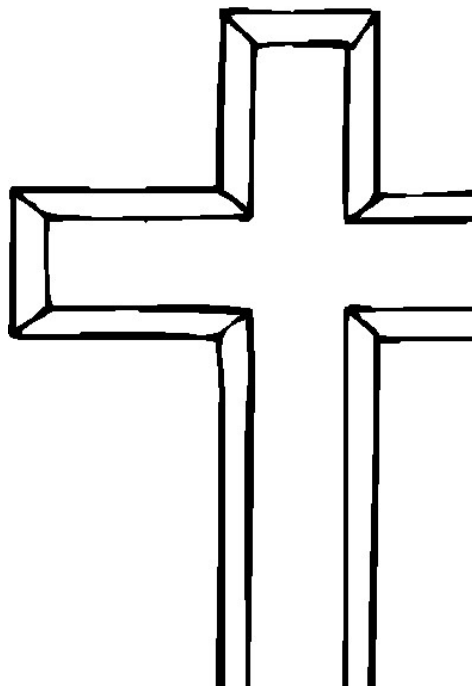




THE METHODIST CHURCH

South Essex Circuit Policy



2022 - 2023

The South Essex Circuit is part of the Methodist Church and is committed to sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in word and action.

Circuit Policy

The Circuit's role is to ensure the effective use of its resources to further the four dimensions of 'Our Calling' as Methodists.

1. Worship – to increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love;
2. Service – to be good neighbours to people in need and to challenge injustice;
3. Evangelism – to make more followers of Jesus;
4. Learning and Caring – to help people to learn and grow in faith through mutual support and care.

The Circuit will, in conjunction with our ecumenical partners where possible, concentrate its prayers, resources, imagination and commitments:

1. on proclaiming and affirming its conviction of God's love in Christ for us and for all the world; and
2. on renewing confidence in God's presence and action in the world and in the Church.

Ways to realise this:

- Underpinning everything we do with God-centred worship and prayer;
- Supporting community development and action for justice, especially among the most deprived and poor in Britain, our local communities and world-wide;
- Developing confidence in evangelism and in the capacity to speak of God and faith in all ways that make sense to all involved;
- Encouraging fresh ways of being church;
- Nurturing a culture in Church which is people-centred and flexible.

Worship Policy

The Circuit policy is to actively encourage churches to:

1. Help members to develop their own spirituality and grow in discipleship.
2. Develop worship that is creative, inclusive, culturally aware and relevant to local circumstances.
3. Examine and use new initiatives or opportunities for different styles of worship, including the creative use of our buildings.
4. Plan worship involving and using the variety of skills that members and Worship Leaders can contribute.
5. Regularly review the spiritual needs of all age groups and seek to meet them.
6. Join in worship with other churches, ecumenically and within the Circuit.
7. The Circuit will offer opportunities to celebrate our faith together as a Circuit.

Service Policy

The Circuit policy is to:

1. Encourage members to offer their gifts in Christian service in their community and to support the Church in its total world mission.
2. Support campaigns and take action to help alleviate poverty, promote justice, and encourage equality, in Britain and worldwide.
3. Care for creation and make decisions based on sustainability of resources.
4. Use Circuit resources wisely for God's work.

Local Churches will be encouraged to:

1. Respond appropriately to significant local issues and community projects.
2. Care for creation.
3. Encourage and support one another.

Evangelism Policy

The Circuit policy is to:

1. Help equip all worshippers to share in God's mission, showing God's love and offering pastoral care to those within our local communities.
2. Engender confidence in worshippers to share their faith by word and deed, giving the reason for the Christian hope that is within them.
3. Encourage local churches to provide ways into Christian discipleship.
4. Encourage the churches to be involved in outreach strategies.

Learning Policy

The Circuit policy is to:

1. Emphasise the importance of learning and faith development for the health, renewal and mission of churches and Circuit.
2. Encourage a deep desire for lifelong Christian learning, growth and transformation.
3. Provide opportunities for all in our churches to grow in faith and discipleship.
4. Support and equip those called to local preaching and worship leading.
5. Encourage and support staff and others to undertake learning and training relevant to their role.

Caring Policy

The Circuit policy is to:

1. Encourage everyone in our churches to care for one another, and maintain an established pastoral system where church members work in conjunction with staff.
2. Require an annual review of Safeguarding Policies and ensure necessary DBS checks are made and training attended.
3. Encourage churches to work alongside other agencies, as well as ecumenically to seek to alleviate social needs locally identified.
4. Be sensitive to people of other faiths and to face the challenge of being open to dialogue with them (emphasising what we have in common, rather than solely focussing on those issues on which we differ).

Family Ministry

1. Encourage and equip volunteers and leaders to build each church into a community for all generations.
2. Encourage and nurture relationships between God, church and families.

3. Nurture relationships across age groups within church.
4. Facilitate links between the church, families, the wider community and other organisations through outreach and church-based events including worship.

Hospitality

1. Encourage local churches to extend Christ-like hospitality and practice an active and generous love.
2. Invite, welcome, receive and care for those who are 'strangers', so they may find a spiritual home and the richness of Christ in our churches.
3. Express God's invitation to others.
4. Pray, plan, prepare and work toward helping others to receive Christ.

Inclusivity

1. Encourage and facilitate a sense of belonging together as one in the Body of Christ.
2. Acknowledge the uniqueness of individuals and foster inclusivity.

3. Encourage mutual concern, good will and respect for others regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, age, disability or opinion.
4. Acknowledge Christians hold different views on issues including faith and life-style, and encourage all exchanges of opinion to be within a framework of mutual respect, prayerfulness, grace and honesty.
5. Challenge discrimination and injustice.

Working Together

1. Encourage openness to change and a willingness to receive the talents of others.
2. Encourage people within church to work together as effectively as possible.
3. To be conscious and considerate of the well-being needs of those who serve/work in our churches: volunteers, lay workers, ordained ministers.

Business and Resources Policy (People)

The Circuit policy is to:

1. Maintain effective oversight of churches through the grouped responsibilities of staff and the location of manses.
2. Develop and support its ministerial staff and lay workers, who meet regularly for mutual support, encouragement and conversation about Circuit and church issues.
3. Train and authorise local preachers and worship leaders, who, together with ordained ministers, have the primary role in leading the worshipping life of the churches.
4. Seek appropriate people to join the Leadership Team as Circuit Stewards, offer induction and encouragement to take an interest in particular aspects of Circuit work.

Business and Resources Policy (Buildings)

The Circuit will:

1. Maintain and improve, where appropriate, those manses for which it is responsible.
2. Continue the independent quinquennial inspections of all Circuit property, supported by annual physical inspections by the relevant stewards, and will maintain a list of relevant maintenance and professional agencies.
3. Require churches to comply with the Safeguarding and Equality legislation and Connexional policy.
4. Require churches comply with current buildings Health and Safety legislation and undertake Annual Risk Assessments.
5. Seek to support and give advice on the improvement and maintenance of church premises.
6. Seek to support and provide resources towards energy efficiency, health and safety, accessibility and property improvements for outreach.

Business and Resources Policy (Finance)

The Circuit policy is to:

1. Encourage each church to maximise the use of regular, tax-efficient giving.
2. Consider and approve an annual budget, together with two forecast years.
3. Consider and review future Circuit finance.
4. Consider and approve the annual church contributions, in the knowledge that giving is one response we can make to God's constant love.

Business and Resources Policy (Business)

The Circuit policy is to:

1. Plan and discharge its responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner.
2. Encourage churches to plan and discharge their responsibilities efficiently and effectively.

SAFEGUARDING

As the people of the South Essex Methodist Circuit:

1. We are concerned with the wholeness of each individual within God's purpose for everyone. We seek to safeguard all members of the church community of all ages.
2. We take seriously the issues of promotion of welfare so that each of us can reach our full potential in God's grace.
3. We commit to respond without delay to any allegation or cause for concern that a child or vulnerable adult may have been harmed, whether in the church or in another context.
4. We commit to the provision of support, advice and training for lay and ordained people to ensure clear and confident understanding of their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults who may be vulnerable.
5. We commit to the implementation of Connexional Safeguarding Policy and reviewing the Circuit Safeguarding Policy annually.