

UMC Mission Plan

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Mission plan

Introduction

Uppermill Methodist Church is inseparable from the people and much-loved colourful Christian traditions of its locality: both as a worshipping, serving, participating fellowship and as an imposing facade on the main square of the village conservation area.

The church currently has regular, mostly traditional worship on a Sunday, and a midweek communion. Our congregation consists typically (but by no means exclusively) of retired or late career professionals and there is a very strong sense of the church's place in the community. Many of us have been involved in managing previous projects including a major re-configuration in the 90s. More recently, deployment of a youth worker and installation of a lift have both included grant applications and the associated accountability. A number of congregation members have prominent roles in running local charities, societies and social interest companies.

The church is in a village which is part Saddleworth: the more rural, scenic, tourism- and commuting- focussed part of (on average) the more urban, diverse borough of Oldham. It is part of the Oldham Methodist Circuit.

In considering the shape of our mission over a number of years, we have consulted in great depth with the two neighbouring Methodist churches in Saddleworth, the local Anglican church, the local Congregational church. We have sought advice widely, including from external church consultants, and various technical professionals. Our discussions with many existing and future users of the building, and with local residents, are ongoing.

This document sets out our six mission priorities for the medium term: early years; young people; older people; civic footprint; worship; and out-of-area. Woven through our mission approach in all priority areas is a strong focus on sustainability, accessibility, flexibility, and removing barriers to participation. Sustainability is intended to refer widely. For example, reducing the number of car journeys in the area. But also ensuring the governance of the mission project reaches as far as possible beyond the current Methodist congregation. Accessibility means ensuring the widest possible engagement in the services being offered. Flexibility includes ensuring that we can adapt quickly to changing local needs and circumstances.

We want to make the very most of the excellent public transport links, beautiful and regionally popular village setting, close-knit public-spirited community, wider cohesion of Saddleworth and Oldham and thriving local arts scene. We want our presence to be a catalyst for as many people as possible leading a fulfilling life in our village and beyond.

Early years and young people

The current “Tuesday Tots” - which welcomes family members of all ages - meets in the upstairs hall on a Tuesday morning and “Baby Sensory” uses the facility on a Friday morning. The Beaver, Cub and Scout groups meet on a Tuesday, Guides and Brownies on a Wednesday, and Explorers on a Friday. The Scout groups are affiliated to the Church. All groups are thriving. Our plan for mission here is to incubate long term sustainability, increase accessibility, and foster two-way interaction with the whole church fellowship. We aim to widen the leadership and volunteer pool for these groups so that, whilst congregation members are encouraged to volunteer, there is no dependency on this for the long-term future of the activities. We aim to provide a more accessible space on the ground floor for these activities, and for further activities proven to attract wide participation such as the accessible sport Boccia. This space will be shared with worship and other church activities so that visibility and inclusion are enhanced.

Older people

Worship is currently aimed at this group, and there is a number of weekly activities including Wednesday community chat Coffee and Cake and Thursday Friends (with a speaker or activity)

The community arts groups which meet, such as the local choir and musicals group, have a considerable component of older person membership and often these - of necessity - meet in the less accessible upper hall.

The village is popular for retirement and has a considerable number of specialised accommodation units near the church. However, these would not typically be classed in the “affordable” category. The GP surgery in the village is small and covers a wide area. There are plans for a template health centre but these are 15 years out and would meet local resistance on architectural grounds.

The church provides, and is seeking to provide further, opportunities for extending Christian love in simple modes of support to those whose circumstances have suddenly changed, whose health conditions are a constant or intermittent burden, or who experience loneliness. Friendship and support opportunities with social aspect are always welcomed

Our men’s group meets for fellowship, walking tours, and speaker-led events and has a scheduled slot to serve coffee. A zoom meeting takes place weekly. There is scope for a widening of this participative activity.

A repair café has just been launched.

We plan to continue discussions with councillors, health boards, housing associations and retirement accommodation providers to determine the way our well-positioned buildings can best serve the community needs for this and other groups. Options might include: a walk-in health facility; facilities for such outreach as Anna Chaplaincy or Parish Nursing Ministries UK; a dedicated affordable retirement accommodation development; affordable or housing association housing; a post-justice system rehabilitation unit; a combination of some of the above.

Civic footprint

Our building is a well-loved feature of the main village square (a conservation area), and our vision is that a Methodist (or at least ecumenical Christian) presence will remain. We have strong ecumenical partnerships - particularly with Anglican and Congregational friends – and these partnerships will be prominent in our detailed plans and activities.

As well as the areas identified as mission priorities above, our building provides a hub for a thriving arts community. We host many amateur rehearsals and concerts and have a long-running professional classical music concert series and summer festival. The English Jazz orchestra rehearses on our premises. The acoustic of the church building is much sought-after.

There is an existing range of community, self-help and health groups meeting weekly who cater for a range of ages and needs. We aim to extend this considerably. Oldham borough is divided into five areas, with the church situated in Oldham East area. The area is geographically the largest, and “hub” provision for facilities listed below is located in the west of the area, a long way from the Saddleworth villages. These facilities include Citizen's Advice, housing, welfare rights / benefits / financial advice, council services: blue badge applications etc, healthcare (see nurses options above), mental health access (eg Mind), Age UK, early help drop in, employment support, digital skills, food bank, drop ins for other services such as POINT. The mayor of Greater Manchester is very keen to move in the direction of very local hubs to provide a holistic support for people rather than the traditional style centralised Job Centres and so on. We are in close discussion with local borough councillors and with Action Together and the community development worker for East district, and the indication is that - notwithstanding the introductory comments about the area demographic – there is unmet need in this area precipitated by the recent rapidly increasing cost of living

Worship

We have a vision of varied worship which is flexible in timings and makes use of a space which can accommodate to a wide variety of styles. We will be working with circuit, district and connexional initiatives as well as increasing our community engagement: to

introduce worship at times and in styles which increase belonging and participation. We will be seeking to vary the reflective and musical styles accordingly. Café Church and similar will be considered.

We are very open to groups who want to pioneer or seed different styles of worship and Christian belonging but lack premises, and we will be talking to Manchester city centre groups who may want to seed satellite worship groups.

We will be aiming for a lighting, sound and visual resource base which can meet the varied needs of different styles of worship (and other community use).

Out-of-area

Our fact-finding exercises to date have led us to realise that there is considerable mission opportunity in providing services to those outside the immediate Saddleworth community. One charity was very interested in the fact that we are “a world away” from the environments which their service-users come from and would therefore offer a chance to distance themselves from unhelpful surroundings. We are exploring further ways in which this can be achieved, on a day retreat, overnight retreat and accommodation basis. Our partners here are the Methodist circuit and district, local interfaith groups, Age UK, Breast Cancer charities.

Mission constraints

Having engaged in mission initiatives over recent decades to do with family engagement, we are realistic about the local and national environment in which the church operates. If the realisation of the plans outlined in this document means that our worshipping congregation grows and widens its variety during the period of this project, we shall be thankful and rejoice. However, our aim is to ensure sustainability primarily through community involvement which does not necessarily involve regular worship. Our working groups will *not* be for Methodist members only, and if any measure of success is appropriate, it will the scale of project involvement of those without a traditional Methodist background. We will not seek to be prescriptive of how Jesus’ love is transmitted within our community.

Mission actions

We have visited a considerable number of churches with similar missions and architectural constraints (see below) and these have informed our plans.

We have set up an **Engagement** working group connected with our mission project which meets approximately bi-weekly. Its broad areas of coverage are

- Communication
- Prayer

- Community needs
- Community involvement in project
- Local fundraising
- Grant applications

Its live action plan is available [here](#).

We are undertaking an audit of community and out-of-community needs and engaging widely with two purposes in mind. Firstly, to achieve the best local fit for both the public and accommodation spaces, and secondly to tie in as many community partners as possible with the stewardship and delivery of the project.

Resource plan

Few of the mission aims can be achieved with the buildings in their current configuration. We have a slow lift to our most flexible space on the first floor, and this is very well used. We draw encouragement from this that a more accessible flexible space would be able to meet even more need.

Our vision is to adapt the buildings in a way which broadens their use and ties them more closely to the wider local community. In accordance with the mission plan, the transformed buildings will be *sustainable* in a global and local stewardship sense; *accessible* in a physical and social sense; and *flexible* in a day-to-day and future usage sense.

From a range of well-researched options, we will choose as a preferred direction one which meets at least one of the local needs for affordable housing, health provision, “retreat” provision and “hub” provision. All the building development options would meet the need for an easily accessible public space. We aim to secure a financial head-start for our project by choosing a partner to work with who is able to provide initial capital. This could be the Oldham Methodist Circuit, the health board, a Community Led Homes entity, a housing association, a retirement living organisation, or a developer. Depending on the nature this (/these) partnership(s), one option would ultimately be to convert the nineteenth century schoolroom (currently with a difficult-to-access but nonetheless a very well used first floor hall space) to whatever function is agreed. Before that, it is hoped that there would be a timing agreement with the partner which would enable the conversion of the 1912 church building into a flexible space: able to meet the many existing and all foreseeable community, arts, youthwork and worship needs but preserving the renowned concert acoustic and architectural coherence. Our goal is to provide continuity of community availability during any transformation, and if required we would aim to have the new flexible public space in

use as soon as practicably possible. The schoolroom development would then proceed. Other scenarios for the overall building would, of course, involve different sequencing.

We are current stewards of a key local amenity, and we plan to engage widely so that it will be available to all for the foreseeable future: to Methodism at the Saddleworth, Oldham and Connexional levels; to ecumenical partners; to the Borough of Oldham at large; and critically to the village which already makes such good use of it.

The project will be phased so that fund raising can be focused and specific. In outline these phases will have the form: agreement of sale of schoolroom; proceed with works to make church a flexible space; release schoolroom for reconfiguration works; further phases on church: kitchen, secondary glazing, solar panels. We are aware that some grant funders would prefer an overall application at the outset, and that would be available. Sustainability will be paramount at every stage, and we will seek additional grant funding wherever possible if it will enable the realisation of more expensive, more sustainable options.

We believe our resource plan balances realistically the well-documented practical demands and constraints of the existing buildings, the skills and time available, and the reasonable expectations of grant and ad hoc fundraising.

We will audit all plans for accessibility, making use of external expertise where possible.

Resource constraints

Following extensive archive research, we believe the 1912 church building may partially stand on unmarked graves. This imposes legal restrictions on options for this part of the building and our plans with neither disturb the legal or physical status of these. The building is in a conservation area. We will be liaising with the connexional conservation officer and are aware the outside of the buildings cannot be changed substantially. The building has no dedicated parking. All our plans and mission objectives take good account of this. The project will need to include stabilisation of the existing buildings to the tune of nearly half a million pounds, and our financial and development proposals take this into account.

The church building has considerable acoustic and architectural merit, and our plans take good note of this. A mezzanine has been considered but rejected partly on the grounds of architectural integrity. Replacement of the original 1912 pews with flexible seating is acknowledged as a compromise to the architectural integrity, as would be any removal of the original pulpit or font. Mitigations here might be retention of some of the pews as we have noted in some of our case studies, or potential storage of these features.

We have a well-regarded, large Great War memorial currently exhibited only in a staircase. It is our aim that this will be on wider public display in the new configuration.

We are well aware that the number of members on call to engage in short- medium- and long-term maintenance activities are nothing like they would have been in 1912. We will be aiming for ease of maintenance and robust, sustainable solutions at all points.

We appreciate that proposing any potential change of building use is sensitive, particular around the issue of parking. We aim to keep an open mind on whether, or what type, of accommodation might be appropriate and listen extensively to local concerns and suggestions.

Resource actions

We have set up a **Delivery** working group connected with our resource project which meets approximately bi-weekly. Its broad areas of coverage are

- Methodist processes
- Budget
- Sale/partnership for schoolroom
- Detailed specification of church building
- Commissioning and oversight of building project
- Consideration of ongoing facilities maintenance including caretaking resource

Its live action plan is available [here](#).

We will continue to work with the professionals with whom we have established contact. We will be using the Methodist property project flowchart throughout. This will include regular external confirmation that our proposals are meeting the accessibility and sustainability principles which are our focus.

Resource plan summary

Subject to discussion with partners, our current outline of the trajectory of changes to our buildings could be summarised as

- Agree release of capital via sale of Schoolroom building or via some other external investment
- Defer hand over of Schoolroom by agreement
- Develop Church building (with prayer room) including
 - New roof
 - Remove pews, chair purchase
 - Flat floor
 - Heating
 - Essential fittings required for worship and general use

- Relocate community activity from Schoolroom building to Church building
- Further adapt church building: potentially in phases depending on logistics and funding
 - Toilets
 - Kitchen
 - Storage
 - Front/access
 - Secondary windows
 - Solar panels
 - Balcony modification

Resource budget

This estimated budget has some accurate entries on the expenditure side (heating, roof from recent quotes) but overall is intended to give an approximate high-level picture of our initial assumptions. If the nature of the project changes in line with potential partners, there may well be radical changes to this.

Expenditure (Church & annexes only)

Roof	£	200,000
Floor & pews	£	150,000
Heating	£	80,000
Toilets	£	30,000
Kitchen	£	30,000
Windows	£	100,000
Solar	£	50,000
Balcony	£	40,000
Misc (chairs,tech...)	£	100,000

£ 780,000

Income

Sale of schoolroom	£	250,000
Potential grants:		
District/Circuit baseline	£	50,000
Other	£	410,000
Local fundraising	£	70,000

£ 780,000
