**1. Bolton Circuit of the Methodist Church**

 **Children and Young Person’s**

**Background information**

The Bolton Circuit is looking to appoint a Children and Young Person’s to work with young people across the circuit.

The post and budget has been approved by the Circuit Meeting with the responsibility for making the appointment delegated to the Circuit Leadership Team.

The post is part of fulfilling the vision of the circuit as articulated in the strategy paper approved by the CLT in October 2020.

**Overview**

Historically, our work with children and young people has been the responsibility of local churches and has been individual to each church’s context. I believe that this is of the utmost importance and from the outset it needs to be said quite clearly that this will continue

I have divided my thinking into 4 separate areas for consideration:

1.Local churches

2. Circuit Oversight

3.The Youth Pastor

4.Work with Schools

**Local Churches**

**Sunday School –** Staffed by leaders from the local church family. Organised and resourced by the local church. Fitting with historic tradition the Sunday school at each church is overseen by a office holder with the title Sunday School Secretary/Coordinator.

**Creche –** Each local church organises their own structure for caring for the under 3 age group of children in their church as well as welcoming the babies and children of occasional visitors to the church. There is an opportunity here to provide a structured programme of activities for little ones who attend the creche. This could be based on biblical themes and include music and sensory experiences.

**School years 6,7 and 8 –** This age group are in transition from Sunday school to more age appropriate activities and opportunities to explore faith in more depth. This is where we begin to disciple our emerging young people. There needs to be a sensitivity here to the transition also taking place in the lives of this age group from Primary school to high school.

**Teens –** The time when young people begin to develop a voice of their own. This needs to be recognised and encouraged and given time and space to enable our teens to explore who they are within their own lives and within the church family. It can be a difficult period in their life and as a church we can give them the safe space they need to ask and explore the difficult life questions. Discipling these boys and girls should be one of the priorities of the church family. We must always be aware that this is the age group that we can so easily lose.Young people in this group may begin to show a willingness to learn about taking part in leading worship. These young people need to be encouraged to explore their individual gifts and talents.

**Young Adults –** (16 – early 20s) In this age group there are opportunities to introduce more structured and focused activities e.g. Bible Study, House groups and preparation for confirmation and church membership. In some instances this group may be able to organise themselves and might prefer to meet together socially. This age group, like the years 6,7 and 8s are also in transition. The important role of the church family here is to recognise that these young people have a relevant voice and need to be empowered, enabled and fully integrated into the life of the church.

**Uniformed organisations –** For the Bolton Circuit these include; Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and The Boys’ Brigade. These will include young people from all the above age groups and will also include those who may not otherwise be involved in other aspects of church life. It is important that the church embraces these organisations, and fully supports the work that is undertaken by the volunteers who work with our young people and the young people in our local communities. They should not be treated as separate.

**Circuit oversight**

**Circuit Meeting –** Young people from our churches might be encouraged to attend the Circuit Meeting as non-voting members. This would give our young people an introduction to the structures and governance of the Methodist Church. It would also provide an opportunity for them to have their own voice and to keep the Circuit informed about current youth activities and events around the circuit. The reverse of this is that our young people would have a chance to learn more about the wide church beyond their local context.

**Circuit Youth Council –** The place where young people and their leaders can come together to represent their churches, This is where ideas can be brought and events can be explored and planned.

**Youth Pastor**

There is a need here to consider the potential differences between the title of a person who is responsible for the oversight of the children and young peoples’ work across the circuit. A ‘Children and Young peoples’ Worker’ might imply a creative yet practical approach, where ‘Youth Pastor’ might imply a more pastoral, Discipling focus alongside the practicalities of youth work.

**Enabling Local Churches and Leaders** – The Youth Pastor might be responsible for regular communication with Sunday School Secretaries/coordinators in our local churches. There might be a need for an awareness of the work of the uniformed organisations with the aim of encouraging and enabling growing relationships with the church. The role of the Youth Pastor might also be to direct local church young peoples’ leaders towards appropriate training opportunities.

**Children and Young peoples’ Council** – This might be a group of people who are representative of all the age groups of young people named previously in this document. It might also include some leaders. Although the Youth Pastor might assist in overseeing this group, they need not be required to do all the work generated by what might come out of the discussions in this group. Volunteers and organisers might be drawn from across the circuit using individual gifts and talents. Examples here might be: A circuit youth choir, A drama group or a Worship Team.

**Holiday Club** – A holiday club in various shapes and forms might be coordinated by a Youth Pastor along with a team gathered from around the circuit. This could be an annual event.

**Youth Events –** A Youth Pastor might be responsible for coordinating special youth events throughout the year e.g. Youth services, opportunities to explore different styles and traditions of worship. There is an importance for the organisation of annual events such as residentials and trips to Christian festivals specifically aimed at the needs of young people.

**Schools Work**

**Relationships with Schools** – There are several churches in the Bolton Circuit that are in various ways connected to Primary Schools. Part of the work of a Youth Pastor might be to establish and develop relationships with these schools. This might be in the form of a friend, a Pastor or simply to be a regular presence in the school environment, offering support for both students and staff alike. Of course, according to the needs of individual schools.

**Assemblies -** This might also be part of the defined role of a Youth Pastor. There would be an opportunity here to work with the staff of the school/s to create the best approach that fits the school’s ethos. A youth Pastor might use their own gifts and talents to bring creative acts of worship in to the schools existing curriculum.

**Working as Ministry Teams** – Lay and Ordained members of the staff team working together to offer exciting ways of working together to serve the needs of our schools. There is great value in more than one person going into a school to lead worship either for assembly or for special occasions. Two people working together can be more effective and have more impact on the children and the Gospel message, especially when each works to their strengths.

This document has been put together after a lot of thought and prayer. It is not intended to be a model of any kind. My hope is that, as we focus on the children and young people of our circuit, we explore all possibilities, so that in due course each one receives the love and attention they deserve. We have a duty as members of the Methodist Church in this place and time, to provide our young people with all that they need to become the Christian men and women that God longs for them to be.