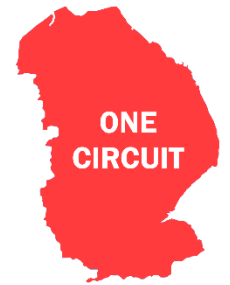


1 Circuit: Our Future, Reshaping for Mission



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why are we looking at merging all 8 current Circuits into 1?

- To create a new structure in which congregations and individuals will be able to grow as disciples of Jesus, and then, in turn, to go out to be disciples of Jesus in their communities. To grow the church; spiritually and numerically. To be better equipped and have more time to show God's love, grace, peace, justice, and welcome.
- To gather together as much of the administration and compliance currently done by ordained ministers, stewards, and others at both Local Church and Circuit levels releasing time for discipleship and mission and relieving the anxiety of increasingly complex legal requirements.
- To address the issue of fewer Presbyters available to be stationed across the Connexion, and, of those Presbyters, a still smaller number willing and able to take on the role of Circuit Superintendent (which every Circuit is required to have.)
- There is an imbalance in resources available between the current Circuits with some having significant resource while others are struggling to support the work they want to do.
Gathering all the available resources; people, places and money, together will enable more strategic thinking and work.
- The current Circuit borders do not always make sense. Some Circuits are able to work as a cohesive whole but in some places contexts vary and relationships are strained because of distances.

When will this happen?

Synod in September 2026 will be asked to consider in more detail the proposed model. If Synod is still in agreement with this direction of travel every Church Council and Circuit Meeting will also need to confer and come to a view before Synod in April 2027. Continued support from the majority of churches and Circuits will enable the proposal to go to Methodist Conference in 2027 with a view to the official formation of the new Circuit from September 1st, 2028.

Will Preachers be asked to travel right across the new Circuit to preach?

No, all preachers will be asked not only which Sunday's they will be available to preach but also how far they will be prepared to travel. If preachers want to travel more widely they will be able to, but if they would prefer to be based more locally this will be taken into account.

Will this reshaping mean chapel closures?

The reshaping is not an exercise in closing chapel buildings or in asking Societies (congregations) to cease to meet. There will be buildings which will be closed and the Societies that meet in them may choose to worship with another church rather than looking at the possibility of continuing in a different space (e.g. a school hall), however, this is a natural part of where we find ourselves in the life of some of our congregations and not a deliberate part of the reshaping into 1 Circuit.

What is the 'Hub and Spoke' model?

A model based on a regrouping of the existing churches in the District, regardless of which circuits they are currently in. Hubs would be churches where there is already significant discipleship and mission work happening. Around each Hub would be a satellite ring of spoke churches, smaller, less active but still being faithful to their call as the people of God in their place. The main focus of resource and energy will be put into the Hubs who will support the discipleship and mission of the spokes.

Each Hub and Spoke cluster will be able to focus on the communities they serve to share Jesus' Good News in ways which are most relevant for them.

Church Councils will still be required but the Hub and Spoke cluster may decide to reshape these in a more effective way to oversee the work.

The aim is to have more hub and spoke clusters than the current number of 8 Circuits. So that the groupings can be more local and address local issues more effectively.

'Hub and Spoke' is our current terminology. This may change. As with any analogy the imagery breaks down and is not applicable to every circumstance we want to describe.

Why 'Hubs and Spokes' and not 'Mission churches and Fellowship churches'?

Reshaping into 1 Circuit is not just about streamlining administration and compliance. It is about enabling us to have space and energy to become more focussed on discipleship and mission. Therefore, our aim is that every church/chapel/Society is a mission and fellowship church.

We recognise that there are already places where this is happening in greater and in smaller ways. The Hub churches will receive concentrated time and resource to maintain and build the discipleship and mission in those places and also to enable them to assist the spoke churches in their work. As the discipleship and mission grows in spoke churches they too may become hubs with the benefits and the responsibilities of that role.

Do we have to stop working with other churches that we already have relationships with if they are not in our cluster?

No. The groupings we will seek to create are to try and arrange churches so that discipleship and mission can take place most effectively. However, these are not closed groups. There will always be a more messy network of relationships and work, as a Connexional Church this is to be encouraged.

This also applies to any ecumenical relationships which are already in place.

How will we work out which churches are hubs and which are spokes?

Initially there will be a questionnaire for each Local Church about their discipleship and mission which we hope will be answered honestly. Finally assessments will also have to take account of factors such as geography.

Will every church continue to have a minister?

Yes, every church/Society is required to have a Minister in Pastoral Charge who must be an ordained Presbyterian in the Methodist Church. However, our aim is that every hub and spoke cluster will have a ministry team (possibly made up of a Presbyterian, Lay Ministers who may work broadly across the cluster or have specific roles, Lay Pastors, Local Preachers) who would work together to enable the discipleship and mission life of the cluster.

Will Local Churches be able to employ people too?

Local Churches and clusters will continue to be encouraged to look at additional roles they may need to enable discipleship and mission in their context.

What will this mean for the Assessment?

At present every Circuit uses a slightly different formula for calculating the assessment required from Local Churches to pay for ministry and resources in the Circuit, District and from National teams. The Reshaping Group will be looking at how this will be brought into line should we be given formal agreement to move to One Circuit. Some churches may find they have to pay more, some less, while others will not notice a significant change.

TERMS

The following links for the Methodist Church Website may be also be useful:

[Structure and Governance - The Methodist Church](#)

[What is distinctive about Methodism? - The Methodist Church](#)

[Membership - The Methodist Church](#)

CIRCUIT: a grouping of Methodist churches. The Circuit oversees the calling of Presbyters and Deacons, the training and accrediting of Local Preachers, and the effective deployment of resources for discipleship and mission.

The Circuit Meeting are the trustees of Circuit finance and property.

CHAPEL/CHURCH/SOCIETY: a local church in a particular place. The Society is the group of people who worship together. This maybe within a traditional church space, on-line or in a building such as a school hall which they do not own. A Society may continue to meet and worship together even if they decide to sell their church/chapel building.

The Church Council are the trustees of church finances and property. The Church Council may have oversight of more than one building eg where 2 Societies have merged into one Church Council but have decided to maintain 2 church properties in neighbouring communities.

DISTRICT: a group of Circuits or one Circuit is overseen by the District. This provides another layer of checks and balances to ensure that trustee obligations are being fulfilled and also has particular oversight of matters pertaining to discipline.

The District Council (or District Policy Committee) is the trustee body for District finances and property (i.e. the Chair of District's manse.)

CONNEXION: we are all the Connexion of the Methodist Church. We work relationally and in groups. We are not congregational, i.e. we do not set our own policies and doctrines.

The Connexion confers in many different ways but the annual Methodist Conference is the primary place for decision making.

'Connexion' is most often used when referring to members of the Methodist team who are based in Methodist Church House in London or in Manchester e.g. TMCP (Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes.)

PRESBYTERS/DEACONS/MINISTERS: There are 2 orders of ordained ministry in the Methodist Church:

"The ministry of presbyters can be summarised as leadership in mission focused in a **ministry of word** (interpreting the Scriptures and speaking about God, both to followers of Jesus and the wider world); **sacrament** (celebrating God's presence everywhere and presiding at baptisms and Holy Communion); and **pastoral responsibility** (leading, loving and caring for God's people)."

[Are you called to be a Presbyter? - The Methodist Church](#)

"The core emphasis of a deacon's ministry is **witness through service**. These two strands are highlighted in the ordination service and are embodied through acts of pastoral care, a passion for mercy and justice, being a prophetic voice and a messenger of the gospel.....As a deacon, you would be a 'focus' for the **servant ministry of Christ**."

[Are you called to be a deacon? - The Methodist Church](#)

However, all followers of Jesus are called to be ministers in different ways. Some may be official roles such as Local Preachers and Stewards, some may fulfil their calling in being a good neighbour, challenging injustice, prayer-focussed ministry, caring for the environment.

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