

Progress evaluation: NPNP Pilot

24 months – May 2024



The purpose of this evaluation is to support your reflections on how your new Christian community is developing, what you need to adapt for it to continue to progress, and what you have learnt along the way that you and others should be mindful of. Please be as open as possible in your reflections. A “satisfactory” evaluation is you actively learning, reflecting on progress and responding to changing circumstances. It is quite normal for some things not to turn out as expected when starting something new.

Whilst the words on these pages may be written by one member of your team, they should be collectively owned by the team.

Because of the scale and importance of investment in new Christian communities we are requesting six monthly evaluations. We have attempted as best as possible not to duplicate information in the Connexional NPNP evaluation and research form.

Your evaluation will be shared with the District Leading Team. We will not treat information contained here as for public distribution without first checking with you. A reminder of some key information from your original proposal is included after the questions for convenience.

Person completing this evaluation	Jonathan Hood
Team/ other people who have had sight of this evaluation	Sean Adair, Neil Harland
Date of evaluation	22/04/2024

VISION - How and why has your vision evolved or been clarified since your original proposal/ last evaluation?
We have continued with the original vision set out from the beginning as it has proved successful in building relationships within the community and encouraging other people to own elements of the project. Listening to and responding to the needs of the community has been rewarded by people asking for worship, asking to run groups with us and people feeling free to invite others to the work we are doing.
TEAM – How often do the team(s) responsible for your new Christian community currently meet? What has worked well about this model of oversight? Are you planning to make any changes to this over the coming six months?
The management team meet every 6 weeks. An update is shared as well as any problems or concerns that the paid pioneer wishes to bring. Collective wisdom then works through these issues. This has worked well in every meeting. We are having a number of changes to the team as two of it’s members will no longer be working within the circuit, Rev Sean Adair and Rev Margaret Mwilu, but we will still have four very experienced members, who understand pioneering, the circuit and the identified communities.
TEAM – Who is praying for this work? How are you engaging with them at this stage?
The circuit are currently praying for this project – updates are being provided at circuit meeting, through videos on the youtube channel and from preaching around the circuit. We do feel that prayer for the project needs to be more intentional and captivate a wider audience. We need to explore how we do this as we have tried gatherings within the circuit to pray which have only seen the management group respond. We have noted that we have seen doors opening following specific prayers.

MARKERS OF FRUITFULNESS - In your application you explained what fruitfulness would look like for your new Christian community and key markers of progress towards these. What have been the most significant developments over the past six months?

New community groups emerging in response to the needs in one of our communities, with the support of local people and other partners
Growth in numbers of people engaging in worship, shaped and advertised by local people
Growth in numbers attending our longer running community groups
Faith conversations that are being had following both of the above
People in the communities willing to volunteer for activities

MARKERS OF FRUITFULNESS - What are the most significant developments you hope to see over the next six months?

A Café, in partnership with the freedom project, beginning in Barrow Hill, that will help the community with their needs and encourage faith based conversation
Growth in Chesterfield with the children's work with a natural progression to discipleship – we have begun gently introducing Jesus at our toddler group with prayer and short stories but not so obvious how discipleship is emerging from other activities.
We would like to deepen the conversations had with adults during worship sessions into something that looks more like an informal discipleship programme, but this still feels a long way off.

MARKERS OF FRUITFULNESS - Which markers of fruitfulness feel least likely to transpire? What plans do you have to respond to these concerns?

Similar to the last report, serious discipleship still feels a long way off, people are engaging in informal worship and conversation but not yet willing or ready to engage in something deeper. Again, sustainability will be a challenge in these communities. We are meeting new people all the time and some of these people have offered to and have got involved. We have accessed a couple of small grants for some of the activities we have offered so this may be a way of raising small amounts of income.

RISKS AND RESPONSES – In your proposal you explained how you would respond to the main risks to flourishing of your community. If any of these have transpired, how did you respond? Are there any significant new risks emerging you are unsure how to respond to?

mutual recognition – how the circuit understands new Christian communities, and how they find their place at the table – was a risk we identified. Whilst the circuit approves of this work, we still have very few members who have offered to help. The superintendent who has been one of the main driving forces behind the work within the circuit is also leaving so there needs to be some thought into how pioneering still has a place in the hearts and minds of the circuit.
In response to not having a 'practical team', we have since seen more volunteers help with activities and the one of the circuit safeguarding officers take a large interest in supporting the work with a safeguarding hat on. Others are also now offering to support with craft activities.
The pioneer, subject to conference, has been recommended to begin training for presbyteral ministry this September. This will have an impact on work load and the hours of work may also need to change. The pioneer has found the travel to work increasingly difficult over recent months so the management team discussed how this can be supported with careful diary planning.

FINANCES – Did you achieve the local income (beyond circuit, district and Connexional grants) that you intended for the last six months?

We have not managed to raise any local money as yet, but we have been supported with two of our activities by grants from the local council. We are also supported with mainly free hire of venues for the work we do, costs covered by local organisations.

FINANCES – How much local income do you need to generate over the next six months to keep on track with your plan for financial sustainability? What preparations have you made for this?

Need to make a start on raising funds towards salary costs – ideally for this to be locally led rather than by the steering group. A couple within the community have emerged recently who, with time, may be interested in leading more faith based activities within Barrow Hill, as well as others emerging to help run other community activities. This may be first steps to sustainability.

JOURNEY – Is there anything else you have discovered in the last six months that makes you wish you had approached this work differently?

It is still felt that a ‘practical team’ of people may have been beneficial to set up initially, to have people ready and willing to volunteer to support activities and the thinking behind them from the off-set. This would have also created an automatic team to pray into the work too. More thought, and as I understand, not just in this project, needs to be given to how we encourage the people in our circuits to own this work themselves.

Please return this questionnaire to Neil Harland, District Mission Enabler

mission@sheffieldmethodist.org

Information from original proposal

Overall vision

To start new Methodist Christian communities the ex mining village of Barrow Hill and the interconnected estates in south Chesterfield, both “left behind” places where no churches have had a significant presence for many years.

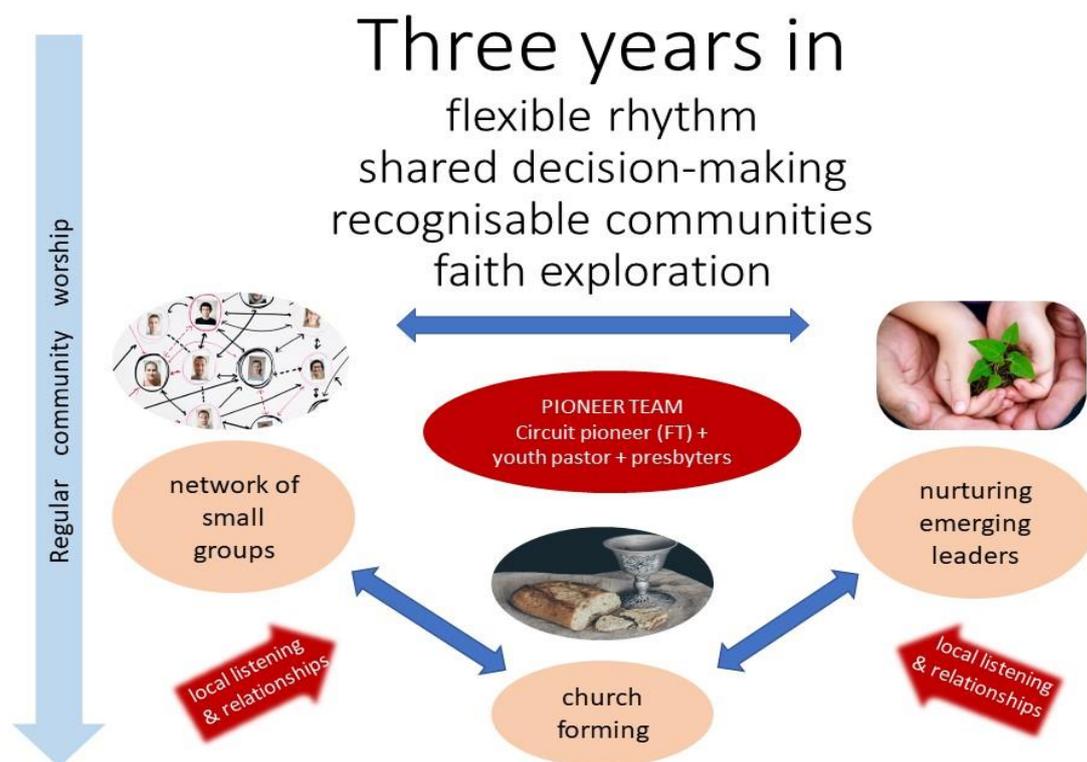
We anticipate that church in these places will look like a relational network of small groups and activities. Some people will engage with only one of these, others will be part of several. We will establish early a pattern of regular open worship, but without the expectation that we are building towards 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.

Fruitfulness measures

Theme	Marker	Measure
Growing disciples	Fostering culture of deepening discipleship	Increasing number of people engaging in regular activities with intention of growing in faith (eg 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 (note 1)
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 (note 2)
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

Progress markers



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. District/ circuit will support the pioneer in exploring possibilities for the next place.

Risks and potential obstacles

Dependency culture

Many public and third sector agencies have delivered services in the Chesterfield estates and Barrow Hill. People have learnt that initiatives will be provided to/ for them, but these cannot be relied on for the long term. Local councillors in particular have highlighted the challenges they have experienced in attempting to transfer ongoing management of successful projects to local people. We will attempt to address this through an asset based approach, allowing our activities to be shaped by local skills and interests.

We will also modelling team-working from the start, with the pioneer working alongside the youth worker, presbyters and others. Aptitude for forming and enabling a team will be a key consideration in our recruitment.

Through Freedom Community Project borne out of Bolsover Methodist Church, we have direct local experience of the challenges and opportunities of building relationships of trust through meeting practical needs.

Complex/ unstructured lives

Local leaders we have spoken with have referenced the challenges of working with people who have become unfamiliar with the routines and motivations of paid employment, sustained lack of agency, or destabilizing drug/ other addictions.

Breaking staff dependency

Whilst we normally expect the wealthier parts of a circuit to contribute to those parts which are financially poorer, we must plan for new churches in economically disadvantaged communities to be financially self-sustaining:

- So they do not remain subservient projects, reliant on the patronage of established churches
- So that the financial reserves of the inherited church is not a limiting factor on the self-replicating growth of new churches at the margins

We will therefore need this pilot to generate a tent-making element, linked to its natural activities and the skills of its members and/ or to be able to continue to develop with engagement of the pioneer reducing significantly over time. The role of paid/ ordained ministry then becomes primarily to mentor, network and enable local volunteer lay leadership for several Christian communities. This is made more difficult by the inherent challenges of working in these communities described above, but re-imagining of sustainable ministry for growth is a key task of our pilot. We hope this culture is supported by working from the start across two communities – being present, but not ever-present.

Ownership without bureaucracy

The new Christian communit(ies) which emerge will need become mature “churches”, able to make decisions about their common life, organize their activities, carry the respect of partner organisations, hold a common purse, uphold strong safeguarding and governance and relate to the

wider connexion. This will need to be done in a way that is accessible to leaders without prior experience of church, and so may require re-interpretation of CPD and Methodist procedures.

Mutual recognisability

The newly emerging Christian communities need to be recognised by other churches in the circuit as equally valid expressions of church as established chapels, despite potentially acting and behaving differently. They will need to have a genuine seat at the circuit table and not be seen as a threat. Equally we need the new communities to feel the circuit is a supportive Methodist extended family to which they belong if they are not to become frustrated or disengaged.

Original budget

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
COSTS						
Salary, pension, NIC	33,412	34,103	34,809	35,528	36,262	6,390
Travel, administration, other expenses	4,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	500
Training	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	500
Venue, event, partnership costs	16,000	16,000	16,000	16,000	16,000	16,000
TOTAL NEW COSTS	54,412	53,103	53,809	54,528	55,262	23,390
FUNDING						
Connexional Team (part 1)	10,000	-	-	-	-	-
Connexional Team (part 2)	20,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	-
Circuit Model Trust Fund	16,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	10,000
District Advance Fund	6,000	5,000	4,000	3,000	2,000	-
Local fundraising, grants, giving	3,000	6,000	8,000	10,000	13,500	15,500
DIRECT FUNDING	55,000	56,000	57,000	58,000	60,500	25,500
ASSESSMENT/ (DEFICIT)	588	2,897	3,191	3,472	5,238	2,110
IN KIND CIRCUIT FUNDING						
Youth youth pastor (2 days/ week)	11,424	11,652	11,886	12,123	12,366	6,307
Circuit minister(s) (2 then 1 day/ week)	15,300	15,606	7,959	8,118	8,281	8,446

In year 6, focus for pioneer time is shifting to next opportunity.