

Transforming Lives and Communities

Lancashire District of the Methodist Church: Policy 2010 - 2013



Our Promises

We are the Methodist people of God in Lancashire and in the next 3 years, we are responding to God's loving challenge as we promise to:

***Energise discipleship
Enable leadership
Encourage risk
Employ buildings
Embrace technology
Enrich communities
Engage all***

Dear Friends,

Over the past four years in the Lancashire District, Methodist people of all ages have been seeking to express what it means to be the Living Presence of Christ. This was our response to the 'Our Calling' statement adopted by the Methodist Conference a few years ago.

In preparing a new Policy statement for 2010-2013, we have tried to understand how rapidly our world is changing. We have spent time thinking how these trends might affect all of us in the future.

We have considered how developments in science, technology and the media will speed up and affect the ways we live in our different communities. We have thought about how the make-up of the population might change, realising that it will be a priority for the church to respond to the needs of young people - whilst at the same time recognising that the numbers of older people will continue to grow. We have also tried to reconcile the challenges we face around the availability of resources for ministry with the diverse ways in which people will explore their spirituality in the future. We have spent a lot of time talking to each other, and to God, in prayer.

This new Policy, **Transforming Lives and Communities**, is for all, but it is particularly a challenge for those called to positions of leadership and responsibility in our churches. Across Lancashire, I see the commitment and faithfulness of countless people serving Jesus in the world and in the church. I believe God wants to lead His church through the unprecedented changes we see around us, drawing us closer to His love in the world and in the church.

I hope and pray that this Policy will help us to follow Him faithfully. We have identified 7 promises which I believe we should make as members of the Methodist Church in Lancashire. The rainbow colours remind us of God's faithful promises to us and I invite you to join with many others in making this Covenant. We are committing ourselves to God and to the challenge of transforming lives and communities.

Yours in Christ,

Stephen J Poxon

1. Energise Discipleship

We will reaffirm our commitment to discipleship with Christ as the principal goal of our District Policy for 2010-2013.

We will support and challenge members of all ages in each circuit with a range of discipleship encounters which can build a real spirituality for daily living. Our approach will place a strong emphasis on personal and social holiness.

We will launch a year of the Bible in 2011; a year of Prayer in 2012 and a year of evangelism and discipleship in the District in 2013.

We commit ourselves to use at least 15% of each circuit's resources to work with children, young people and families by 2012-2013.

We will ask the Holy Spirit to re-energise our collective and personal commitment to prayer in each church, supported with regular resources provided by the District.

2. Enable Leadership

We will review the roles and responsibilities of lay and ordained leaders in each Circuit during 2010/11.

We will agree a Circuit Leadership development plan for 2011-2013 which describes how lay and ordained leaders will be identified, mentored, and equipped. This will include a specific emphasis on young leaders.

We will promote the use of time-limited task groups to offer more opportunities for involvement and leadership in churches, Circuits and in the District.

3. Encourage Risk

We will create opportunities for innovative, high quality examples of worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism across the District by 2013. This will include 3-4 pioneer projects (e.g. church plants, mission communities) developed in partnership between Circuits and the District.

We will remove unnecessary bureaucracy and reduce business meetings to create the flexibility for innovation and faithful risk-taking.

We will encourage innovation and risk taking in Circuits through our stationing and grant-making policies.

4. Employ Buildings

By April 2011, each circuit will prepare and publish a “Statement of the Trustees”, explaining before God and to their local community:

- How we are using His existing buildings for worship, fellowship and caring,
- What plans we have in place to offer His buildings back to local communities in a spirit of service,
- What opportunities we have identified to work with current ecumenical partners to use each other’s buildings.

As a District, we will petition the 2011 Conference on the issue of trusteeship, opening up a debate about the transfer of trusteeship from churches to Circuits. We will discuss this locally first.

5. Embrace Technology

By 2013, we will have investigated, worked with and provided training in the use of a range of technologies which will enable each Circuit to:

- Enhance our experience of Worship
- Communicate more effectively
- Support pastoral care
- Reduce our carbon footprint
- Help us to share the gospel

As a priority, we will seek the leadership of young people in the use of social media eg Skype, Facebook and Twitter and evaluate the impact of this by 2012.

We will also embrace the early church's "technology", for example, by providing opportunities for people to experience the spirituality of Iona, Taize and monastic traditions during 2010-2013.

6. Enrich Communities

We will be salt and light in each of our communities, expressed in ways which meet their diverse needs.

We will seek ways to celebrate and develop more connections between each church and its global and local community by people becoming more involved in politics, schools, charities and other voluntary groups.

During 2010/11, we will encourage each church to use a community audit to identify a specific local need to which they can respond where these

have not taken place in last 5 years. Where churches have already taken steps to respond to local needs, we will encourage Circuits to ensure that resources are available to sustain this work.

In 2011/12, we will launch an “Environmental Church Challenge” inviting each church to devise and implement an environmental project within their community. We will invite a neighbouring District to help us evaluate this initiative in 2012/13.

We will continue to develop our relationship with our World Church partners in Sierra Leone, Papua New Guinea and Uruguay.

7. Engage All

We will strengthen our ability and confidence to engage in conversation and activities with local people of other faiths, agnostics and people of no faith during 2010-13, asking the Holy Spirit to guide us.

We will identify practical opportunities to work, learn and share with other people, using the natural abilities and interests of lay and ordained members. We will place particular emphasis on our work with children, young people and families.

We will provide training and development opportunities to lay and ordained leaders to increase our awareness of, and confidence to challenge issues of equality and diversity. This will help us to reach out to people who find it difficult to have their voices heard.

We will promote the active involvement of the Methodist people in the local and national political process.

Prayer of Commitment

Loving God,

We make these promises trusting in your eternal love and faithfulness. Help us to transform lives and communities as we use all the resources you have given to us in churches, Circuits and the District. Help us to fulfil our calling to worship, learn and care, serve and evangelise, wherever we are in Lancashire. For this we pray, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the name of Jesus.

Amen

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