



Derbyshire North East
METHODIST CIRCUIT

Community Pioneer

INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

Derbyshire North East Circuit launched in 2020, bringing together two smaller circuits (groups of churches). One of the key drivers behind its creation was creating capacity for new mission. Visions to reach out to the post-industrial village of Barrow Hill and the interconnected Boythorpe, Grangewood, St Augustines, Birdholme estates in south Chesterfield emerged from extensive consultations with members across the former circuits. These are both “left behind” places, facing economic deprivation and isolation.

We have spent the last year listening to people from within these neighbourhoods and in prayer. We recognise that pioneering is as much an art as a science, particularly when not tied to any particular building or commercial venture. The balance and precise nature of the activities we undertake and the rhythms of the Christian communities which emerge will continue to be shaped by the confluence of relationships formed, the gifts of the pioneer and team, and the needs and interests of local people. This information pack is intended to give a flavour of what we have discerned thus far and what we hope to see over the coming years.

Our Pioneering Values



Embracing the spirit of Caleb



Seeing possibilities not hurdles



Allowing God to lead us to other communities



To be people who do things with, not do things to

New Places for New People

This project represents one of the first national pilots of the New Places for New People strand of [God for All](#), our national Methodist strategy for evangelism and growth, which aims to recover the practice of starting new Christian communities, with particular focus on being church at the margins.

When a range of potential pilots were shared with local church leaders, this one emerged as our priority because there are so many communities across Sheffield Methodist District which have been left behind by government, wider society, and by our churches. More than thirty years on, the closure of mines and heavy industry still casts a shadow over our region, further re-enforced by lingering impacts of the 2008 recession. Even before these economic shocks our churches had been losing touch with contemporary working-class culture despite our nineteenth century historical roots of rapid growth in many of these places. The result of this has been our inadvertent retreat from former pit villages and estates.

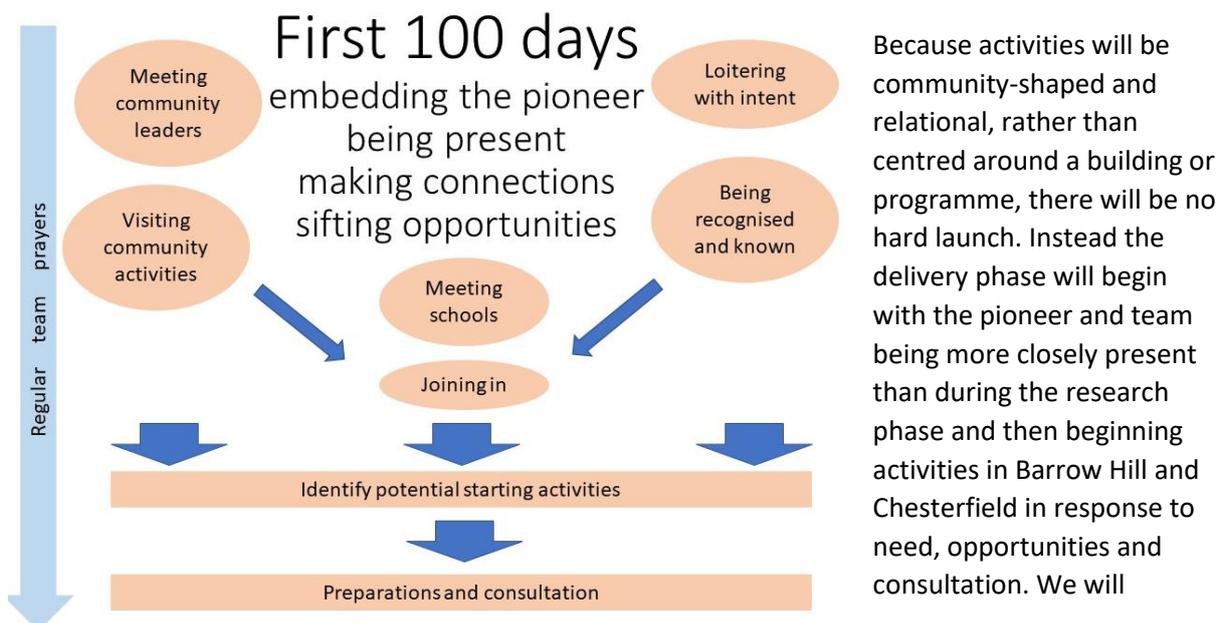
They are in many senses our Methodist roots, but as society has evolved we have struggled to relate to them. If we can carefully and painstakingly relearn what it means to be a community led church in these places, this could be repeated, including with the involvement of new people from these new places, in many other communities.

Where We Are Heading

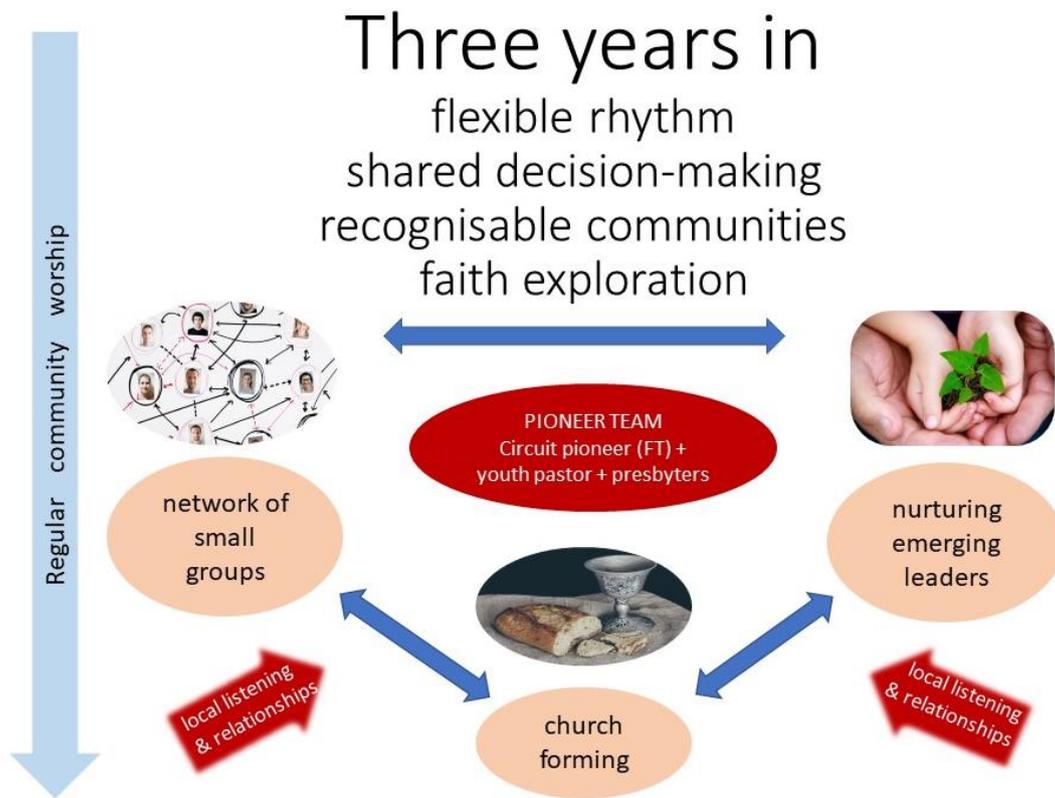
We anticipate that church in these places will come to look like a relational network of small groups and activities. Some people will engage with only one of these, others will be part of several. We will establish early a pattern of regular open worship, but without the expectation that we are building towards a single regular Sunday service that everyone attends together, e.g. for those who engage through a community gardening group, a forest church model may be appropriate.

We will also place emphasis on identifying and nurturing emerging leaders from within the communities, which we recognise will require significant investment of time.

We describe below how we anticipate that this will develop over the next five years, but recognise that our understanding will continue to evolve.



include publicly accessible regular worship and prayer from the start, to model that this is what we are and what we are about, but not necessarily expecting many people to join with us at this stage.



By the third year we would expect a relatively stable but still evolving pattern of groups, activities and events to be happening. We would expect the pioneer team to be involved in the organising of most of these, but to be alert to and prioritising sharing of leadership. Across the groups would be opportunities for people to begin discipleship journeys. People would self-identify as belonging to a community and some would profess Christian faith.



By the fifth year the pioneer team should be looking to draw back to mentoring and supporting new leaders from within the community where possible, recognising that support will continue to be required for some time. Members will recognise themselves as agents of change in their neighbourhood and will support each other in growing in faith. Working with the pioneer we will explore possibilities for the next places that God calls us to.

Being Fruitful

We will reflect on the fruitfulness of our work amongst our team, with the organisations that are supporting us, and to benefit others starting new places for new people in their own communities. Our markers of fruitfulness speak to progression rather than absolute standards.

Theme	Marker	Measure
Growing disciples	Fostering culture of deepening discipleship	Increasing number of people engaging in regular activities with intention of growing in faith (e.g. small groups, way of life)
	Lives being shaped by relationship with Christ	People comfortable to give testimony about recent change
Sharing stories	culture of invitation to relationship with Christ	New people coming to explore because they have been invited
	People (re)discovering faith	Baptisms & culturally relevant public professions of faith Growing number of active members
Passionate contextual worship	Growing worshipping community	Increasing numbers of people engaged in regular collective worship activities
	rooted in and continually informed by context	Worship increasingly led by people other than the pioneer team Format of worship evolves in response to local suggestions
Long term sustainability	Working towards financial sustainability	Decreasing deficit of locally generated income vs costs (including costs of staff time)
	Nurturing new leaders	Creation of local leadership teams, which become increasingly self-reliant
	Self governing	Increasingly able to take on own governance and safeguarding
Connexional	Relating well to wider Methodism	Local leaders glad to be associated with the circuit
	Contributing to circuit/district	Local members making growing meaningful contributions to wider life of circuit

Our Team

Sean Adair, our circuit superintendent minister, will line manage the community pioneer.

The community pioneer will be supported by a steering group. We are keen to model collaborative leadership and participation for the new Christian communities as they emerge. The steering group will be active participants in the project, rather than sitting on the side-lines offering advice. The group currently comprises:

- Rev Sean Adair – Superintendent of the newly established Derbyshire North East Circuit, trustee of Freedom Community Project, deputy chair of district, former ministerial training tutor at York St Johns
- Rev Margaret Mwailu – minister at Derby Road Methodist Church. (Derby Road is a small traditional church on the edge of St Augustine’s estate. The building may be a base for some activities, but will remain separate from this project.) Margaret has a strong relationship with other Christians ministering on the estate, with whom she has undertaken joint outreach activities, and is governor of a school on the estate
- Rev Richard Harris – was minister of circuit churches near Barrow Hill. During his recent sabbatical Richard volunteered with Derbyshire Community Hub, a new foodbank charity, and continues to deliver food parcels to Barrow Hill residents on their behalf
- Yvonne Birchmore – local preacher, formerly a teacher in Birdholme, volunteer at Solace group in Boythorpe, becoming a school pastor at a primary school in Boythorpe
- Tim Rossall – Circuit Youth Worker, who will be devoting a significant portion of his time to this project given the need for children’s and youth activities shared with us
- Siggy Parratt-Halbert – Methodist Learning Network regional officer, worker for Urban Unlock focussed on sharing gospel stories in “text-shy” working class communities, former council allotments officer, and our team cartoonist
- Neil Harland – District Mission Development Support Worker, focussed on enabling circuits and churches to engage in risk-taking mission

We have spoken with Christians from other traditions who have also felt called to these places, and have heard from them an invitation to be present alongside them, recognising the scale of the challenge and value of different experiences, skills and approaches.

Our finances

The community pioneer role is funded for the first five years. Some money will need to be raised to pay for costs of activities that we choose to provide during this period, and we will intentionally work towards the new Christian communities becoming financially self-sustaining.