

# *A Guide to*



THE METHODIST CHURCH  
IN IRELAND



# About the Methodist Church in Ireland

The Methodist Church in Ireland is a community of people drawn together by God's love who seek to live wholeheartedly as followers of Jesus for the transformation of the world.

We are a connexion of churches (societies) spread across the island of Ireland from North to South, from East to West with a community of almost 37000 people.



# Values

## **All people need to be saved.**

*Everyone needs Jesus - we were made for relationship with God*

## **All people can be saved.**

*Everyone and anyone can come to know Jesus - no one is outside of God's love and grace.*

## **All people can know they are saved.**

*Everyone can live rooted in deep relationship with Jesus - the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.*

## **All people can be saved to the uttermost.**

*Everyone can grow in faith - there is no limit to what the grace of God can do in us.*

Read more about our **beliefs** [here](#).  
Discover how **the story began** [here](#).

*Living wholeheartedly as followers of Jesus, for the transformation of the world.*



As Methodists the call to missional discipleship has been part of our story since the beginning. What this looks like has taken different forms at different times in history and look different in the future. With newly found meaning to the call we hold as Methodists, we've explored language for missional discipleship today.

**Visit the Mission & Discipleship Hub**



# *We have a story to tell*



**We have a story to tell of our roots, of who we are and of the transformation we long to see.**

There are stories to be told of God at work through the people called Methodist amongst those who need it across our island in towns, villages and cities, reshaping our communities with love, grace and healing.

We are a movement responding to the breath of God in our homes, on the streets, throughout the World and throughout this island that we call home.



**Visit the  
'The story so far'**

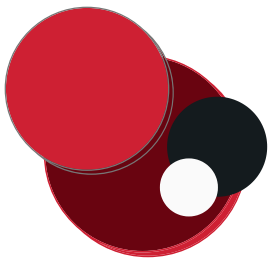
# How We Are Organised

The Methodist Church in Ireland extends throughout the island, and refers to itself as 'the Connexion', to remind individual members and local churches of their interconnected and interdependent nature. Methodism's structures are shaped by its origins.



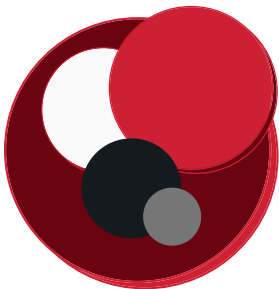
## Classes

The small group (or class) has always been the lifeblood of Methodism. They have different names now, whether a home group, prayer triplet, Bible study, or whatever, but the aim is the same - to encourage one another in the Faith.



## Societies and Circuits

A group of classes in a locality form a society or congregation, administered by a Church Council. A large society or a group of societies form a circuit, which may have one or more ministers, and is in the care of a Superintendent minister and administered by a Circuit Executive. View the Find a Church section for contact and location details and service times for each of the congregations.



## Districts

A group of circuits forms a district, overseen by a District Superintendent and administered by a District Synod. Currently, there are three districts:

- North East
- North West
- Southern

# Conference

The supreme court of the church is the Conference, which is the final authority in the Church in all matters of doctrine, worship, discipline and order.

The first conference in Ireland was called by John Wesley in 1752 and was held in Limerick. With a few exceptions, the Irish Conference had been chaired by the successor of John Wesley, the President of the Methodist Church in England, until recently. In the last number of years the Church has elected a President annually, who chairs the Conference and other committees throughout the year, as well as visiting Methodist congregations all over the island and representing the Church in the public sphere.

Lay and ordained people, both men and women are involved in decision making at all levels. The Methodist Church in Ireland has ordained women since 1978, and women may serve in all positions in the Church. A system of committees deals with a variety of issues within the Church, eg Faith and Order, Inter-Church relations, Social Responsibility.

## *Conference is also an opportunity to gather and connect*

With special services spanning from the Ordination and Installation Services to a Conference Youth Night, it is the opportune time to gather and for all involved to witness and celebrate the work of God in and through the church.

## Find out more about Conference





# *Three Districts, One Connexion*

In July 2019 we moved from having eight districts to three, as a response to the leading of God's spirit to see Methodist Churches throughout Ireland released for mission.

Click [here](#) to read **Connexional Structures: Frequently Asked Questions** .



*God is at work in and through the Methodist Church in Ireland; we see that in the faithful witness of congregations in villages, towns, and cities across this island.*

We see and hear of God at work as lives are transformed, and communities impacted through the work of Christians. We see God at work in congregations and individuals prayerfully wrestling with what it means to be faithful to God in their communities.

Over many years, as a Church family we have kept coming back to the question,

***“Could we be organising ourselves better, particularly in a way that releases resources locally and which helps us respond to the opportunities and challenges we are facing?”***

Part of our heritage is the willingness to respond to the needs of the time. A recognition that structure matters for mission, Wesley developed structure which supported mission.

## ***What is our mission as a church?***

### **'God's Mission, Our Mission'**

"Our spiritual heritage encourages experimentation, diversity and flexibility supported by a methodical approach in analysing the missional context so that we can go where we are needed most". The change process in which we are now engaged has come from the question 'how can we be effective for God's mission at this time?' and we are changing our structure so that more support is offered to local churches in their mission.

# *Structural change is not the end to the story*

The change will enable us to be more effective as we serve God together. We start with this vision of a structure which is there to support local churches in the work which God is calling them to do with rigour, strength and flexibility.

**Conference in June 2018 agreed a set of proposals by which:**

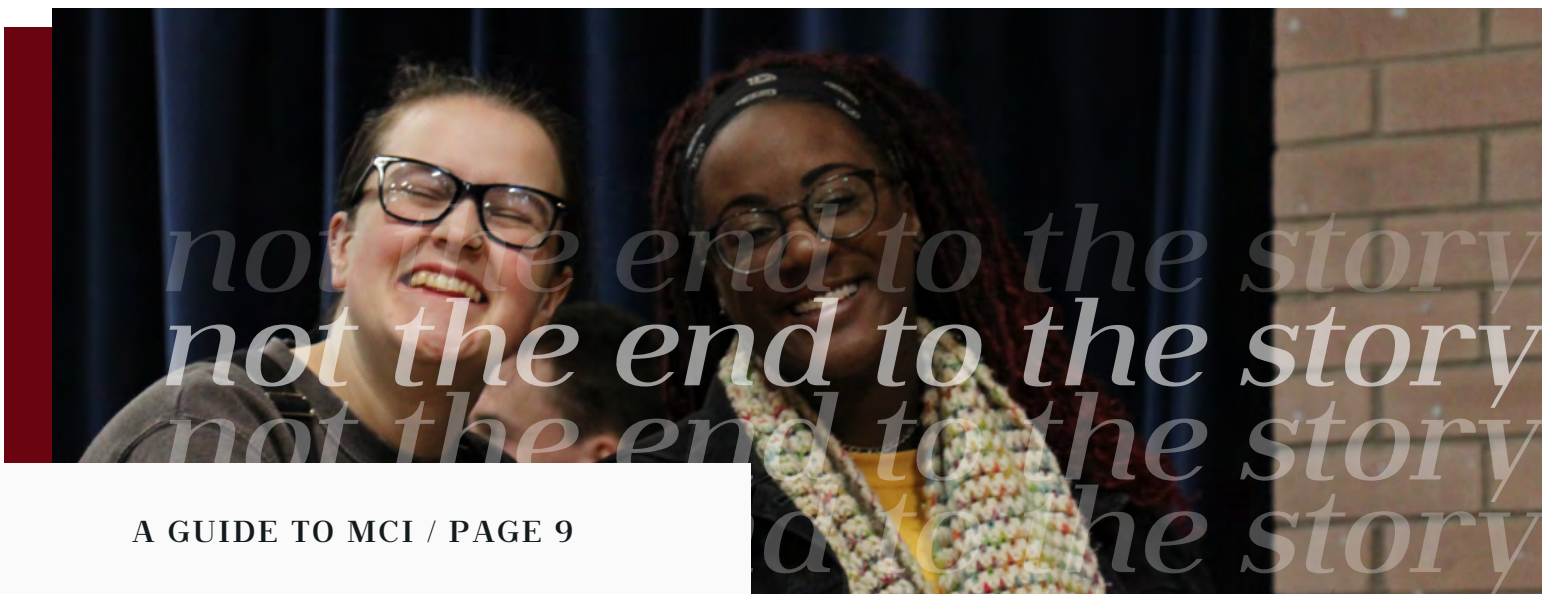
(i) The eight current Districts will be joined into three geographically and numerically viable Districts;

(ii) A full-time separated District Superintendent is appointed for each District to provide oversight, leadership support and Connexional vision for the mission and ministry of Societies, Circuits and ministers;

(iii) The current District administrative layer is re-defined to reflect contemporary practice and make it fit for purpose, and;

(iv) A “Connexional Team” is created to enable more effective collaboration and efficient decision making across the Connexion.

As the new structures developed, we have asked each other hard and helpful questions as we sought to discern God’s way forward together.



# *Meet the District Superintendents*



**Rev Andrew Dougherty**  
*Southern District*



**Rev Philip Agnew**  
*North Eastern District*



**Rev Stephen Skuce**  
*North Western District*

Watch 'Meet the DS's' video [here](#).

# *We're making changes to how our church is governed*

*“Leading us toward structure that better supports mission today.”*

The Working Group on Governance Reform was set up in 2018 to examine the national-level governance structures of the Church. It examined the roles of Conference, General Committee, and the Secretary of Conference, as well as looking at our finance and support structures and our committee system. In December 2020, General Committee, acting as Conference 2020, voted to accept the report and recommendations of the Working Group. These recommendations will come before Conference 2021 for final approval and, if accepted, will result in changes to all of the areas mentioned above. The full report of the working group together with some ancillary documents can be read at the links below.

[\*\*The Benefits And Implications of the Registration of the Methodist Church In Ireland as a Single Charity.\*\*](#)

[\*\*Report and Recommendations on the Governance Structures And Processes of The Methodist Church in Ireland\*\*](#)

[\*\*Governance Reform FAQ\*\*](#)

# Inter-Church Relations

## Membership

The Methodist Church in Ireland is a member of the [Irish Council of Churches and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland \(CTBI\)](#).

## The Covenant *with the Church of Ireland*

### Covenant between the Methodist Church in Ireland and the Church of Ireland

[Read here](#)

'Where We Are Now' 2014 Article [Read here](#)

*Prepared by Archbishop Richard Clarke and the  
Revd Winston Graham, Co-Chairs of the Covenant Council*

### Inter-Church Relations Committee

The remit of the Inter-Church Relations Committee is to address 'those issues which concern relationships with other churches within Ireland and keep the church informed concerning ecumenical issues at a national (Britain and Ireland), European and world level.' (Manual of Laws 42.2).

This is a complex remit with multiple forms of relationship:

- **Bi-Lateral relationships**
- **Irish churches**
- **Intra Methodist**
- **Wider Ecumenical**

**Read more about  
Inter-Church Relations [here](#)**

# Chaplains

The Methodist Church has appointed chaplains to many hospitals, universities, schools, colleges and prisons. They provide pastoral care and support where it's needed most. In addition to this, three Irish Methodist ministers are currently appointed to full-time armed forces chaplaincy.

Most chaplains are also circuit ministers, but some are set apart full time for these ministries. Chaplains provide spiritual comfort, care and support to many people, often in challenging and demanding situations. Chaplains also show God's loving concern for people, irrespective of their situation or need.

Many chaplains are ordained ministers, however there are also opportunities for lay ministries.

The Methodist Church in Ireland has a Prison & Healthcare Chaplaincy Committee, with the mission:

***To support and promote Christian chaplaincy ministries of healing, care and restoration among vulnerable people.***

The Secretary/Convenor of this Committee is Rev Derek Johnston, who may be contacted by telephone on (028) 9029 5237 or office (028) 9063 2045 or by email: [derek.johnston@irishmethodist.org](mailto:derek.johnston@irishmethodist.org)

Other chaplaincies come under the Home Mission Department. The General Secretary is Rev Desmond Bain.

**Contact information for Chaplains can be found in the [MCI Directory](#) here.**

[www.irishmethodist.org](http://www.irishmethodist.org)

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