

District Vision Document

Introduction

The purpose of this vision document is to give some direction to District Policy; to influence the use of resources including the time commitment of District officers and the Chair, and clarify the financial priorities of the District Grants Committee. It will also influence the relationship between the District and the Discipleship and Ministries Learning Network (DMLN).

From September the new Network will impact upon the District; part of our vision is to ensure that we will impact upon the Network. It will take some time for the establishment of the relationship between the DMLN and the District. We are not however adopting a “*wait and see*” policy. Along with other Chairs in the North West and Mann region a 24 hour meeting with the officers in the Network is scheduled to discuss details. However, an unknown at this point is just how our vision can be supported by the Network. It is partly because of this optimistic uncertainty that we will look to whether or not the Vision Statement needs to be modified in a year’s time, sooner than would otherwise have been planned.

Vision

The Bolton and Rochdale District:

- seeks to provide leadership at District level that allows the effective sharing of good practice;
- encourages and inspires all Members and the wider communities in Christian Faith.

It will support projects which:

- offer the Good News of Jesus;
- encourage bold ventures where churches seek to deepen discipleship.

Mission Actions

In 2014/16 the District will have 3 areas of focus.

- Leadership
- Local communities
- Discipleship

The section below provides illustrative examples of particular actions that would be appropriate in the three areas. The list is not intended to be prescriptive, allowing Churches and Circuits freedom to plan actions appropriate to their circumstances.

Leadership

Synods – minimising business and maximising opportunities for sharing good practice and/or inspirational speakers

District Leadership Team – having a two-part meeting with the first half focussing on business and the second half reserved for matters of concern from the circuits (all are represented on DLT)

Worship – having one District Service each year which focuses on leadership, engagement with local communities or exciting or inspirational developments. These should be organized by a small group and given a budget.

Development - We will encourage the development of leadership at all levels, giving serious consideration to different models of leadership, and particularly seek to involve and encourage young people as leaders.

Training – In addition to making grants available for going on training courses, the District should arrange an annual training session for a group within the church – i.e. circuit stewards, church stewards, local preachers etc.

Communities

Mission – Enabling Churches to be a key part of their community, the “heartbeat” of their area, identifying local needs and encouraging the development of partnership working with existing organisations as well as responding to needs in work with refugees and asylum seekers, food banks, street pastors, credit unions etc., and sharing effective practice in such work across Circuits.

Evangelism – Encouraging our people to be more open about the gospel, and unashamedly saying that the love of God revealed in Christ inspires us to engage in mission.

Distinctiveness – Helping to value difference and celebrating the variety of our District. In some of our communities there is low self-esteem and lack of self-worth. As a District we will strive to support those who teach and show that God loves all people and Christ died for them.

Commitment – Relatedly, some of our communities have been neglected and left by many institutions. We will try to support those who genuinely and appropriately try to engage with their locality.

Hospitality – Seeking to ensure that Churches provide safe spaces in which people and groups can meet outside of formal worship whilst ensuring that they remain a worshipping community and not a Community hall.

Schools – We value the contribution made by local churches and ministers in Methodist and Methodist/Anglican primary schools as well as all other maintained and independent school. This will be especially borne in mind in the stationing process.

Discipleship

“Go and make disciples” - We recommit ourselves to the command from Matthew 28. To do this we need to employ different methods. Change therefore is not simply a cherished ideal but an absolute necessity in engaging with lost generations.

Learning – There is an urgent need to prioritise learning about God revealed in Jesus through the Spirit. Without this we will flounder. So, we will support courses such as Disciple, Step Forward, Inspiring Discipleship, Alpha, etc

Healthy Churches and Circuits – We expect churches and circuits to review themselves – through this or some other process. The development of churches encourages the deepening of discipleship

Ecumenism – Disciples make up the body of Christ. To what extent is our discipleship contradicted by different denominations and how is our notion of stewardship undermined by too many buildings? As a District we are committed to greater ecumenical co-operation so that we are stronger together.

Discipling – Ensuring that we are culturally relevant and supportive in our work with our communities and those who use our facilities, nurturing them and seeking to bring them to Faith.

First steps

1. Reformat DLT and Synod to allow focus on leadership
2. Re-do District Grants' priorities to reflect current priorities in leadership, communities and discipleship.
3. Produce clear training grant priorities and develop training sessions to support leadership, community and discipleship.

Structures

More work needs to be done in two areas. Firstly, a re-examination of existing meetings and offices to determine their role and indeed necessity. Secondly, consideration of what new structures, if any, should be established to furnish the vision.

Timetable

1. Grants' priorities review and published by September 2014
2. Meeting structures review and agreed by May 2015
3. Existing meetings, e.g. DLT reformatted by March 2015

Links

- DMLN
- Circuits
- Ecumenical links

Review

The Vision Statement may be modified in a year's time (i.e. by the Connexional year beginning 2015) and will be reviewed in three years' time (i.e. by the Connexional year beginning 2017). There will also be an interim review following further developments in the DMLN as it matures and the relationship with Districts becomes clearer.

Background

The initial thinking for the development of a District came in part from two sources:

- A discussion at DLT on the matter of leadership in the District and the role of DLT
- Recognition that the existing vision predates the current Chair's appointment and may not fully reflect the changing needs within the District.

The outcome was a discussion with the Superintendents which flagged up the need to set out a clear rationale for the work as well as underpinning anything that was produced with a clear view of the relationship between the District and its Circuits and in particular how they were mutually supportive.

Timeline

The timeline below evolved because of the feedback from Circuit staff and the Circuits placing at the heart of the process a consultation with Members across the District.

- February – Initial idea development
- February – District Vision day. This was a facilitated session with representatives from all Circuits that came up with priorities for action.
- March – First Policy Implementation Group (PIG) meeting to plan consultation using outcomes from Vision day
- April – Consultations across District. These were a focussed discussion using priorities developed by the PIG group that took place at 3 locations across the District
- June – PIG group review consultation results and request Chair to produce a first draft
- July – PIG group review first draft and committee to developing a subsequent draft
- September – Update to Synod
- October – PIG group finalise draft
- December – DLT Discussion
- January to May 2014 – Consultation across District
- May 2014 – Synod discussion
- September 2014 - Formal adoption at Synod

Consultations

The consultations' meetings looked at a number of statements and following group discussion asked people to allocate them a priority and then also say which of the statements would need District support. This process was able to tap into the views of Members across the District and so form a firm foundation for the development of the vision. The three areas which came as priorities from the consultations were.

- Leadership
- Local communities
- Discipleship

Structure

The PIG group's discussions developed the following structure for the document. This is listed with a brief rationale

- Introduction and rationale detailing development and link with Circuits and the consultations giving a clear overview of the process
- Clear Vision for District. This is regarded as the unchanging heart of the document reflecting clearly what the District stands for and how it operates.
- Mission from vision. These are priorities that exist at a particular moment in the vision cycle and reflect the current needs. They are intended to be supportive of Circuits and Churches, in part because they arise from them, but also because they reflect the underpinning purposes of the Church and are priorities that everyone should be able to buy into, even if they are not a specific priority at this moment in this particular Church or Circuit. However, the breadth of these Mission priorities should cover all Churches.
 - Actions that arise to support the Mission priorities and ensure they happen.
 - Structures that are needed to support the priorities
 - Timetables for action to allow effective monitoring.
- Links to Circuits, Churches and other relevant organisations including DMLN
- Review process and timetable for looking at current priorities and developing new ones.