**Exeter Coast & Country Methodist Circuit**

**Guidelines for the provision of grants relating to Circuit Worship, Mission and Service projects (as defined by the Mission & Ministry Group).**

These guidelines supersede all pre-existing approvals, arrangements and procedures for the provision of grants or loans for these particular purposes. They will be updated as and when required.

These guidelines do not cover requests for the contribution to or reimbursement of expenses (e.g. relating to travelling expenses, costs associated with the provision of or attendance at training courses, printing , postage and stationery costs and suchlike) which should continue to be dealt with by the Finance Group in the normal course of its responsibilities. Applicants should be aware that there are separate procedures for primarily “Property” projects where the Connexion’s Property Consents” process takes precedence over any guidance contained herein.

**Source of Application forms.**

Application forms and a copy of the latest version of the guidelines may be obtained from the Circuit Treasurer.

**Criteria for considering applications**

Applications for projects meeting the criteria set out below should be sent initially to the Chair of the Circuit Mission & Ministry (and, if applicable, the Circuit Property Group) and will be considered as outlined below. These projects may be for:-

1. Single events.
2. Other new initiatives/developments needing “start up” funding over an initial period of up to five years after which it is hoped they will become self-funding. Applicants should be aware that repeat funding after such an initial period is unlikely but, nevertheless, will be considered on a case by case basis. Applicants should also be aware that monitoring & evaluation reports together with income & expenditure accounts (and an Independent Examiners certificate where appropriate) **will be required** **on an annual basis as a prerequisite for continuing support during that initial period.**

Projects costing up to £500 should normally be dealt with by the Finance Group on its own initiative without recourse to the following arrangements and such applications should be sent to the Circuit Treasurer.

**First step – Approach to the Mission & Ministry (and, if applicable, the Property) Group.**

The Mission and Ministry group are here to help. If you are uncertain how to proceed with your application, having read these guidelines, then please get in touch with the chair of the Mission and Ministry group for further support. Churches should commence the strategic and (if applicable) property steps simultaneously if there is an urgent need for a prompt response. Also churches may wish to consult the District Enabler for further help and advice.

**Strategic recommendation - by the Mission & Ministry Group**

* The project must adhere to the aims and objectives of the Circuit “to respond to God’s love in Jesus by sharing our lives through Christian discipleship, in worship, mission and service”.
* The project should have a significant impact on worship, mission, learning and caring, or service and be aligned with the vision statement of the Circuit. Evidence to that effect must be included in the application form.
* The project should not normally be one solely related to the repair and maintenance of church properties. It should therefore contain a significant non-property element, which should be described in the application form.

**Property recommendation (where there is a property element to the project) - by the Property Group**

* Projects should be fully costed and the costs submitted with the application in the form of a “project budget”.
* The formal Property Consents process must have been adhered to and the approval notice lodged with the application. This process is accessed via the Methodist Church website.

**Financial recommendation - by the Finance Group**

* The application should be submitted by the Church Treasurer and should declare that it has the support of the Church Council.
* The application should explain what existing and new local money is available towards the cost of the project and what local fund raising requests have taken place together with evidence that the proposed fund raising is achievable.
* A significant proportion of the total costs should normally have been raised by the local church or from other external bodies, but it is acknowledged there may be situations where this cannot be achieved and should not be a bar to a successful application.
* *The maximum amount approved for any one church in any one year should normally be no more than one quarter of the total amount for the year deemed available at the time.* Further grants or loans would not normally be considered for that church during the next four years but this would be reviewed in the light of the total take up of grants or loans from all churches.
* The application should include an explanation of how the funds will be raised to repay any loan at the end of the period.

**Calculation of the total amount available for these projects**

Grants or loans will come from the Development Fund. The availability of funds will be calculated as follows:-

* The balance of the Development Fund as at the latest 31 August.
* Less whatever amount is required to top up the Stewards Reserve account to the level recommended by the Reserves Policy.
* Less a reserve to cover any foreseeable annual budget deficits.
* Less current identifiable Circuit commitments.
* The result will be spread over four years and be available on an annual basis.

The amounts available will be recalculated each year after completion of the annual accounts so as to continually allow for any changes in circumstances.

**Levels of discretion to approve applications for grants**

The Finance Group, Mission & Ministry Group and, where applicable, the Property Group, have discretion given to them by the Circuit Meeting, by virtue of their approval of these guidelines, within the limits calculated above. Approvals are monitored the Circuit Leadership Team which enables them to exercise a high level of control over the whole process.

Above those discretionary levels all applications must be referred to the Circuit Meeting for approval.

The Circuit Meeting should be consulted in cases where there is no consensus of the above, or the decisions are disputed by the applicant. The Circuit Meeting decision is final.

Ken Rothwell

As agreed by the Finance Group and the Mission & Ministry Group

[[1]](#endnote-1)

1. UPDATED BY M&M GROUP 08/10/2020 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)