amongst unaffiliated people – with creativity, imagination, innovation, and sustained commitment.

**Develop a 'mixed ecology':** We value a diverse range of missional approaches which will produce a variety of new Christian communities among unaffiliated people. These include church plants, pioneering communities of faith, fresh expressions, missional communities, and other new faith communities in rural, estate, urban, inner city, suburban, and village contexts.

**Be committed to risk-taking mission:** NPNP is the work of the whole Methodist Church, and we are committed to experimenting and taking risks in mission. In a healthy culture of learning and reflection, evaluation will be valued as part of the journey of a fruitful NPNP project.

**Ensure contextual relevance:** New Christian communities will arise out of careful listening and will always remain connected to the wider community and aware of its needs.

**Nurture discipleship in gathered community:** Though an individual chooses to become a disciple, faith is nurtured in community with others. NPNP will celebrate emerging patterns of worship and contextually relevant discipleship that resonate with new people.

**Seek justice:** We believe God loves all people. God is at work, and can be discovered among people who are economically vulnerable or marginalised. We recognise the devastating impact of poverty on people's lives, especially children, and are committed to a vision of God's justice for all people. We are committed to listening to, amplifying, and being changed by the voices of those who experience injustice and marginalisation. Working collaboratively, we will seek opportunities to enable those voices to be heard by those with power to instigate change and transformation.

**Prioritise the lived experience of people at the economic margins:** We believe people with lived experience are the experts in their contexts and are essential partners in co-designing, co-creating, co-delivering and co-leading any project. We are committed to the orientation that, 'nothing about us, without us, is for us.'

**Share power:** We will share power and recognise the dynamics and potential misuse of power, including acknowledging the privileged position of cultural outsiders and the dominant patterns of white, middle class, and male culture. We are committed to a long-term and sustained presence in economically marginalised and vulnerable communities.

**Celebrate inclusion and participation:** We will celebrate and value the inclusion and participation of all. We believe everyone in a community has something to offer. Gifts are waiting to be discovered in all communities. We will resist focusing on service-provider models of community engagement based on the rich doing something for the poor. We recognise our need for the gifts of those at the economic margins, and believe the whole Church needs to receive these gifts in order to be fully transformed by the gospel of Christ.

**Enable leadership communities:** We will nurture, enable, and develop local leadership within people already present and invested in their local context. We recognise a variety of leadership styles but will resist models of 'heroic leader/ rescuer' leadership.

## Aims and objectives

The District is tasked with

- a) Establishing an NPNP team to lead on this work
- b) prioritising starting a new Christian community in every circuit, by making it an integrated part of the district's mission plan/strategy
- c) encouraging and equipping circuits and local churches to launch NPNPs
- d) sharing learning and best practice on pioneering with circuits and local churches
- e) exploring how the district will support an ongoing, long-term commitment to starting new Christian communities in circuits across the district in a variety of contexts, especially Church at the Margins
- f) creating a policy and process to ensure the equitable allocation of funds to eligible projects (including what will happen if there are more eligible projects than there is funding available).
- g) The District NPNP Team will share this vision at Synod (or similar gatherings of circuit leadership teams) to inspire circuits and encourage them to apply for funding

The District NPNP Team are accountable to the District Leadership Team and the Representative Synod, and work under the direction of the Chair of District. The key tasks of the team are to:

- a) Be enthusiastic advocates for NPNP and especially Church at the Margins
- b) Build relationships with the Circuits, encouraging them to explore the possibilities for NPNTs in their contexts, with the aim that 60% of these will be Church at the Margins initiatives. An Initial Ideas form exists for this purpose and will be the basis for such consultations.
- c) Work with and encourage local Circuit NPNT teams and especially those people who are emerging as leaders of NPNTs
- d) Support the development of local NPNT budgets and the process of accessing NPNT funding grants from both the District and Connexion
- e) Discern how the most effective oversight and support for any proposed NPNT might be offered, including whether the Kairos Movement may be an appropriate pathway

**Circuits** that wish to launch an NPNT are expected to:

- a) Form a circuit NPNT team of people with the vision and enthusiasm to plant a new Christian community and support its development. In particular Circuit NPNT Teams will initiate the circuit-led projects by discerning a context, vision and focus for the project; playing a role in submission for funding; and leading on any necessary recruitment. The Circuit NPNT Team could be any group of people committed to pioneering an NPNT. It may involve lay volunteers, paid lay workers, presbyters, and/or deacons. Though it may not always include the Superintendent, the group should have the support of the Superintendent for their project.
- b) Consider how Church at the Margins might best be developed in their context
- c) It is connexional policy that all circuit-led NPNT projects should be match-funded or match-resourced, Where possible it is therefore imperative that Circuits match fund external grants given for NPNT from their own Circuit and Church funds and resources, or give very sound reasons for the level of support that can be offered if matching is not possible.

## Grants and funding

The District has been allocated £220k by the connexion for NPNT, to which we have match funded £200k from the DAF. This gives a total available of £420k. Funding for the Kairos movement is separate to this figure. Currently there are fifteen circuits in the District, plus Kairos, so the amount available for any single project will not be huge. This is why match funding by circuits and churches is essential, particularly if personnel are to be employed. Additionally, as Church at the Margins plays such a key part in NPNT, the District may think it prudent to set aside a modest sum to support a dedicated officer for this purpose.

As the intermediate group in the connexional funding process, the District NPNT Team will have delegated authority to approve all applications for grants from these District funds. In so doing they will be mindful of the total available to the District and will accordingly apportion such funds with due care and diligence.