

Can New Places for New People fit within the ecclesiological structures of the Methodist Church in Great Britain? A Case Study of the Kairos Circuit.

2025

LMM3816

CLIFF
COLLEGE

A dissertation submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of MA Mission (Leadership Pathway) in the Faculty of Humanities

11,973 words

Table of Contents

Abstract	4
Declaration	5
Intellectual Property Statement	5
Acknowledgements	6
1. Introduction.....	7
2. Literature Review	8
2.1 Methodist Ecclesiology	8
2.1.1 The Historical Context.....	8
2.1.2 Early Methodist Structures	9
2.2 Contemporary Conversations	10
2.2.1 The Context.....	10
2.2.2 The Methodist Response	11
2.2.3 Redeeming the Structures	12
2.3 New Places for New People	13
2.3.1 The Background.....	13
2.3.2 Project, Community, or Church	14
3. Methodology	17
3.1 Observation	17
3.2 Interviews	18
3.3 Participants & Confidentiality	19
4. KM Case Study	20
4.1 KM.....	20
4.2 Observation Findings	21
4.3 Interview themes	22
5. Towards a New Places for New People Ecclesiology	25
5.1 Purposes	25
5.2 Practicalities.....	27

5.3 Proposals	31
6. Conclusion.....	35
6.1 Summary of Arguments	35
6.2 Further Work	38
Bibliography	39
Appendix 1 – Kairos Movement Trustee Meeting Minutes	44
Appendix 2 – Observations of the Meeting and Supporting Documents	46
Appendix 3 – Interview Questions.....	50
Appendix 4 – Interviews	51
Interview One (With I1)	51
Interview Two (With I2)	57
Interview Three (With I3)	68
Interview Four (with I4a and I4b)	80
Interview Five (with I5)	92

Abstract

This dissertation examines the potential place for New Places for New People within the ecclesiological structures of the Methodist Church in Great Britain and offers a proposal for adapting the Methodist Church's definition of a church to a relational model from a practice model.

It does this by focusing primarily on the life and work of the Kairos Movement (a single church circuit in the Yorkshire North and East District) and uses empirical research to explore their self-understanding in an ecclesiological sense and how this works out in practice as a community and in relationship with other Circuits and the wider church. The research was both participant observation (of a trustee meeting) and one-to-one professional interviews with a number of the core leadership team.

To reflect on this research, it offers a broad review of existing literature covering early Methodist ecclesiology, the contemporary context for the Methodist Church, and then specifically the New Places for New People elements of the God For All report. These conversations focus on questions of membership, definitions of church, participation and belonging, and the long-term vision of the New Places New People movement.

It then brings the research and the literature review together in the final section to analyse the purposes and practicalities of the Methodist Church, the Kairos Movement, and New Places for New People. It draws out the similarities that all three are seeking to serve the *Missio Dei*, yet notes the distinctions in their aims and methods of doing this.

Finally, it brings all this together to offer a proposal that the Methodist Church revisit its definition of a church and move from a practice-based definition to a relationship-based definition. It offers this proposal to benefit the nature of participation and belonging, membership and relationships between different expressions of church whilst acknowledging there are challenges in relation to not disregarding all Christian tradition without assessing the positives of these traditions.

Declaration

I declare that the dissertation is my own original work unless referenced clearly to the contrary, and that no portion of the work referred to in the dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Intellectual Property Statement

- i.** The author of this dissertation (including any appendices and/or schedules to this dissertation) owns certain copyright or related rights in it (the "Copyright") and s/he has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative purposes.
- ii.** Copies of this dissertation, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made **only** in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has entered into. This page must form part of any such copies made.
- iii.** The ownership of certain Copyright, patents, designs, trademarks and other intellectual property (the "Intellectual Property") and any reproductions of copyright works in the dissertation, for example graphs and tables ("Reproductions"), which may be described in this dissertation, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions.
- iv.** Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialisation of this dissertation, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy, in any relevant Dissertation restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, and The University Library's regulations.

Acknowledgements

I want to thank all those who have supported and encouraged me at every point through this MA program, but especially the dissertation.

A special thanks to my wife Nat, and children Stevie and Lockie, for being the amazing support through every challenge and struggle.

To the Bury Methodist Circuit for allowing me to do this study as part of my work, and the Methodist Church for part funding my place on this course.

To all the staff at Cliff College for offering such a rewarding course and positive learning environment.

And finally, to Dr Heather Major for supervising this dissertation and providing great support and advice in my first piece of empirical research.

Can New Places for New People fit within the ecclesiological structures of the Methodist Church in Great Britain? A Case Study of the Kairos Circuit.

1. Introduction

This dissertation explores the question of whether New Places for New People¹ has a place within the ecclesial structures of the Methodist Church in Great Britain² using a case study of the Kairos Movement³, a non-geographical Circuit in the Yorkshire North and East District.⁴ To do this it will review the existing literature on Methodist ecclesiology from three perspectives. The historical perspective examining the foundations of the movement known as Methodism, particularly noting the missional pragmatism that defined the structures created. The contemporary perspective will look at the post-Christendom context of the 21st Century UK and explore how the MCB has responded to some of the challenges and changes, seeking to offer some of the key questions that face the church. Finally, the specific perspective of NPNP, defining what the movement is and the challenges it faces going forward, primarily focused on its long-term vision and how this is explored and challenged by the use of language within its foundational reports.

Focusing on the empirical research, it will explore the methodology to be used and some key challenges present within the use of participant observation and professional interviews and how these can be minimised to best support the work of this dissertation.

Once the methodology has been discussed it will draw out the key themes raised, highlighting key questions to be explored further in the final section. It will do this by outlining the findings from my observations of the KM trustee meeting and then comparing to the ideas shared by the interviewees.

The final section will bring the proceeding sections together to form some proposals for the MCB to best accommodate the NPNP movement within the ecclesial structures of the MCB. It will compare the purposes of the inherited church, KM and the wider NPNP movement, exploring similarities and distinctives expressed by the literature, research, and Methodist reports. Having discussed the purposes, it will explore how they are expressed and examine where there are tensions and how they are experienced, particularly within

¹ Referred to as NPNP

² Referred to as MCB

³ Referred to KM

⁴ <https://www.kairosmovement.org.uk/>

KM, but applicable to NPNP as a whole. Finally, it will draw together these questions and challenges and seek to offer a way forward that will deal with some of the issues raised previously. Predominantly, exploring the impact of redefining the nature of the church within the MCB's ecclesiology to focus more on relationships rather than practices. It will offer some of the positives and the support within existing Methodist theology and polity but also raise some of the possible drawbacks and tensions. The balance between acknowledging the value of the Christian tradition whilst also accepting the need for change will be an important tension going forward for a church that is constantly in need of reform.

This dissertation seeks to offer one key way the ecclesiology of the MCB may need to adapt to value and support NPNP. Yet primarily it serves as a reminder that “renewal is a permanent task of the community of faith ... Ecclesia semper reformanda.”⁵

2. Literature Review

2.1 Methodist Ecclesiology

2.1.1 The Historical Context

The societal context surrounding early Methodism was one that was seeking renewal and reform of the Church as a whole. This *Zeitgeist* was present in both the Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions through movements such as the Puritans and Pietists and the Jansenists and Quietists respectively.⁶ The hallmarks of this context can be seen in the work of John and Charles Wesley and the other early Methodists in both their emphasis on Methodism remaining a renewal movement within the existing Protestant establishment⁷, but also the varied and eclectic backgrounds from which they drew their theology and traditions. The polity and theology of Methodism was influenced by traditions as varied as Anglicanism, in its understanding of sacrament and ordination, Roman Catholicism and its organisation of itinerancy, Orthodox understandings of growth in the Christian life and

⁵ Paul W. Chilcote, *The Wesleyan Tradition: A Paradigm of Renewal for the Contemporary Church*, In: Paul W. Chilcote (ed.), *The Wesleyan Tradition: A Paradigm for Renewal* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2002) Chapter 1 23-37 [25]

⁶ Ted A. Campbell, *The Way of Salvation: The Wesleyan Tradition and the Religion of the Heart*, In: Paul W. Chilcote (ed.), *The Wesleyan Tradition: A Paradigm for Renewal* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2002) Chapter 5 78-86 [79-80]

⁷ Ryan Nicholas Danker, *Social and Political Thought*: In: Clive Murray Norris & Joseph W. Cunningham (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to John Wesley*, (London: Routledge, 2024) Chapter 20 235-245 [243]

evangelical reliance on the experience of salvation.⁸ It is from this variety of theological influences that Campbell identifies the three main elements that, for Wesley, defined a Church; that is, the practices of “faith, preaching, and the sacraments”.⁹

This broad influence on early Methodism could be interpreted as both a reason for the Wesleys’ intention to not found a new denomination and a consequence of it. From the beginning of the movement, Methodists were required to be part of “both the church and the chapel”¹⁰, i.e. being members of both the local parish church and the Methodist society. As there was no intention to form a new Church, the Wesleys were freer to choose from spiritual practices that supplemented the existing spiritualities offered by the Church of England irrespective of their background. The Wesleys’ broad influences could also be seen in the requirements that were set for initiating people into the movement of Methodism. There was no entry condition or doctrinal test beyond “a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins”¹¹, underlining John Wesley’s belief that an experience and relationship with God through the Holy Spirit was the mark of a Christian, not orthodoxy in belief

2.1.2 Early Methodist Structures

Despite this openness and broad interpretation of Christian life and discipleship, the structure that built up around Methodism was designed to be missional first and foremost. Wesley designed an ecclesiological structure that would serve, in and of itself, as a means of grace and enable disciples to “learn how to love in their gathering and the share that love with others as they are sent.”

Clapper describes the structures that built up around early Methodist missions as the “little churches within the church that were the secret of early Methodism.” These groupings developed locally to encourage and enable Christians to better participate in the means of grace that Wesley identified as crucial to the Christian journey of holiness, most especially focusing on the importance of Christian conferring on matters of faith and

⁸ Thomas Edward Frank, *Methodism's Polity: History and Contemporary Questions*, In: Charles Yrigoyen Jr (ed.) *T&T Clark Companion to Methodism* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2010) Chapter 18 309-328 [312-313]

⁹ Ted A. Campbell, *Wesleyan Beliefs: Formal and Popular Expression of the Core Beliefs of Wesleyan Communities*, (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2010) 47

¹⁰ Martin Wellings, *Methodism in the UK and Ireland*, In: Charles Yrigoyen Jr (ed.) *T&T Clark Companion to Methodism* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2010) Chapter 5 73-88 [77]

¹¹ Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley And Patterns For Church Renewal*, (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers 1980) 84-85

practice. However, these local expressions were also then required to confer and be accountable to the wider movement through the institution of the Methodist Conference, as it would become, which had the sole authority to discern and articulate the theology and practice of the people called Methodists wherever they may be located geographically. This power dynamic between central control and local independence became a challenge to the movement of Methodism throughout the lifetime of John Wesley, but also in the years after his death.

This conflict between local and central power is a direct consequence of the emphasis that early Methodism placed on being a movement for holiness and mission and Wesley's willingness to develop and adapt a functional view of church order to best serve these purposes rather than hold to the traditional ecclesiology of his Anglican roots. Had Wesley intended to found a new church or denomination it is likely that the structures would have been more rigid and foundational; instead, Methodism is marked by a flexibility and experimentation in order to best serve the mission of God as it was being revealed and discerned. Following Wesley's death, this lack of structural rigidity proved to be a challenge that led to the fracturing of the Methodist people into multiple different denominations.

2.2 Contemporary Conversations

2.2.1 The Context

Many of the questions and challenges that faced the early Methodists are still relevant in contemporary society, however the denomination now has almost 300 years of history and tradition to carry with them. The 21st century church seeks to have discussions around renewal, holiness and mission within the context of "collapsing membership and ebbing confidence across the Connexion."¹² This has been exacerbated by the surrounding contexts of Western Europe which offer a "spiritually competitive, culturally diverse and socially secular society."¹³ Despite these trends, there is recent research that challenges

¹² Wellings (2010) 77

¹³ Martyn Percy, *Back to the Future: A Search for a Thoroughly Modern Methodist Ecclesiology*, In: Clive Marsh, Brian Beck, Angela Shier-Jones & Helen Wareing (eds.), *Methodist Theology Today: A Way Forward*, (London: Continuum, 2004) Chapter 20 204-210 [207]

secularisation as the only narrative, hinting towards a wider interest in general spirituality and Christianity with an increase in church-going and interest in the Bible.¹⁴

For many, this change in context has been described as a transition from Christendom to Post-Christendom, and Modernism to Post-Modernism. Whilst this transition has been blamed for much of the decline in traditional, cultural church attendance, it is not a purely negative change. For example, in more emergent circles, this shift is seen as “an opportunity to exploit more than a loss to lament.”¹⁵ Morris argues this point with an overwhelmingly negative view of the Christendom church, however there must be care not to discard positive elements of the Christian tradition due to the surrounding context in which they developed.

2.2.2 The Methodist Response

In general, the MCB has not dealt well with changes in society. Many varied responses have been proposed, seeking to reorganise structures or use resources differently, however, as Frank observes, these have done little to alleviate Methodism's decline as the current context has brought “stagnation, impasse and resistance in polity development.”¹⁶ Frank identifies an apparent disconnect between the central authority of the MCB and the local communities which contributes to an increasingly negative relationship between the two sections of the Church due to a lack of understanding.¹⁷ In a similar way, Curran draws on the organisational theory work of Rosemary Stewart to critique contemporary Methodism as nothing more than a bureaucracy.¹⁸

This challenging view of the MCB raises the question of what is needed within the denomination: reform, renewal or resurrection? From the perspectives offered by Frank and Curran, it appears that reforming the existing structures, no matter how well intentioned, will not bring about the necessary change to the denomination required to turn around the decline. Instead, as Leslie Newton proposes, “the crisis of institutional decline (and some significant dying) could, most wonderfully, trigger the resurrection of ‘the people called Methodists’ to be re-awakened as a movement/church which is both

¹⁴ Russell R Reno, “A Time of Revival”, *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, 354 (Jun/Jul 2025) 64-65 [65]

¹⁵ Helen D. Morris, *Flexible Church: Being the Church in the Contemporary World*, (London: SCM Press, 2019) 34

¹⁶ Frank (2010) 310

¹⁷ Ibid 324

¹⁸ Luke Curran, *A Shared Faith*, In: Luke Curran & Angela Shier-Jones (eds.), *Methodist Present Potential*, (London: Epworth, 2009) Chapter 5 94-113 [104]

truly willing and empowered to renew the church."¹⁹ The proposal for a necessary death and resurrection of the MCB goes beyond a restructuring or renewing of what currently exists and instead seeks something new and different. The question remains, as with Morris' critique of modernism, can any good be kept from what currently exists whilst seeking something radically different?

2.2.3 Redeeming the Structures

As previously mentioned, Methodism started as a renewal movement within existing church structures, seeking to supplement the work of the church by bringing a renewed emphasis on holiness and mission. The call for a new flexibility in church structures is one that has been present in Methodist conversation for a number of years, particularly in relation to the local structures of Church and Circuit.²⁰ This flexibility is something that has been most evident in the MCB's commitment to the Fresh Expressions movement, which offers a "reforming re-imagination of the Church" in which both tradition and contextual relevance can be held together.²¹ Through this work, denominations have sought to offer a 'mixed economy' approach to church that allows for the flexibility of new, different communities living alongside inherited models of church within church denominations rather than one seeking to serve or dominate the other.²² Phyllis Tickle discusses this model as developing hyphenated Christians, those who have reservations about the traditional institutions, but seek to find common ground between the denomination and local community.²³

There is also the question of belonging to the MCB to be considered. Membership has been an aspect of Methodism since the beginning with membership of the local societies being part of a group of fellow disciples journeying together.²⁴ However, this is a concept that has come under closer scrutiny in recent years with changes in society making

¹⁹ Leslie Newton, *Revive Us Again: Rejuvenating a Movement of Transformation*, (Bagshot: PublishU, 2023) 93

²⁰ Methodist Church in Great Britain, *The Missional Nature of the Circuit* (London: The Methodist Church 2008) para 2.1

²¹ George Lings (Church Army's Research Unit), *The Day of Small Things: An analysis of fresh expressions of Church in 21 dioceses of the Church of England* (online) <https://churcharmy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/the-day-of-small-things.pdf> [accessed on 23rd July 2025]

²² Lincoln Harvey, *How Serious is it Really?: The Mixed Economy and the Light-hearted Long Haul*, In: Graham Cray, Ian Mobsby & Aaron Kennedy (eds.) *Fresh Expressions of Church and the Kingdom of God*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012) Chapter 9 95-105 [104]

²³ Phyllis Tickle, *Changes and a Changeless Faith*, In: In: Graham Cray, Ian Mobsby & Aaron Kennedy (eds.) *Fresh Expressions of Church and the Kingdom of God*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012) Chapter 6 59-76 [63]

²⁴ Methodist Church in Great Britain, *Methodist Membership in the 21st Century* (London: The Methodist Church, 2021) para 2.1

people more hesitant to commit to organisations and groups as they have in the past.²⁵ There is also the challenge raised by new missional approaches such as FX and NPNP, with a recognition that local belonging does not necessarily easily translate to belonging to the wider Connexion. It is proposed that “this can be addressed through the local leadership promoting membership as an expression of faith and discipleship and encouraging a culture of membership within each group.”²⁶ There is some risk that this offers a disingenuous approach in incorporating connexional membership without making this apparent to those committing to membership. An additional challenge is of multiple memberships, whilst there is provision for people to be members of multiple denominations, there is no provision to be members of more than one Methodist community.²⁷ Curran supports this challenge with his perspective that suggests though new movements within Methodism may offer different expressions of church, “the form of commitment, and therefore belonging, may be remarkably similar.”²⁸

There are three key challenges that face the MCB in its response to an ever-changing society. Firstly, to ensure that communities are being created primarily for mission to those around them rather than to assume specific ecclesiological forms²⁹. Secondly, to hold the balance between the local expression of church and the connexional principle of unity.³⁰ Finally, the question of how people are enabled to belong to these communities with the questions and challenges raised by traditional Methodist membership.

2.3 New Places for New People

2.3.1 The Background

NPNP is one stream of the MCB's God For All evangelism and growth strategy, focusing on “projects who primary goal is to start, build, and reproduce new Christian communities among unaffiliated people.”³¹ It has attempted to approach this goal with three key principles, working ‘ground-up’, responding to a changing society and demographics,

²⁵ Methodist Church in Great Britain (2021) para 3.5

²⁶ Methodist Church in Great Britain, *Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues* (London: The Methodist Church 2024a) para 3.5

²⁷ Methodist Church in Great Britain (2024a) section 5

²⁸ Curran (2009) 107

²⁹ Snyder (1980) 162

³⁰ Philip Drake, *Joining the dots: Methodist Membership and Connectedness*, In: Clive Marsh, Brian Beck, Angela Shier-Jones & Helen Wareing (eds.), *Methodist Theology Today: A Way Forward*, (London: Continuum, 2004) Chapter 12 131-141 [135-136]

³¹ Methodist Church in Britain, *God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth*, (London: The Methodist Church, 2020) 14

and not just working harder.³² The report, though written and presented by the Connexional Team and received by the Conference, is intended to work differently across the Connexion as is required by the context into which the new communities are being planted. This is in line with a more positive interpretation of Connexionalism in which it is seen to support diversity rather than bringing about uniformity.³³ However, the MCB's endorsement of a joint Methodist-Anglican Report from the Fresh Expressions movement and the eight practices within that define a church³⁴ challenges how a community can be fully included within the Connexion with conforming at least in part. The intention is to renew the mission of the church both as a whole and as individual communities around the country "in a way that is deeply embedded in and faithful to the communities to which we belong and serve."³⁵ A second challenge is to the proposed ground-up model is offered by Moynagh, though not specifically aimed at NPNP, draws on the MCB's history of using demonstration models in its missional work, i.e. launching a few major projects as examples and encouraging others to recreate what they have seen.³⁶ Though the first strand of projects is going to be focused in Districts rather than nationally, there is still some elements of the same demonstration model and thus, the risk of it continuing to appear as a top-down approach.

2.3.2 Project, Community, or Church

One of the key questions that has been present within the Fresh Expressions movement since its inception is what is the fundamental intention of the movement? Moynagh describes how there have been those who intended to birth church plants, "but discovered that not many people were willing to attend a conventional Sunday service."³⁷ Instead a contextualised approach of listening, serving, community building and enabling people to encounter Jesus in new and experimental ways.³⁸ NPNP appears to be careful in its use of language referring to multiple types of project intended to create Christian communities, only one of which is described in the language of church

³² Methodist Church in Britain (2020) 1-4

³³ Newton (2023) 81

³⁴ Anglican-Methodist Working Party, *Fresh Expressions in the Mission of the Church*, (London: Church House Publishing, 2012) 114

³⁵ Methodist Church in Britain, *God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal*, (London: The Methodist Church, 2024b) 10

³⁶ Michael Moynagh, *Church in Life: Innovation, Mission and Ecclesiology*, (London: SCM Press, 2019) 103

³⁷ Ibid 104

³⁸ Ibid 44

planting.³⁹ It is clear then, that the intention of NPNP is not specifically to create communities that can be defined as churches within Methodist ecclesiology. This change in focus holds a recognition that the primary focus of the new communities is to “live in the Kingdom of God” rather than to desire or create churches and denominations as has previously been understood.⁴⁰

This, to some extent, reflects the early Methodists and their “bipolar ecclesiology” that holds in tension the understandings of an inherited church alongside the concept of a revival movement of communities intended for mission.⁴¹ Whilst this may be a positive step that means the new NPNP projects will not have to conform to particular standards or practices in order to be considered “successful”, it does raise the question of how they will be valued within the wider life of the MCB.⁴² Without the status of being an ecclesiological church, the NPNP communities will be excluded from most forms of participation within the wider Connexion unless those attending are willing to become members of another community that conforms to the existing ecclesiological standard for a church.

In addition to the ability to participate in the wider MCB Connexion, there are other questions about how and why the identity of Church would matter. Scanlon discusses how seeking to define Fresh Expressions in the past has been a mechanism to control or quantify a movement which often resists these things.⁴³ Whilst it is completely appropriate for a trustee body to want to ensure its resources are being used well, this raises the challenge of top-down or bottom-up design. It asks the question, ‘who gets decide on the definition and identity of a community or church?’, which is a criticism that has also long been directed at the Fresh Expressions movement.⁴⁴

This use of language and definition leaves a fundamental question about the purpose of NPNPs. Is the NPNP movement intended to create communities that can be defined as Churches and therefore enable people to fully participate in the life of the MCB or is it seeking to offer a means to encourage the MCB to reconsider its definition of a ‘church’? Alternatively, is it to create a group of communities that fulfil a different purpose similar to

³⁹ Methodist Church in Great Britain (2020) 14

⁴⁰ Tickle (2012) 74

⁴¹ Campbell (2010) 170

⁴² Newton (2023) 67

⁴³ Mark Scanlan, *An Interweaving Ecclesiology: The Church, Mission and Young People*, (London: SCM Press, 2021) 228

⁴⁴ Morris (2019) 44

that of the original Methodists and their relationship with the Church of England. If it is more inclined towards the third purpose, then the challenge will be how this relates to the goal of reaching “unaffiliated people”⁴⁵, rather than simply renewing those already with some existing relationship to faith and the MCB.

⁴⁵ Methodist Church in Britain (2020) 14

3. Methodology

The research methodology for this dissertation is interpretivist,⁴⁶ involving a two-fold research design of observation of practice and professional interviews with those in leadership. The first involves observing a trustee meeting (i.e. Circuit Meeting) and reflecting on the implications for KM's ecclesiology. The second includes semi-structured interviews with those involved in the leadership and trusteeship of Kairos, as well as the District Chair.

The research aims to explore where Kairos finds itself on the journey as a faith community and particularly understand its ecclesiology and self-understanding within the Methodist Church in Great Britain. It is likely that observation will provide a snapshot of where Kairos currently finds itself but without any of the history that led to this point or the reasons for such understandings⁴⁷ and practices. The semi-structured interviews will be carried out to further investigate the findings from my observations and delve into the depth of context and history, including discussions about underlying reasons for decisions or practices, addressing the inherent weaknesses of observation.⁴⁸

3.1 Observation

There are a number of ethical and practical concerns that have influenced the preparation for the observation aspect of my research. The first decision was to focus on structured rather than open-ended observation⁴⁹ due to the question's focus on the ecclesiology of Kairos rather than the experiences of those who attend its events. This also allows for replicating this type of observation into other Pioneering or NPNP Circuits with the MCB.

A second question concerned my role as a researcher. For both ethical and practical reasons, I observed the trustees meeting in an overt role.⁵⁰ This allowed for the ethical aspects of permission and consent to be agreed as all contributors were aware of my presence, which can be a particular challenge when conducting research in a digital space.⁵¹ There is a risk of the "observer effect", where those being observed behave

⁴⁶ Helen Cameron & Catherine Duce, *Researching Practice in Ministry and Mission: A Companion* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 30-31.

⁴⁷ Cameron & Duce (2013) 57

⁴⁸ Ibid 79

⁴⁹ Ibid 57

⁵⁰ Ibid 57

⁵¹ Sam Kinsley, *Virtual Spaces and Social Media*, In: Helen Wilson, Jonathan Darling & Sam Kinsley, *Research Ethics for Human Geography: A Handbook for Students*, (London: Sage Publications, 2020) pp. 269-79 [272]

differently due to the presence of the researcher⁵² or the risk of becoming involved in the conversations or activities of the meeting⁵³. However, both of these risks were minimised due to the digital nature of observation, with a less obvious presence, i.e. being one screen amongst many. The relative anonymity of digital participation may be less influential on the proceedings than an observation taking place in a physical location where a researcher is visibly distinct from other participants.

3.2 Interviews

There were also ethical and practical considerations in setting up the interviews. I chose to carry out semi-structured interviews, allowing for a balance between openness in the conversation and ensuring the answers remain focussed on the research in question.⁵⁴ The alternatives of a standardized survey or open exploratory interviews would have limited opportunities for a deeper investigation of the evidence collected during the observation phase.

Due to time limitations the interviews were conducted virtually, however, it is necessary to note that this presented extra ethical and logistical challenges, particularly in relation to confidentiality and consent.⁵⁵ It is also important to acknowledge that the virtual nature of the interviews may present a risk that people “may disclose more than they might otherwise”.⁵⁶ In order to mitigate these risks, I ensured that each participant was provided with a full information sheet and reminded of the purpose of the research and their rights as a participant at the beginning of each interview.⁵⁷

Whilst interviews provide a greater depth to research than observation alone, there are challenges, partially in relation to the quantity of data generated and the possibilities of people limiting information that they may wish to share or offering answers that may be what they think people want to hear rather than accurate answers.⁵⁸ While I cannot change how people view me as a researcher, maintaining my awareness of the inherent power imbalance and any personal motives, preconceptions, and background I bring to

⁵² Ibid 57

⁵³ Ibid 61

⁵⁴ Ibid 79

⁵⁵ Ibid 80

⁵⁶ Kinsley (2020) 271

⁵⁷ Magnusson & Marecek (2015) 44

⁵⁸ Cameron & Duce (2013) 81

the research may mitigate any potential negative impact on the interviews and my approach to analysis and interpretation.⁵⁹

3.3 Participants & Confidentiality

A major challenge has been deciding who to invite to participate in the research. It requires people who were aware of, and involved in, the organisational side of Kairos. Interview participants also needed a basic understanding of Methodist theology and ecclesiology. As such, the pool of possible participants was limited to the trustees and senior leadership of the District. I considered approaching the Connexional Methodist Evangelism and Growth team, but their distance from the community would not have provided the necessary expertise and understanding of Kairos for a critical investigation. Despite the limited sample size, participants represent a variety of backgrounds, roles, and status within the community, allowing for at least some balance between “people with atypical, as well as typical, experiences”.⁶⁰

Alongside the necessity of limiting the sample size, questions of confidentiality or anonymity need to be addressed. I considered the practicalities of anonymising KM as a whole; however, due to Kairos' unique nature within the MCB and the focus of my research, I acknowledge that discussions of the community cannot be anonymised. While KM is named, in the interests of encouraging participants to share their honest thoughts or opinions, I chose to anonymise individual contributions in my discussion and analysis.⁶¹

I transcribed the interviews and have used both my own notes and the official minutes to record my observation of the trustees meeting. The first stage of analysis identified any patterns and connections that were immediately apparent within the data.⁶² The second stage involved reflection on the key themes and a critical comparison with the existing literature and other ideas or themes being discussed within the field and across Methodist Church resources. Finally, the discussion will focus on any points of divergence in the themes, as well as analysing differences between data and responses collected in both observations and interviews.⁶³

⁵⁹ Zoe Bennett, Elaine Graham, Stephen Pattison & Heather Walton, *Invitation to Research in Practical Theology* (London: Routledge, 2018) 576

⁶⁰ Eva Magnusson & Jeanne Marecek, *Doing Interview-Based Qualitative Research*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) 35

⁶¹ Magnusson & Marecek (2015) 175

⁶² Cameron & Duce (2013) 95

⁶³ Magnusson & Marecek (2015) 98

4. KM Case Study

4.1 KM

KM is a single Church Methodist Circuit which is part of the Yorkshire North and East District. It is a non-geographic, pioneering circuit intentionally seeking to be inclusive, participatory, and transformative⁶⁴. It is rooted in the Methodist tradition, not just in its structures and ecclesiology, but also its practices and theology using the Methodist Way of Life as a benchmark for the various activities and groups that it participates in. However, in line with the early Methodists, Kairos also draws on a variety of spiritualities and faith traditions⁶⁵ to “respect the unique manifestations of belief in every person.”⁶⁶ It also draws on early Methodist tradition of supplementing discipleship,⁶⁷ with people often being part of other expressions of church alongside their participation in KM, described as a “tertiary involvement”.⁶⁸

There are a number of different aspects to KM that have various levels of association with the core values; ranging from the core Kairos Community at the heart of the movement stretching out to a coaching and developmental role for unaffiliated pioneers.⁶⁹ For the purposes of this case study, I will focus on the core elements of the Community and Groups as they are more akin to the conversations around Methodist and NPNP ecclesiologies.

The Kairos Community and Groups exist in a hybrid form that mixes physical and digital gatherings and offers a variety of groups including a community weekly gathering, photography group, digital podcast, bible study and social action groups.⁷⁰ The intention of the groups is not to create an expression of church within each one, but to encourage a broad range of participation so that “together the whole can be experienced,”⁷¹ a challenge identified as “living in the ambiguous tension of church and not church.”⁷²

⁶⁴ Appendix Two pages 3-4

⁶⁵ §2.1.1

⁶⁶ Appendix Two page 4

⁶⁷ §2.1.1

⁶⁸ Interview Five page 4

⁶⁹ Appendix Two page 2

⁷⁰ KM, *Gatherings Overview* [online] <https://www.kairosmovement.org.uk/types-of-gathering/> [accessed on 6th August 2025]

⁷¹ Interview Five page 7

⁷² Scanlan (2021) 185-6

4.2 Observation Findings

Whilst the meeting I attended was a trustee meeting that contained the business you would expect at such a gathering, there was a primary focus on conversations around vision, values, and identity with the business discussed in a small section towards the end of the meeting.⁷³

The first major conversation that took place related to how the Movement could be assessed and emphasised the importance of stories over statistics. It recognised the challenge that there often is between pioneering models and more static institutions, in that the latter will look for the easy things to measure and compare, i.e. numbers and engagement, whereas in contrast, pioneers will focus on those things which are less tangible and harder to measure such as individual stories and transformation. Hirsch notes that this variation in emphasis is due to the differing understanding of the nature of the church with priorities that are focused, either outwardly on mission, or predominantly focused inwardly on maintenance and stability.⁷⁴ This conversation developed further into a contrast between attempting to control how Kairos was developing and the importance of letting the “Spirit work”. This was not just aimed externally, but also an inward challenge to the core team to ensure the focus was in the right place.⁷⁵

It was identified at the meeting that, looking solely at the numerical side of Kairos, things were challenging with apparent decline in attendance, yet this allowed the meeting to refocus on KM’s identity and purpose. In discussing what Kairos was intended to be, it was stated that “The beauty of Kairos is what it is not, not just what it is”. However, it was pointed out that this worked for those who had previous experience of church, but was a challenge when attempting to engage with those who “had not encountered the ‘not’.”⁷⁶ The discussion of Kairos’ identity also related to the wider MCB, and noted their use of the Methodist Way of Life as a foundational structure, however acknowledged the tension that, while this is known and important to those in the leadership of Kairos, it neither matters, nor is known to the wider community of the Kairos groups, a common challenge in contemporary society.⁷⁷

⁷³ Appendix One

⁷⁴ Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012) 206

⁷⁵ Appendix Two page 1

⁷⁶ Appendix Two page 1

⁷⁷ §2.2.3

The final major topic of conversation developed out of the discussion on identity and focused on the nature of pioneering in KM and how it related to their values. This conversation was the section of the meeting that was the most detached from the ecclesial structure of the MCB as it placed the emphasis on adapting to and connecting with people as they encountered KM rather than holding to a more inherited model that might identify what it is that is being offered and look for people that will be able to engage with that. This conversation again brought to the fore the emphasis on relationships and identifying where God was already at work in people and communities. A reference was made to Kairos intending to not just share God with the people they met, but also to see God in the people they meet which emphasised this dynamic within the group. This once more demonstrates a difference between a practice based inherited model of church and a more pioneering relational model, identified by Scanlon as a way of ensuring a contextual church is formed by those who are connecting with the community⁷⁸, also identified by KM value of co-creation.⁷⁹

Drawing all these conversations together it was identified that a primary purpose is that Kairos is intended to be a movement not just in name. The reflection process of “Experiment, assess and prioritise”⁸⁰ was offered as a tool for the meeting going forward ensuring they were not just achieving their purposes but allowing the Spirit to influence the direction of travel.

4.3 Interview themes

Many of the themes identified in the interviews are expansions of the conversations had at the trustee meeting. For example, the importance of relationship and connection as a fundamental principle in Kairos' development was apparent in all the interviews.⁸¹

However, there were times in the interviews when it felt that this may have presented a challenge to the development of Kairos as well. Particularly interview 5 who suggested that the importance of relying on relationships to develop the work had limited both the size and the scope of Kairos. For example, “we've been maybe too dominantly shaped by those people and not by fresh people.”⁸² Conversely, this was seen as a positive by

⁷⁸ Scanlon (2021) 190

⁷⁹ Appendix Two page 4

⁸⁰ Appendix Two page 2

⁸¹ See Interview One page 1, Interview Two page 2, Interview Three page 5, Interview Four page 7, Interview Five page 7

⁸² Interview Five page 12

other interviewees in that the specific groups of people who were part of Kairos had allowed for groups to be developed that were aimed at specific demographics often underrepresented in church life, for example, young families.⁸³

The differing interpretations of this phenomenon demonstrate why it is important to consider the perspective that someone is coming from, as the same characteristic has been identified but reflected upon in different ways. This difference in perspective also led to an interesting interpretation of how well KM fitted within the Methodist structures. For example, those who could be considered as more involved with Methodist structures interpreted Kairos' as having adapted the standard models of the MCB quite loosely to the extent that some may struggle with the ecclesiology that has been created.⁸⁴

However, in Interview 1, it was stated that "From where I stand, I think we do run like other circuits", clearly offering a different perception. This, perhaps, offers a particular strength to the ecclesiology of KM, that it has been set up in a way that is similar enough for it to be viewed as running as any other circuit would, but there have also been adaptations made that mean it can flex and change when is needed to. It also brings to the fore a question about the necessary roles to ensure a project such as KM can be maintained. For example, Interview Five discusses the role played in relation to both the Kairos Community and the wider MCB and describes how the language used changes depending on who is being spoken to.⁸⁵ This is one specific example of the model of "Pioneers and Settlers"⁸⁶ and the need for both to be present for a movement to both remain a movement but also to keep the gains that have been made by those who are pioneering, as Interview 5 says "we've been run by pioneers who like change. So if we get bored, we move on."⁸⁷

The theme of not being fully understood by the institution raised in the observation was also developed further in the interviews. In all of the answers to question 7,⁸⁸ it was mentioned that other circuits within the district vary in their response to Kairos⁸⁹ depending on their first-hand experience. The responses indicate there would only be a good understanding of what Kairos is, and how it seems to operate when it has partnered in a

⁸³ Interview Two page 2

⁸⁴ Interview Three page 4, Interview Five page 6

⁸⁵ Interview Five page 11

⁸⁶ Hirsch & Catchim (2012) 69-70

⁸⁷ Interview Five page 5

⁸⁸ Appendix Three

⁸⁹ Interview Three page 6

particular geographical area. Even though, in these circumstances, the relationships may be described as “fruitful”⁹⁰, it still challenges the wider MCB with how it expects to engage with and relate to new ways of being and doing church. Harvey describes how this difference in relationship is often something that can be experienced in Fresh Expressions work as they can either be viewed as “a living hope for the future or instead an irritating distraction”.⁹¹

There are questions about how well understood Kairos is, even amongst those who do support its work. Interview 4 raises the point that “five years on, Kairos is not quite where they anticipated it could be ... with any pioneering movement, it could actually take eight to ten years before it becomes [self-sufficient].”⁹² If such a misunderstanding can be raised by the team supporting the project then it is obvious that those who do not support the project could be at risk of even greater misunderstandings or representations of the pioneer ministry context.

Both Interview Three and Five referred to the prominence of the inherited church in any relationships between the inherited church and a pioneer context, and that, by default, the priority would be given to the inherited church unless the relationships were managed well.⁹³ Interview Four also recognised the challenge of these relationships as it is often the inherited church financially supporting pioneering communities,⁹⁴ which requires sacrifice from the inherited church, but also comes with a power dynamic and a one-way reliance.

The final theme to acknowledge is who the main demographic attending the Kairos groups are people who would be considered ‘dechurched’ rather than unaffiliated as is the aim of NPNP.⁹⁵ A point raised by Interview Four, who states “How much it is pioneering and how much it is that support for the disillusioned ... It’s one of those things we’re working on.”⁹⁶ This was also acknowledged in the identity conversations at the trustee meeting and is clearly a dynamic within Kairos that is raising questions for the core team.

⁹⁰ Interview One page 4

⁹¹ Harvey (2012) 96

⁹² Interview Four page 9

⁹³ Interview Three page 9, Interview Five page 2

⁹⁴ Interview Four page 6

⁹⁵ §2.3.1

⁹⁶ Interview Five Page 7

5. Towards a New Places for New People Ecclesiology

This final chapter will seek to draw together key themes from the previous sections and to work toward suggestions for how NPNP can influence the ecclesiology of the MCB. New missional work has influenced the theology and polity of the MCB in the past. Most recently, with examples such as allowing reaffirmation of baptismal vow by full immersion and broadening the scope for lay authorisations to preside at Holy Communion⁹⁷, but also from early Methodism with the practical, missional outlook demonstrated by John Wesley.⁹⁸

To draw these themes together it will focus on three sections. Firstly, purposes; looking at the similarities and differences in the purposes of NPNP and the wider MCB. Second, it will focus on practicalities, analysing what works well and what does not within the experience of KM. Finally, it will seek to offer some proposals for what might need to look different in MCB ecclesiology to incorporate more communities similar to KM within the wider NPNP project.

5.1 Purposes

Fundamentally, it must be remembered that the mission of the church is not something that is for the sake of the church in and of itself, instead it is “in the light of mission that the church has to be understood.”⁹⁹ The church exists solely in the context of the *Missio Dei* to be “communities for the kingdom” rather than focusing on their own continued survival.¹⁰⁰ To this end it could be assumed that there should be no distinctions between the purposes of the existing MCB and that of the NPNP movement. However, in NPNP’s foundational document, the God For All strategy discussed in §3.1, it is clear that, although their mission may not be different, it is distinct.

The key similarity in the mission of both areas of the MCB’s life, is spiritual formation and the nurturing of disciples through the practices of the church handed down through tradition. Any community that seeks this goal will draw on the practices that are common across the whole body of the church¹⁰¹ even if exact purpose and expression may be

⁹⁷ Moynagh (2017) 117

⁹⁸ §2.1.2

⁹⁹ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, (Minneapolis MN: Fortress, 1993) 107

¹⁰⁰ Graham Cray, *Communities of the Kingdom*, In: Graham Cray, Ian Mobsby & Aaron Kennedy (eds.) *Fresh Expressions of Church and the Kingdom of God*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012) Chapter 2 13- 28 [26]

¹⁰¹ Moynagh (2017) 245

challenged or varied depending on the reflections and understandings of each individual community. In Methodist tradition, these practices would be referred to as the 'Means of Grace'¹⁰², however, the history of these means comes from a much wider pool than any single Christian tradition, evidenced in both §2.1.1 and §4.1, demonstrating this is about more than making Methodists but instead "forming people into the image of Christ."¹⁰³ This points to one key difference in purpose as referenced throughout the interviews, KM is one of the only church spaces where difficult, and challenging conversations are able to be had.¹⁰⁴ Whilst this is only an anecdotal description, it was a common theme in the interviews and is likely something easier to do within a community such as Kairos. Partially, due to the informal and conversational nature of their gatherings, but also being able to create a community from scratch and build the values¹⁰⁵ into every part of it means these conversations and questions are far easier to incorporate.¹⁰⁶

A second difference between Kairos and other NPNP structures and the inherited MCB ecclesiology is the long-term vision of each community. There is a tension, identified by Scanlon between the inherited church largely focusing on developing formal churches and recreating slightly adapted versions of what currently exists,¹⁰⁷ in contrast, KM leadership is not concerned with their continued existence or replication.¹⁰⁸ How this purpose relates to the wider NPNP movement is not obvious in the initial, or follow up reports, despite them referencing the building and reproduction of communities.¹⁰⁹ The ultimate aim of the NPNP movement is likely to depend on where the ultimate control is allowed to lie; if, as intended, it becomes a fully ground-up led movement then it is likely there will be a greater leaning towards the Kairos model of not seeking to perpetuate the institution and being willing to grow and shrink, or even cease to exist as is necessary. However, if Connexionalism becomes a means for control and uniformity rather than diversity and unity¹¹⁰ then it will likely take the form of developing formal churches and sustaining the inherited church as raised by Scanlon above.

¹⁰² §2.1.2

¹⁰³ Steve Harper *Works of Piety as Spiritual Formation: Cultivating the Grace-Filled Life*, In: Paul W. Chilcote (ed.), *The Wesleyan Tradition: A Paradigm for Renewal* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2002) Chapter 6 87-97 [96]

¹⁰⁴ For example, Interview Two, page 2

¹⁰⁵ Appendix Two, pages 3-4

¹⁰⁶ Interview Five, page 9

¹⁰⁷ Scanlon (2021) 186

¹⁰⁸ Interview Five, page 11

¹⁰⁹ §2.3.1

¹¹⁰ A risk described in §2.3.1

A third question of purpose is one that challenges both the inherited church and KM, that is, who they intended to reach. The NPNP movement is specifically intended to reach those currently 'unaffiliated' to any church or faith,¹¹¹ however both the inherited church, and to a lesser extent Kairos, struggle to engage with this demographic of people. As discussed in a number of the interviews, Kairos has primarily focused on those who are disillusioned with formal church or are looking for something to supplement their existing involvement.¹¹² Even more so this is a challenge for those in the inherited models of church in that their worship, mission, and general life together is "still going to be speaking largely to each other [meaning] mission will make little headway."¹¹³ Whilst KM acknowledges this challenge more openly, there is still some distinction between the aims of NPNP and what Kairos is currently achieving. Perhaps this is inevitable given Kairos' choice to use a Methodist structure for its ecclesiology, and intentional, yet sometimes hidden, use of Methodist concepts and tradition including the Methodist Way of Life.

5.2 Practicalities

Whilst the purposes of the MCB, NPNP, and KM are the most important concepts that should be driving ecclesiological conversations, there are practicalities already in place that need to feed into the conversation at this point.

In many ways the ecclesiological practicalities of KM are not dissimilar to the wider inherited model of the MCB. It was stated in the interviews that Kairos being setup as a single church circuit within Methodist polity was an intentional choice,¹¹⁴ to allow for the various activities, groups, and communities that developed to be enabled and protected within the MCB's structures. Interview Three, in particular, focused on different groups that would struggle to find a home within the wider MCB without the creation of KM.¹¹⁵ There were however some distinctives that were present within the structures of Kairos, for example, not having a building,¹¹⁶ and not having Local Preachers or, as a result, a Local Preacher's meeting or preaching plan.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ §2.3.1

¹¹² §4.3

¹¹³ Jane Craske and Clive Marsh, *Ten Years On: From Methodism and the Future to Methodist Present Potential*, Angela Shier-Jones, *Growth in Grace and Holiness*, In: Luke Curran & Angela Shier-Jones (eds.), *Methodist Present Potential*, (London: Epworth, 2009) Chapter 10 203-211 [209]

¹¹⁴ Interview Three page 5, Interview Five, pages 5-6

¹¹⁵ Interview Three page 6

¹¹⁶ Interview One page 3

¹¹⁷ Interview Five page 5

It is not just within the structures of KM that it mirrors the traditional Methodist ecclesiology, but also in its spiritual discipleship. As discussed already, there is a focus on the Methodist Way of Life as the background to many of the Kairos Groups which leads to an emphasis on the means of grace in both personal and corporate discipleship. It could also be argued that it allows for a mirroring of the initial band, class, society structure of early Methodism,¹¹⁸ with the intention of the individual groups feeding into Kairos Community and the wider gatherings, even if the success of these gatherings remains questionable. The irony of this mirroring is that the inherited church model generally attempts to use the same means of discipleship yet struggles to successfully engage people in the smaller gatherings beyond the main society setting, the reverse of Kairos' struggles. The question raised is whether, for NPNP to be effective in its aims of reaching unaffiliated people, it requires a complete reimagining of worship, discipleship, and structure otherwise it will always be too confined and focused on those who are already part of the MCB, even if their association is loose or struggling.¹¹⁹

This leads on to the next practical consideration; the question of belonging and membership within Kairos and the wider NPNP movement. As has already been mentioned, membership is an area of polity in Kairos that holds in tension following the rules of the MCB, by having the twelve official members needed to exist, yet also not requiring or encouraging others to take the step of commitment of becoming new members themselves.¹²⁰ This issue of membership is one that puts KM at odds with much of the history of Methodism with membership having been a pre-requisite of long-term participation in any Methodist gathering. It was intended to promote "accountable discipleship"¹²¹, but held a balance of being both inclusive and challenging with a low bar to initial participation but an ongoing commitment to holiness and mission.¹²² The intention of membership within the MCB is not to build a wall keeping those out who do not reach a certain standard, but instead be a tool of invitation welcoming people into the body of Christ.¹²³

¹¹⁸ Harper (2002) 93

¹¹⁹ This idea was posited in Interview Three (page 9) with reference to creating a Methodist Research and Development department that allowed people to be "really entrepreneurial and imaginative" without metrics or assessment.

¹²⁰ See discussion in §2.3

¹²¹ Chilcote(2002) 37

¹²² Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace*, (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2007) 250

¹²³ Drake(2004) 139

From this experience, there is a two-fold consideration for Kairos and NPNP, firstly relating to the conversations about whether these movements are to be renewal movements for existing Christians,¹²⁴ and if so, how membership of different Methodist communities could be expressed, i.e. following early Methodism and the 'church and chapel' model.¹²⁵ Conversely, if the intention remains to engage primarily with unaffiliated people, then how do conversations of belonging, commitment, and membership develop to incorporate those for whom membership could be an uncomfortable challenge given societies leanings away from such concepts.¹²⁶ This concept of belonging and how it is expressed is clearly an ongoing conversation within Kairos' leadership and was something raised throughout the different interviews.¹²⁷

The function of membership in the MCB being both local and connexional also encourages a wider perspective due to this dual characteristic. It opens the perspective to consider the concept of connexionalism for NPNP and think about how each individual member or community relates to the wider MCB. The importance of conferring within Methodist theology has already been discussed¹²⁸ at all levels of church life.

At a local level this is clearly already possible. Kairos, as an example, does not struggle to engage its community in conversation about importance and challenging, yet how these people and communities relate to the wider MCB without the status of being a member is yet to be considered. There is no way of a committed attendee participating in the official life of the local community, circuit or even wider without having committed to membership. This was demonstrated in the interviews with some levels of confusion about who could and couldn't be considered members of Kairos¹²⁹, but also in discussions of the core leadership team and how it was made up.¹³⁰ Even at a local level this lack of ability to belong and commit limits how people can become involved and engaged with the leadership of the community. With the direction and vision of the community being guided and decided by the trustees there is an inevitable gap between those

¹²⁴ As discussed, this does not appear to be the intention but does seem to be a risk in practice.

¹²⁵ §2.1.1

¹²⁶ Methodist Church in Great Britain (2024a) 112-113

¹²⁷ For example, Interview Two, page 1

¹²⁸ §2.1.2

¹²⁹ Interview Four, page 6

¹³⁰ Interview Five, page 6

participating in the groups and those with the ultimate power to decide the direction it takes.

The necessity of membership to be fully involved in Methodist conferring raises the practical challenges about the inclusion of potentially new and unaffiliated people, in direct contrast to the stated aims of the God For All strategy, “The Church must learn from and be led by our indigenous leaders, who already have deep knowledge and wisdom about their communities.”¹³¹ However, it also raises theological questions about people’s participation in the means of grace with some people being prevented from participating in important areas of church life due to the bars of membership.

There is also a risk of disenfranchising whole NPNP communities on a wider scale with the same challenges being mirrored and amplified throughout the MCB’s structures. As discussed previously, there have been conversations about what NPNP and other fresh expression communities are intended to be.¹³² This impacts more than just the identity of the community, but within the MCB links to the ability of a community to participate in the wider structures, just as membership does for the individuals. Again, it asks the question of how these communities are to be included and represented within the MCB without structures such as KM, or a more fundamental reconsideration of the MCB’s ecclesiology.

This sets up people in specific positions, often who have previous experience of the denomination, who speak for these new communities and whose influence can directly affect how supported or disenfranchised they may be. This was evident from both Interview Five, who took on the role of representing the community,¹³³ but also Interview One who despite being part of the leadership did not necessarily feel engaged with the structural conversations and left it to others who define what needed to happen.¹³⁴

Though there is an important role for a person who is willing to communicate between the local community and wider denomination¹³⁵, in the longer term there needs to be more engagement from the community as a whole to prevent disenfranchisement or detachment becoming the dominant feelings. In a discussion from a more Anglican perspective, Tickle refers to the purpose of Fresh Expressions as to “seek to create worshipping, serving communities that reference the aesthetic and experience of the

¹³¹ Methodist Church in Britain, (2020) 18

¹³² §2.3.2

¹³³ Interview Five, page 10

¹³⁴ Interview One, page 3

¹³⁵ See §2.3

institution without compromising the autonomy of the group."¹³⁶ Due to the Methodist emphasis on connexionalism there must be an element that seeks to create these same communities but acknowledging a different level of autonomy to this more independent intent, yet without better intentional inclusion this is what is potentially being created.

This issue of central control and local independence is also raised in Interview Three and challenges a fundamental concept within Methodist theology. In this interview a comparison is drawn between the interpretations of two people in connexional leadership roles, and the implication is made that, had a different person been leading, KM would not have been able to develop as it has.¹³⁷ This challenges not just the principle of Connexionalism with such a fundamental difference being possible, but also John Wesley's intention to move away from the personal episcopacy of the Church of England within Methodist structures.¹³⁸ When this relationship and dynamic between corporate and individual authority works well it clearly offers a safe space for innovation and spontaneity, whilst holding on to what is beneficial from the tradition of the institution.¹³⁹ However, there remains the risk that by placing too much authority and influence on individuals because the new communities are not enabled to represent themselves there is the risk that any mission or creativity is sought to be controlled rather than enabled.

5.3 Proposals

Both KM and NPNP seek to engage with people who are 'unaffiliated' to the MCB or the wider Christian tradition and so this section will seek to offer what changes need to be considered to the MCB's ecclesiology to fully incorporate these communities into the life of the Connexion.

On first sight, it could be suggested that KM already exists within Methodist polity and thus the ecclesiology of the MCB already offers what is needed. However, as has been discussed, KM has found itself largely working with people who would consider themselves disillusioned with or hurt by the church rather than those who are unaffiliated. It could be suggested that this is, at least in part, due to KM having to adapt from a true pioneer community into one that fits within the ecclesiology of the MCB allowing it to provide a

¹³⁶ Tickle (2012) 63

¹³⁷ Interview Three, pages 3-5

¹³⁸ Snyder (1980) 70

¹³⁹ James E. Pedlar, *British Methodist Revivalism and the Eclipse of Ecclesiology*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2024) 175

safe space to those who are familiar with the general structures of the denomination whilst also looking for something different or more to renew their own Christian journey. As has been raised in previous sections many of the leaders of KM have a significant Methodist background, and much of the underpinning theology and structure is Methodist. This therefore aligns with the criticisms of the MCB from §2.2 and the general top-down approach that has been prominent over recent decades as it is a local community that has had to adapt and conform to an imposed mode of being.

However, even to develop further 'Kairos Movements' there is work that would need to be done to enable the belonging and participation of people who are not fully at home within the denomination. Membership remains the biggest challenge to this goal in that, as discussed, it is more of a cultural challenge than it has been previously. In addition, due to the make-up of the community, it is likely that there will be higher levels of scepticism towards an institution that requires such a level of commitment to fully confer and participate.

In addition to membership, there is also the challenge of connexionalism and the balance held between unity and uniformity, and leadership and control. To enable further the development of communities like KM the balance of these areas need addressing. As stated, Kairos has found good support from people who are able to work with and adapt the rules to ensure Kairos can fit within them, however, with a different person in these positions that would not have happened. The challenge is to practice connexionalism in a way that allows for greater variety in the interpretation of the MCB's ecclesiology to incorporate what may be relevant to certain outworkings of church but not others.¹⁴⁰

With a greater adaptability in what exists it would allow the principles of a community such as KM to be better implemented across the Connexion. For example, the discussions of leadership in Interview Five,¹⁴¹ referred to leadership as journeying with others as disciples on a mutual pilgrimage. Yet the current expressions of connexionalism lean more towards controlling the mission of local churches so current, and more easily understood,

¹⁴⁰ See conversation about Local Preachers in §5.2

¹⁴¹ Interview Five pages 4 & 7

expressions of church can be produced as has been stated is a risk with top-down fresh expression type work.¹⁴²

As stated, however, the aim for NPNP is to go beyond those who have had previous experience of church and seek to engage and create communities with those who have no previous church experience. To achieve this, it is likely that these changes may need to go further than simply enabling new KM communities exist. There is a choice for the MCB to make as to what it wants the NPNP communities to be. One option is for NPNP to develop into a separate strand alongside, but not included within, the existing ecclesiology. If this is to be the case, then it could draw on the historical precedent of Methodism being a renewal movement for an existing denomination¹⁴³ and the more recent demonstration model of Venture FX¹⁴⁴ to influence the wider mission of the MCB. And yet because of the language used throughout the God For All strategy, relating to planting new communities and learning from and being led by those at the margins, it would imply that this relationship is to be deeper than simply offering a renewal strand to the existing MCB. The best way for the wider denomination to learn from those who are creating and growing new communities would be to encourage participation in all areas of the church's life.

For this participation to happen NPNP must become clear about what is intended, e.g. creating new church communities, however, for this to apply to a diverse and varied group of NPNP communities (including some of the groups involved with KM) the MCB's definition of a church needs to be reassessed. As discussed previously¹⁴⁵ the MCB's definition is largely practice based, requiring churches to engage in certain activities and fulfil certain criteria before being considered a church, including achieving the appropriate number of members as referenced in multiple interviews.

In line with the intention of NPNP, KM, and Fresh Expressions more generally, a change to consider a relational definition of church could help new communities seek this identity for themselves and therefore be enabled to participate further in the life of the MCB. This definition is supported by Moynagh from both a biblical and an anthropological perspective, stating that:

¹⁴² §2.3.2

¹⁴³ §2.1.1

¹⁴⁴ §2.3.1

¹⁴⁵ §2.1.1 and §2.3.1

“Defining the church’s essence in relational terms is faithful to the New Testament. The church began with relationships – with people encountering the risen Lord, encountering each other, telling others about their encounters with Jesus and local churches encountering one another through connections between them ... Secondly this relational view of the church accords with contemporary understandings of human nature, including theological ones: humans are primarily social beings.”¹⁴⁶

This approach also aligns better with Tickle’s assertion of a new paradigm of denominational identity she refers to as “Emergence Christianity,”¹⁴⁷ one that includes a greater unease of controlling and powerful denominations and focuses more on expressing God’s kingdom in a contextually appropriate way, again emphasising the importance of relationship over practices. Finally, this would acknowledge that, throughout church history, the practices and definitions of church are “always both forming and reforming” and would align better with a church seeking its purpose of participating in the mission of God rather than its own self-perpetuation.¹⁴⁸

This new model of definition is something that does have precedent within the MCB. In recent years, there have been conversations about the adapting and reforming the national structures of the church. In a response to the process, the Faith and Order committee shared three emphases for consideration, “relatedness ... participation ... conferring.”¹⁴⁹ Whilst these conversations were considering a different aspect of the denomination’s life, they could provide a framework for a reassessment of the definition of a church within the MCB as they relate to the rational provided in this thesis.

Despite these supports and precedents for this redefinition, there are risks. There must be care taken that the practices that have served the church in their relationship with God are not abandoned but carefully considered and reinterpreted through a relational lens, in line with the work of the Spirit.¹⁵⁰ In particular, there must be recognition of the value of the Methodist tradition back to John Wesley and his three elements of church, that is

¹⁴⁶ Moynagh (2017) 243

¹⁴⁷ Tickle (2012) 61-62

¹⁴⁸ Craig Van Gelder, *How Missiology Can Help Inform the Conversation about the Missional Church in Context*, In: Craig Van Gelder (ed.) *The Missional Church in Context: Helping Congregations Develop Contextual Ministry*, (Grand Rapids MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007) Chapter 1 12-43 [37]

¹⁴⁹ Methodist Church in Great Britain, *Faith and Order Committee: Oversight and Trusteeship* (London: The Methodist Church, 2021) 3-6

¹⁵⁰ Pedlar (2024) 175

“faith, preaching and the sacraments.”¹⁵¹ Neither of these preclude a redefinition, but are crucial considerations for any work done in this regard.

The final positive for the MCB considering a relational definition of church would be more nebulous yet still important, it would demonstrate an institution that is able and willing to hold the balance between passing on the faith and appreciating the contemporary culture. Demonstrating leadership and guidance rather than control and power in allowing others to self-define as church rather than holding the power to make that decision. And finally, allowing a space for wider theological reflection on the overlap between new communities and an ever-changing society not confined by previous interpretations. All three of these are recognised by Moynagh as important supportive roles for denominations seeking to grow emerging ecclesial communities.¹⁵² Though it cannot be known for sure, this willingness to change and adapt may help a demographic with negative previous experiences of Christian institutions, or if NPNP is to be successful, those from a culture that simply doesn't understand them.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Arguments

This dissertation explores the ecclesiological relationship between the MCB and NPNP and reviews what, if any, changes may need to be made going forward to allow for NPNP to be fully incorporated into the life and structures of the MCB. The first section reviewed a broad sweep of existing literature to offer an understanding of existing Methodist ecclesiology and NPNP's place within that. To begin it examines the historical context of the MCB looking back to John Wesley and the initial intentions and structures of the Methodist movement. It examined the early concepts of membership and what could be defined as a church,¹⁵³ whilst also recognising that the intention was for Methodism to be a holiness and renewal movement with the Church of England rather than a separate denomination.¹⁵⁴ It also acknowledged the pragmatic approach to ecclesiology that was taken with the emphasis on missional thinking instead of prioritising the existing theological understandings.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ Campbell (2010) 47

¹⁵² Moynagh (2017) 139

¹⁵³ §2.1.1

¹⁵⁴ §2.1.2

¹⁵⁵ §2.1.2

The discussion then moved on to explore contemporary conversations around mission and ecclesiology observing changes in culture around the 21st Century church with the emergence of post-Christendom.¹⁵⁶ Subsequently, it then reviewed the Methodist response to the identified changes and observed that there was much to be critiqued in the MCB's apparent unwillingness to adapt to the changing culture and demographics beyond offering limited structural changes.¹⁵⁷ It led to Leslie Newton's proposal that the current plight of the MCB may indeed be the death that precedes the resurrection of Methodism.¹⁵⁸

The final section of the Literature Review focused on NPNP and some of the main content within the reports that had led to its adoption by the MCB. It particularly challenged the description of NPNP as a ground-up model of renewing the church's mission due to its similarity to previous MCB initiatives that used a demonstration model to encourage wider participation.¹⁵⁹ It also analysed the language used within the reports and asked the question regarding ultimate aim of NPNP and, as a result, how NPNP fits within Methodist ecclesiology. That is, whether the intention is to fully adopt NPNP communities into the structures of the MCB in a way that allows them to fully belong and participate, or whether they are intended to be a parallel structure or simply an external renewal movement.¹⁶⁰

The next section reviewed my research findings highlighting a number of key points, most notably conversations around the identity and vision for the Kairos and who the demographics they were reaching best were. This was emphasised in both forms of research as people previously disillusioned or hurt by the church, and whilst important and valued by all those I spoke to, questions were raised about KM's ability to reach those who are 'unaffiliated' as is the stated aim of NPNP.¹⁶¹

The difference of perspective between interviewees provided some interesting challenges, for example the perspectives shared on how similar KM is to other Circuits. This emphasised the importance of a person's position and previous experience as a factor in

¹⁵⁶ §2.2.1

¹⁵⁷ §2.2.2

¹⁵⁸ Newton (2023) 93

¹⁵⁹ §2.3.1

¹⁶⁰ §2.3.2

¹⁶¹ §4.2 & §4.3

how they would view the distinctives and similarities between KM's and other Circuits ecclesiological structure.¹⁶²

The final key finding from the research related to the tensions in the relationship between any form of pioneering and an institution. While there is need for both, the understanding and generosity needed between the two for them both to flourish is a challenge raised here and discussed further in the final section in relation to some possible ecclesiological changes.

The closing section drew together previous work and explored in more depth the purposes, practicalities and, finally, proposals for the MCB, KM and NPNP. The purposes reflected both the similarities of the *Missio Dei* for all ecclesial communities but the distinctives in how different expressions of church might understand and fulfil this. It also explored the long-term vision of the different types of community and who has the power to decide what success looks like, particularly in the context of Connexionalism.¹⁶³

How these similar yet distinct purposes expressed themselves was where some of the key conflicts developed when looking at the practicalities. In particular, discussions around the concept of membership and belonging and how these differed between inherited and pioneering ecclesial models. This then challenged the belonging and participation, not just of individuals, but of whole communities within the NPNP movement. In this conversation it acknowledged the importance of key roles that can 'translate' between the two expressions of church, yet also recognised the danger of this power resting in the wrong place and challenged the resulting perception of Connexionalism.¹⁶⁴

Lastly, it sought to offer a proposal for the MCB to consider a redefinition of church, seeking to define church in the context of relationships rather than practices. In doing so, it suggests this change of definition would help address a number of challenges relating to membership, participation, and understanding between the different expressions of church. However, it also recognised the challenges this redefinition may bring, particularly regarding the spiritual practices of the Christian tradition and how they cannot be lost even while being adapted.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² §4.3

¹⁶³ §5.1

¹⁶⁴ §5.2

¹⁶⁵ §5.3

6.2 Further Work

Whilst there is potential in this redefinition there is also further work that would need to be done that has not been possible within the scope of this dissertation, focussed on the importance of the practices that currently define a church within the MCB. Within KM there are questions about the place of preaching and the sacraments that were not able to be explored. The place of these activities in the wider NPNP movement would also aid any future conversation about redefining the nature of church. There is also further research needed into other expressions of NPNP and how they relate to Districts and Circuits, and how this impacts the wider ecclesiology of the MCB.

There would also be benefit in exploring further the intended purpose of the NPNP movement. As has been raised, there are questions about whether NPNP is intended to be a renewal movement, and complimentary structure, or incorporated into the wider ecclesial structures. Research into previous revival movements within Methodism, or missional renewals and their impacts might help inform the future direction of NPNP within the MCB. Finally, the attitudes of the wider Kairos Community in this instance and the NPNP communities as a whole to participation in the life of the MCB rather than just the local community would provide helpful background to the necessity of improving the belonging and participation by redefining the nature of a church.

Bibliography

1. Anglican-Methodist Working Party, *Fresh Expressions in the Mission of the Church*, (London: Church House Publishing, 2012)
2. Archbishops' Council, *Mission-shaped Church*, (London: Church House Publishing, 2004)
3. Zoe Bennett, Elaine Graham, Stephen Pattison & Heather Walton, *Invitation to Research in Practical Theology* (London: Routledge, 2018)
4. Nadia Bolz-Weber, *Operation: Turkey Sandwich*, In: Graham Cray, Ian Mobsby & Aaron Kennedy (eds.) *Fresh Expressions of Church and the Kingdom of God*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012) Chapter 5 52-58
5. Mark Lau Branson, *Ecclesiology and Leadership for the Missional Church*, In: Craig Van Gelder (ed.) *The Missional Church in Context: Helping Congregations Develop Contextual Ministry*, (Grand Rapids MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007) Chapter 4 94-126
6. Helen Cameron & Catherine Duce, *Researching Practice in Ministry and Mission: A Companion* (London: SCM Press, 2013)
7. Ted A. Campbell, *The Way of Salvation: The Wesleyan Tradition and the Religion of the Heart*, In: Paul W. Chilcote (ed.), *The Wesleyan Tradition: A Paradigm for Renewal* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2002) Chapter 5 78-86
8. Ted A. Campbell, *Wesleyan Beliefs: Formal and Popular Expression of the Core Beliefs of Wesleyan Communities*, (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2010)
9. Paul W. Chilcote, *The Wesleyan Tradition: A Paradigm of Renewal for the Contemporary Church*, In: Paul W. Chilcote (ed.), *The Wesleyan Tradition: A Paradigm for Renewal* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2002) Chapter 1 23-37
10. Gregory S. Clapper, *Making Disciples in Community: Guidance and Transformation in the Living Body of Believers*, In: Paul W. Chilcote (ed.), *The Wesleyan Tradition: A Paradigm for Renewal* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2002) Chapter 8 111-122
11. Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace*, (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2007)
12. Jane Craske and Clive Marsh, *Ten Years On: From Methodism and the Future to Methodist Present Potential*, Angela Shier-Jones, *Growth in Grace and Holiness*, In: Luke Curran & Angela Shier-Jones (eds.), *Methodist Present Potential*, (London: Epworth, 2009) Chapter 10 203-211

13. Graham Cray, *Communities of the Kingdom*, In: Graham Cray, Ian Mobsby & Aaron Kennedy (eds.) *Fresh Expressions of Church and the Kingdom of God*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012) Chapter 2 13- 28
14. Luke Curran, *A Shared Faith*, In: Luke Curran & Angela Shier-Jones (eds.), *Methodist Present Potential*, (London: Epworth, 2009) Chapter 5 94-113
15. Ryan Nicholas Danker, *Social and Political Thought*: In: Clive Murray Norris & Joseph W. Cunningham (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to John Wesley*, (London: Routledge, 2024) Chapter 20 235-245
16. Philip Drake, *Joining the dots: Methodist Membership and Connectedness*, In: Clive Marsh, Brian Beck, Angela Shier-Jones & Helen Wareing (eds.), *Methodist Theology Today: A Way Forward*, (London: Continuum, 2004) Chapter 12 131-141
17. Thomas Edward Frank, *Methodism's Polity: History and Contemporary Questions*, In: Charles Yrigoyen Jr (ed.) *T&T Clark Companion to Methodism* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2010) Chapter 18 309-328
18. Scott Frederickson, *The Missional Congregation in Context*, In: Craig Van Gelder (ed.) *The Missional Church in Context: Helping Congregations Develop Contextual Ministry*, (Grand Rapids MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007) Chapter 2 44-64
19. Steve Harper *Works of Piety as Spiritual Formation: Cultivating the Grace-Filled Life*, In: Paul W. Chilcote (ed.), *The Wesleyan Tradition: A Paradigm for Renewal* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2002) Chapter 6 87-97
20. Lincoln Harvey, *How Serious is it Really?: The Mixed Economy and the Light-hearted Long Haul*, In: Graham Cray, Ian Mobsby & Aaron Kennedy (eds.) *Fresh Expressions of Church and the Kingdom of God*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012) Chapter 9 95-105
21. Richard Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists: The Potential of a Tradition*, In: Luke Curran & Angela Shier-Jones (eds.), *Methodist Present Potential*, (London: Epworth, 2009) Chapter 8 165-185
22. Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (2nd ed.) (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 2013)
23. Alan Hirsch and Tim Catchim, *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012)

24. Kairos Movement, *Gatherings Overview* [online]
<https://www.kairosmovement.org.uk/types-of-gathering/> [accessed on 6th August 2025]
25. Sam Kinsley, *Virtual Spaces and Social Media*, In: Helen Wilson, Jonathan Darling & Sam Kinsley, *Research Ethics for Human Geography: A Handbook for Students*, (London: Sage Publications, 2020) pp. 269-79
26. George Lings (Church Army's Research Unit), *The Day of Small Things: An analysis of fresh expressions of Church in 21 dioceses of the Church of England* (online)
<https://churcharmy.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/the-day-of-small-things.pdf>
 [accessed on 23rd July 2025]
27. Eva Magnusson & Jeanne Marecek, *Doing Interview-Based Qualitative Research*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)
28. Methodist Church in Great Britain, *Called to Love and Praise: The Nature of the Christian Church in Methodist Experience and Practice*, (online)
https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/fo-statement-called-to-love-and-praise-1999_58L8adR.pdf [accessed on 22nd July 2025]
29. Methodist Church in Britain, *The Gift of Connexionalism in the 21st Century* (online)
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-2017-37-The-Gift-of-Connexionalism-in-the-21st-Century.pdf> [accessed on 22nd July 2025]
30. Methodist Church in Great Britain, *The Missional Nature of the Circuit* (London: The Methodist Church 2008)
31. Methodist Church in Britain, *Developments in Reaffirming Our Calling*, (London: The Methodist Church, 2019)
32. Methodist Church in Britain, *Reaffirming Our Calling: Oversight and Trusteeship*, (London: The Methodist Church, 2020)
33. Methodist Church in Britain, *God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth*, (London: The Methodist Church, 2020)
34. Methodist Church in Great Britain, *Faith and Order Committee: Oversight and Trusteeship* (London: The Methodist Church, 2021)
35. Methodist Church in Great Britain, *Methodist Membership in the 21st Century* (London: The Methodist Church, 2021)

36. Methodist Church in Britain, *God For All: The Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth – Strategic Update and Renewal*, (London: The Methodist Church, 2024b)
37. Methodist Church in Great Britain, *Methodist Membership in the 21st Century: Further Issues* (London: The Methodist Church, 2024a)
38. Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, (Minneapolis MN: Fortress, 1993)
39. Helen D. Morris, *Flexible Church: Being the Church in the Contemporary World*, (London: SCM Press, 2019)
40. Michael Moynagh, *Church in Life: Innovation, Mission and Ecclesiology*, (London: SCM Press, 2017)
41. Leslie Newton, *Revive Us Again: Rejuvenating a Movement of Transformation*, (Bagshot: PublishU, 2023)
42. James E. Pedlar, *British Methodist Revivalism and the Eclipse of Ecclesiology*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2024)
43. Martyn Percy, *Back to the Future: A Search for a Thoroughly Modern Methodist Ecclesiology*, In: Clive Marsh, Brian Beck, Angela Shier-Jones & Helen Wareing (eds.), *Methodist Theology Today: A Way Forward*, (London: Continuum, 2004) Chapter 20 204-210
44. Russell R Reno, "A Time of Revival", *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, 354 (Jun/Jul 2025) 64-65
45. Mark Scanlan, *An Interweaving Ecclesiology: The Church, Mission and Young People*, (London: SCM Press, 2021)
46. Angela Shier-Jones, *Being Methodical: Theology within Church Structures*, In: Clive Marsh, Brian Beck, Angela Shier-Jones & Helen Wareing (eds.), *Methodist Theology Today: A Way Forward*, (London: Continuum, 2004) Chapter 3 29-40
47. Angela Shier-Jones, *Growth in Grace and Holiness*, In: Luke Curran & Angela Shier-Jones (eds.), *Methodist Present Potential*, (London: Epworth, 2009) Chapter 9 186-202
48. Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal*, (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers 1980)

49. Phyllis Tickle, *Changes and a Changeless Faith*, In: Graham Cray, Ian Mobsby & Aaron Kennedy (eds.) *Fresh Expressions of Church and the Kingdom of God*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2012) Chapter 6 59-76
50. Craig Van Gelder, *How Missiology Can Help Inform the Conversation about the Missional Church in Context*, In: Craig Van Gelder (ed.) *The Missional Church in Context: Helping Congregations Develop Contextual Ministry*, (Grand Rapids MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007) Chapter 1 12-43
51. Jason E. Vickers, *Theology*, In: Clive Murray Norris & Joseph W. Cunningham (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to John Wesley*, (London: Routledge, 2024) Chapter 15 179-188
52. Geoffrey Wainwright, *Ecclesial Location & Ecumenical Vocation*, In: M. Douglas Meeks (ed.) *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press 1985) Chapter 4 93-129
53. Pete Ward, *Liquid Ecclesiology: The Gospel and The Church*, (Leiden: Brill, 2017)
54. Martin Wellings, *Methodism in the UK and Ireland*, In: Charles Yrigoyen Jr (ed.) *T&T Clark Companion to Methodism* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2010) Chapter 5 73-88

Appendix 1 – Kairos Movement Trustee Meeting

Minutes

Kairos Trustee Meet / ACM 17th June 2025 Meeting Minutes

Attendance

Present: [REDACTED] Jez Hackett
(observer), [REDACTED]

Apologies: [REDACTED]

Agenda

Devotions [REDACTED] used a body scan & a Walter Brueggeman prayer

No matters arising

Approval of January Minutes: Minutes were approved.

Core Discussions based on the trustee report:

Agreed that the Core team ([REDACTED]) would act as circuit stewards.

Andy proposed [REDACTED] as a new trustee, and this was agreed.

We agreed that we needed to do a little more work on our values in order to share them beyond our core group. [REDACTED] suggested we create a little video for each value to illustrate how it is in reality. We recognised that this would be a helpful piece of work to do in time for Flourish. Liane will pursue one-to-one conversations and seek quotes and possible testimonies.

[REDACTED] our new safeguarding officer.

No safeguarding issues were reported.

We had a brief conversation about Wednesdays and agreed to continue until the summer and review with each group. [REDACTED] stated how the Wednesdays are effective as a core place of belonging.

Digital Pioneering

[REDACTED] shared about 'Don't wake the baby'. The frustrations of how slow it has been to form a community, but reflecting that with 50 people listening to each episode and a gradual building of conversations is good.

[REDACTED] has had a few people reaching out to him and is reflecting on how to build something in response to the conversations.

Disney church has felt like an effective hook to engage with people and start faith conversations, and so he is leaning into that.

Andy clarified the 4 strands of Kairos;

1. The Core Community (which we agreed to refer to as Kairos Community)
2. Kairos Groups, which are focused groups to explore spiritual practices, engage with the community or center around an interest or passion.
3. NPNPs (which are effectively little faith communities)
4. Campfire – which offers a peer support and nurture group for Pioneers.

We discussed if there was a need for an elevator pitch describing Kairos, or if it is enough to focus on the shared values and experience of one or two of a network of individual groups.

Finance: We will revisit finance at our next meeting when [REDACTED] is present, but the Connexional team suggested that building coaching and mentoring by the Kairos Pioneers into circuit NPNP finding bids would be a legitimate income stream.

Future plans - [REDACTED] shared ideas for next year's theme, being either using the Beatitudes and/or also the idea of visiting different contexts across the District. It was agreed to explore both, with perhaps quarterly visits to different locations with a view to co-creating liturgy, poetry and worship resources for the context.

Pastoral: [REDACTED] move house next week

13. No other business was raised

14. Trustee Dates for diaries

Thursday 23rd October circuit/ trustee meeting 7.30

January 20th circuit/ trustee meeting 7.30

We were joined by Jez Hackett a Presbyter who is undertaking an MA researching NPNP and the Methodist structure.

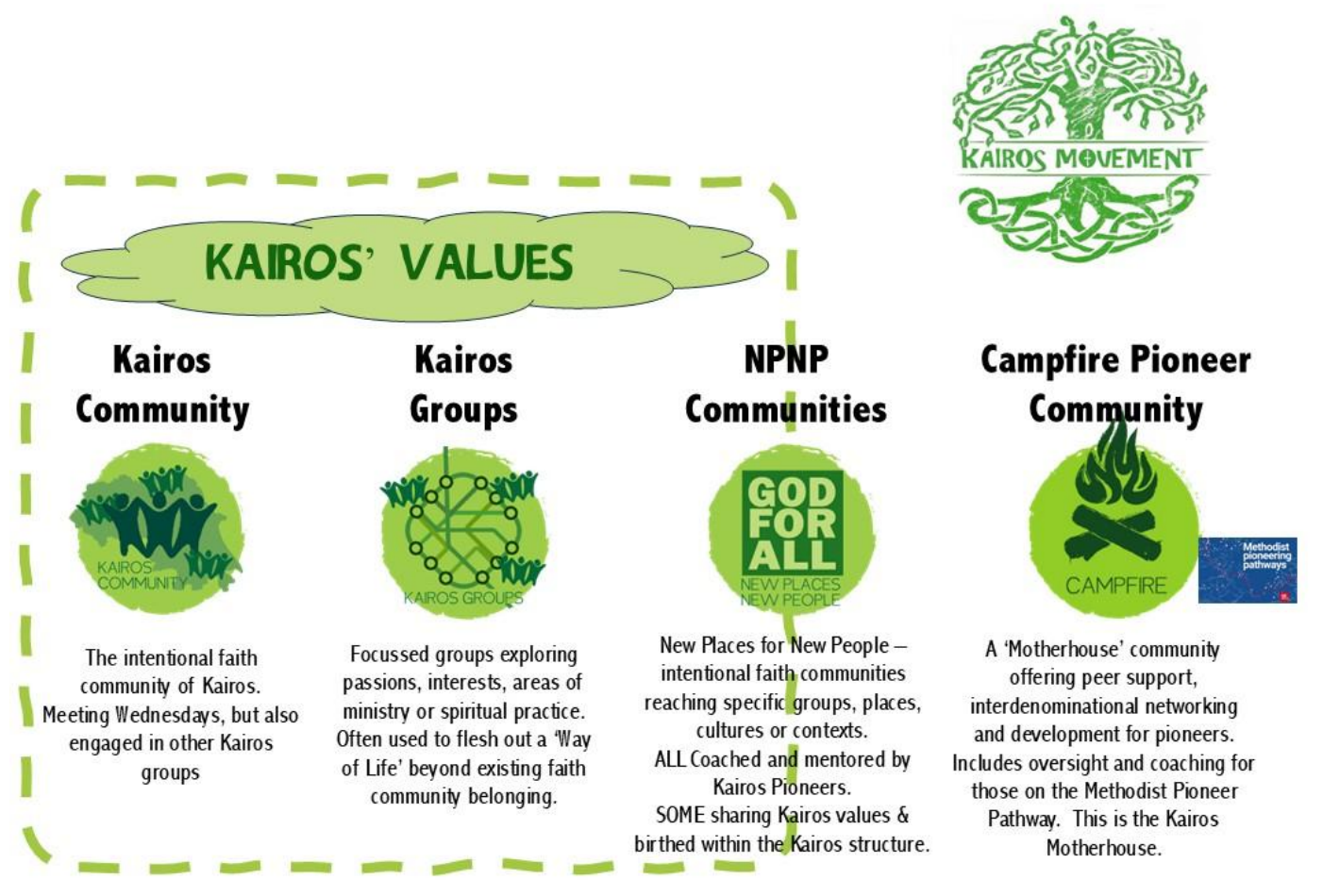
Appendix 2 – Observations of the Meeting and Supporting Documents

Kairos Trustee Meeting observations 17-6-25

- Rather than solely a business meeting, this meeting was more of an opportunity to 'touch base' and acknowledge where people and ministries were at.
- There was a discussion about the make up of the core team and it focused on the different roles and what a Circuit Steward would like in a Kairos context. It was considered that as it was essentially a trustee with extra leadership responsibilities this group were already fulfilling that role.
- Three key focuses kept being returned to – Focus on values (value document below), focus on stories, focus on people
 - o demonstrated by a quote in a discussion about how to feedback to district/connexion “The statistics are meaningless”
 - o It's not about numbers but about what is significant for people
 - o There are easy things to measure and the right things to measure (numbers or stories)
 - o Are these things being measured to support or control? – A question was asked about measuring and controlling vs letting the Spirit work (relating to all levels including within the core team)
- There was a recognition that a lot of what Kairos is has shrunk over the last year, so it was an opportunity to reassess their identity. – Movement and flexibility
 - o 4 strands to what Kairos has become (structure document below) – with the community at the core and slowly spreading out in concentric circles to different levels of attachment and association
 - o “The beauty of Kairos is what it is not, not just what it is”
 - Countered by “What we are not is not helpful for those who have not encountered the 'not'” – in relation to being good at reaching dechurched but not unchurched
 - o We are rooted in Methodism but not confined by Methodism. All the conversations are rooted in Methodist language and history, but it doesn't matter to the wider community.

- Does our wider identity matter? The groups and activities are the selling point, not the wider structure.
 - Countered, it matters because we need to feel comfortable in encountering the wider Connexion – unity with the wider church
- The pioneering emphasis was discussed frequently
 - At Kairos, your voice matters from the very beginning
 - We see God in the people we work with and share God with them too
 - Kairos is about connecting people and matching needs
 - We experiment, assess and prioritise to keep moving
 - What does faith sound like in your local dialect?
- Short time at the end discussing finance, safeguarding, pastoral matters

Structure Diagram



Values Document

Our Values

We continue to pursue these through a mixture of opportunities to Encounter / Encourage/ Explore.

The Kairos Movement – An Entangled Life

We have found the metaphor of mycelial networks a helpful way to describe our movement. These underground fungal networks, a living organisms in their own right, but span vast distances. Their gift to other plants, is they act as a network that transports nutrients, water and 'chemical communication' between the plants with which they entangle, via their root systems. Occasionally, the fungus itself will produce a fruiting body, which appears above ground as a mushroom, but most of its life and fruit are found in this process of connecting and supporting the diversity of other plants that draw from the earth. In this analogy, the earth, of course, is the ultimate source of this nutrition as well as the anchor for the growth of everything in it. We likewise recognise both our lives and the Kairos Movement exist in a Ground of Being (Acts 17:28) that is the life of the Divine.

A Safe Haven

A Safe haven for those open to a radical transformation on their spiritual journey.

Safe spaces to explore and wrestle with faith are rare. It's hard to ask the big questions when those questions underpin either our identity or that of our faith communities. There is more than one way to follow the Jesus way. Together we create a series of safe places, for different stages of a faith journey, where we can value one another's faith insights and stories, alongside Christian and ancient wisdom traditions and practices.



Radical Acceptance

All are welcome, and we celebrate the rich diversity of every human being, seeking to honour and respect everyone.

We affirm, celebrate, and honour every identity and background. All gender expressions, all races, all sexual identities, all religions, all abilities, all socioeconomic circumstances, all ages, all previous & current religious affiliation, all... people.



Risking Vulnerability

We are people shaped by stories and value the sacred space created through the deep sharing of our experiences and seeking resonance with ancient wisdom.

Allowing others a peek below the surface of your soul can be terrifying. Let's do it anyway! Our spiritual life and our identity can be deeply intertwined. Some of us carry fear or shame because of past faith experiences, and becoming part of a new community might feel frightening. It's okay within Kairos, to dip into what works for you. We welcome your vulnerability, honour it and will together explore the liberation and fullness of life Jesus promised.



Co-Creation

We each commit, as part of this movement, to play our part, in shaping and co-creating our movement's life and purpose.

It's hard not to have a hierarchy within any organization, but we hope to be more starfish than spider, with every person having a purpose and being empowered to bring their passions, insights, gifts and skills to help us shape what we do.



Collaboration

No one faith community can do everything, and so we partner with and draw upon others where we can.

We recognise that within any group, organisation or community, individuals can find themselves alone in their passion or ministry. Most of us, need the gifts, graces and support of a diverse team to bring a dream to life. Kairos actively seeks to connect individuals to initiate new projects. If a project already exists that resonates with our sense of calling, however, then we'll either join the team or explore a partnership to develop that work.



Transforming

We ache for a transformed world and seek a more balanced, life-affirming way to be.

Belonging to the Kairos Movement doesn't require you to cut ties with other supportive communities. We are affiliated to the Methodist church, but with the freedom to explore spiritually. We encourage each person in our movement to find a web of belonging, some of which will also complement Kairos by providing a balance for our spiritual encounters and transforming action. Likewise, we hope to honour and augment any belonging you already value.



1 Meals Prepared for Tea2Go

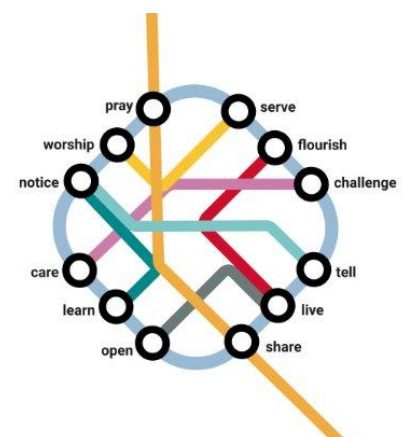
Our Faith

We think it would be helpful to have a statement of faith and to be transparent about our connections.

Our background is rooted in the Methodist environment and its traditions and values but has been shaped in recent years through progressive, pioneering, ecumenical and spiritually diverse environments.

Kairos, although accountable to the Methodist church, has the freedom to explore the riches of other denominations and religious and faith traditions. The diversity of world religions inspires us, and we are respectful of the unique manifestations of belief in every person we encounter. We seek to learn and to create a community of learners.

Although we hope to offer a unique community in which to journey in faith, we are not equipped to offer every spiritual insight, or context in which faith can be explored and lived out, so we encourage those in our movement to find additional places of encounter, encouragement and exploration and actively seek partners in making this more accessible.



Appendix 3 – Interview Questions

1. How long have you been involved in the Kairos Circuit? At what point in its formation did you become involved?
2. What have been some of the joys and blessings you have received in this work?
3. What have been some of the challenges and difficulties you have experienced? Where have they come from?
4. How does being part of Kairos compare to previous Methodist experiences?
5. How does the Kairos Movement run in a comparison to other Circuits? What was intentional from the start, what has worked out along the way?
6. Is there anything that gives you a sense of Methodist identity in the Kairos Movement? Are there distinctives for leaders and team opposed to members?
7. How would you describe the Kairos Movement's relationship with other local Circuits/the District?
8. Why did you choose the title Movement rather than Circuit, what impact has it had? With whom and in what ways?
9. How do you decide what should or shouldn't be part of the Kairos Movement?
10. Is there anything else you want to tell me about the Kairos Movement?

Appendix 4 – Interviews¹⁶⁶

Interview One (With I1)

JH - How long have you been involved in the Kairos circuit and at what point in its formation did you become involved?

I1 - So I've been involved from the very beginning, from before it was formed. I can't actually remember how long ago that is. It was during COVID, we were having the conversations and working out what we were going to do. So yeah.

JH - What did that process go like from your perspective?

I1 - I found it really exciting. Yeah, just I've struggled with, well, just a lot with church the way it is and that recognition that spiritually people are in a different place and been exploring.

Where I live in Hull, we have a lot of, not a lot, but you know, creative spiritual people that we have lots of conversations with and stuff and it's just that awareness of doing stuff differently. And so when the conversations started, it was definitely scratching where I was itching.

JH - Brilliant.

So as you've kind of gone through this work, maybe a bit of the whole process from the beginning, but certainly more recently as well, what have been some of the joys and blessings that you've received in this work?

I1 - It's often about the conversations, just that coming away from a conversation feeling like you've just really met with somebody and that sense of there being a flow and you're in the flow and hearing about similar things happening in other places in the country that are kind of, completely separate and unconnected but that real joy of thinking we're in some sort of flow here something bigger than us is happening because we're all having similar ideas and playing with similar things.

That's a real joy, is having that opportunity, because I think those things are happening and they're available for anybody, but actually, particularly, I guess it's the circles you end up moving in. Once you're in this position, you get to hear about them, which you might not otherwise, and get to meet people. So it's some of that.

JH - Is there anything that you think you've particularly received as part of the slightly different way of working in Kairos rather than just being part of a normal church that connects with others?

I1 - It's hard to think of something concrete. It's just kind of putting into action that sense of, you know, when people say you should do what brings your heart joy and that sense of

¹⁶⁶ Some wording changed to protect anonymity

being able to do that and I'm feeling like we're part of a collective doing it, it's not like I'm trying to push a boulder up a hill myself. Yeah.

JH - Brilliant.

So on the Converse side, what have been some of the challenges and difficulties that you've experienced as part of your work with Kairos and where have they come from? Have they come locally or further afield?

I1 - Yeah, it's not. Will this all be anonymized?

JH - Yes, everything will be anonymized.

I1 - OK. So because we're over the spread over the whole district, working in my locality can be quite difficult because I think people might just not quite get Kairos or feel a bit threatened by it, and so that has been the biggest challenge is, to put it really negatively, territory, ground is the biggest thing, and I mean I've just had a morning spent in this place really of just trying to work it out and how important it is that Kairos gets its name on stuff and how important it is that it just happens and it doesn't matter whether people think it's a Kairos thing or not. Yeah, they're the biggest challenges. I think that the sort of sense of something bigger is happening and because Kairos exists, we can help it happen, but it might not get recognised as a Kairos thing and that's more about my ego than anything, I think.

JH - Yeah, I mean, that's always a difficult line to walk, isn't it, of which badge goes on which thing and where the credit is given because when something goes well.

But yeah, if it helps, although, as I say, everything will be anonymized, everybody that I've spoken to has said that so it wouldn't be traced back to you anyway. So yeah, don't stress about that.

So how does being part of Kairos compare to previous Methodist experiences?

Now, you might want to say that something about your Methodist experiences to compare them to, but I don't know.

I1 - It's hard, isn't it because some of it is a different experience because of the role I've got within it, I think. I think we tend to operate in a more spiritually progressive space, so that makes it different as well.

And it just it feels like there's a willingness to have conversations about things and to question why we're doing them, and to revisit and reflect. It feels a lot more sort of willingness to do that. And then to admit when things aren't working or recognise things have been good, but let's do something different.

JH - So what kind of, how much Methodist particularly experience have you had pre-Kairos?

I1 - So, I became part of the Methodist Church, so I was part of the Anglican Church, and I became part of the Methodist Church about 20 years ago. Then I trained as a deacon

and I didn't go forward for ordination because I couldn't go into direct stationing. And so I became a lay worker locally. So I've had, I have had some experience, but I'm not a lifelong Methodist like some people. And I do struggle to get my head around it still, if I'm honest.

Just a part of it is I'm actually not that interested in the structure and I'm quite happy for those that are to do that and to tell me what I'm not, I am and not allowed to do and how I have to word things. I just would rather just get on with where I sense the life is. And I find the Methodist Church, my experience of it has generally been there are people that I can work with and that I have a similar vision to.

JH - Brilliant, thank you.

So how does the Kairos movement, given that you've just said you're not that interested in structure, how does the Kairos movement run in comparison to other circuits? And what was intentional from the start, but what has been worked out along the way as well?

II - Well, again, so a lot of it I've gone with the structural stuff that others have organised because they know what has to happen. I've just asked questions a lot. Do we have to do that? Why do we have to do that?

So I mean, from where I stand, I think we do run like other circuits.

You know, I feel like we have people with the named roles and we do, you know, it's the things like having two meetings a year, the AGM and the ACM, I think most charities have to do that. I don't know that that's a uniquely Methodist thing.

You know, so for me, the structural bit, I think, is about being a charity and having to adhere to charity law, which, yeah, of course we do.

The things that make it quirkily Methodist, and I'm not sure I do get so much having to have a set. Yeah, these roles filled or whatever doesn't necessarily work. You know, we don't have the need for that because we haven't got a building because we operate in a different way, but we sort of try and adhere to it somehow.

JH - Is that is that kind of something that was there right from the beginning or is that something that you've experienced as you've journeyed along?

II - No, I think it tried to be put in at the beginning, but there are things we've realised, like things like this circuit stewards we were talking about the other night, I think. I was just like, well, we've kind of evolved into having a core team and we're like, well, effectively they're doing that role, so let's just let them take on that role and things like that. Yeah, just of all finding out what we need as we go along. And as people are drawn to join in and want to take those positions rather than desperately looking for somebody because we've got this position.

JH - I know that feeling.

And so outside of kind of the structural side of it, is there anything for you that gives Kairos a sense of Methodist identity? And how does that, are there distinctives between that

from yourself as part of the leadership team as opposed to the ordinary members that are less engaged?

II - We really value the Methodist way of life and so hang that sort of in the background of us checking in and using just that balance of sort of belonging, social action, use of scripture, actually taking it seriously and having proper conversations about it. Yeah, and that sort of self-work, you know, the work that we need to do on ourselves, I think, I don't know if that's uniquely Methodist, but there's some helpful Methodist sort of history of it and drawing on that. Yeah, I think that there's probably the social action and the quadrilateral, is it the quadrilateral, the history, experience, scripture?

JH - Yeah.

II - We talked about it feeds into sort of monitoring a little bit what we, the content, I guess.

JH - How do you think that comes across to people who aren't seeing the behind the scenes stuff in the same way? Do you think that's something they associate with?

II - It's not in your face. We do say this is under the Methodist umbrella. But I guess people could be involved and not realise it. Yeah, there's just a little bit of not wanting people to feel there's an evangelical agenda, which I think, yeah, maybe why it's not put first and foremost of just, I think people might assume what the Methodist Church is like. Yeah, that's the only reason that we don't.

JH - Brilliant, thank you.

So thinking, you've obviously talked about some of the challenges already, but beyond those, how would you describe the Kairos movement's relationship with other local circuits, or if it's more helpful with the district as a whole?

So I think in the district there is, there has been a space. There is a space for Kairos adding to the, to the gift of what's available. And I think it's very, very much person to person rather than the circuit as a whole, I think there are people in most circuits that we connect with in some way. I don't think there's like a circuit policy of how we relate to a circuit, which actually might be a helpful thing. Because we are a circuit, but we overlap all the circuits so it is a little bit complicated.

So yeah, I would say, I would say the relationship at worst is tolerant and at best is quite fruitful. Yeah.

JH - I mean, if tolerance is the worst, then that's not too bad.

II - No, that's true.

JH - Brilliant.

So thinking about the name of it in itself, Kairos Movement, why did you choose the title movement rather than circuit and do you think that's had an impact at all?

I1 - Well, we chose it because we wanted to have momentum and not be like, decide who we were and just carry on doing that forever. Just this sense of, for me, there is a sense of we're in transition from time-honoured church to what will be in the future and a sense really of moving from one to another and exploring and finding out the way and pilgrimaging together with whoever wants to join us. This is how it has been and it's been great and we wouldn't be where we are without it, but we don't want to stay here and so that was the idea of movement. And that constant reminder that actually we can't call ourselves a movement if we're just staying static.

JH - Do you think that intention has worked?

I1 - Yeah, I think so. I mean, we're at another, I think we've probably, rather than it being a smooth movement, it's a little bit jerky. We're at another, another point where we're reflecting and are aware of the energy of, energy for change. And then again, like I said before, there's that's you get to a point where you just realize lots of things are coming together, people are thinking similar things and you're just like, okay, there's a flow here. Let's just move with that.

So it's kind of waiting for that to happen rather than just saying, oh, we can't settle. It's like you know, there is a sense that something's moving and we want to move with it.

JH - Great, thank you.

And so as part of the leadership team, how do you decide what should or shouldn't be part of the Kairos movement?

I1 - Conversation is the main way we do that, and yeah, reflecting on, I guess, using those traditional things of scripture and reason and experience and tradition to help us think it through. But yeah, a sense of spirit being in consensus.

So yeah, I want to say that we include lots of different voices, but I'm really aware that we are still fairly monocultural. But I think if there is a consensus in different, you know, from different people, then that is a sense that's the right thing.

JH - Excellent.

So a nice and a simple one really to finish. It wasn't on the official list. So it's kind of just an opportunity.

So is there anything that you really want to say about what Kairos is, about how it works, about what the future might hold that doesn't come up in any of those other questions, but you think if you hadn't had the opportunity to say, there'd be something of its identity missing?

I1 - Just think it is very much, well, the hope is that it is something that organically grows out of who is involved and I guess, well, that, yeah, maybe that fits into some of your other questions of where it might be different. We're not, it's not in any sense a cookie cutter or this is what it's going to look like or this is that organic. Who's involved? What passions,

what questions are they bringing? And how do we shape who and what we are for those that are involved really?

JH - Brilliant. So kind of like a really personal outworking of what church looked like.

II - Yeah, which is a challenge when you dispersed and cover quite a big geography because you realise how much you want to do stuff together. It takes a lot more planning and effort, perhaps, particularly when you've got young families across the place with their different timetables and yeah

JH - Brilliant.

So that's kind of all the official questions that I have. So that's great. Thank you.

Interview Two (With I2)

JH - How long have you been involved in Kairos and at what point in its formation did you become involved?

I2 - It was very early on. I would say the beginning, but I wasn't involved in the very initial conversations about the idea, the concept of Kairos forming. But certainly once an idea had taken shape, I was aware of the conversations going on because of my role in the district about that when it was, I think it was like circuit 17, the placeholder name was for a while, which was floating about the idea of this circuit, non-geographical circuit in the district. And then, as it began to kind of form into a kind of an idea, a kind of, I can't remember exactly whether it's where I was approached, or I think just naturally it seemed to fit with just all sorts of things, and I was involved in conversations from the get go, and was very happy to be part of the formation of it.

Initially, I'm trying to remember exactly what time it was. You probably know some of this from other people better than I do, because I can't remember. But I think because of just family life and stuff, we were kind of on the periphery for a little while. So we're kind of involved but not actively kind of helping with the leadership or shaping it or but we're kind of part of what was beginning to emerge.

I certainly remember we did a video for Synod and as we prepared to kind of launch formally as a circuit then the following year and we were involved in like being part of the video we made for that and we went to a lot of the launch events when we properly became a church/circuit and yeah I've been part I've been part of it ever since really in.

I mean it's it we'll get into it but like it's hard to define sometimes what it means to be in Kairos but me and my wife have been members of the church/circuit since the beginning to enable it to have the requirements for it to exist but outside of that we do engage with it in various ways.

JH - Brilliant.

So did you have previous Methodist involvement in outside of the districts? Were you local church people or what was finding way into?

I2 - Neither of us, me personally, I didn't grow up in Methodism. My dad was a Baptist minister, but we discovered Methodism at university where we were very involved with the Methsoc there and we had a great experience with that and stuck with it.

When I left, I went up to Cumbria for a little bit where my parents had a house and kind of was like a little rural Methodist chapel. So I kind of tried that, but was kind of not really finding a good fit, understandably, with like 7 little old farmers and probably would have drifted away at that point but then the role that was the kind of starting point of what I do now kind of came about as an internship. And I applied to that and we moved across to Yorkshire.

And since then, we've kind of engaged with the local Methodist church on and off. We're, yeah, we're, I would say we're Methodists, but like, we're not always regular churchgoers just because of family life and things.

JH - Yeah, I sympathise with that very much.

So starting off with a more positive one, because I think the second one is a lot easier a lot of the time. But what have been some of the joys and blessings that you've received in your work as part of Kairos?

I2 - I think it's been one of the few kind of church spaces I've encountered, maybe other than our little group at university, where I've kind of felt comfortable enough to share deeply and be able to kind of voice questions and talk about like theology and stuff in a way that I've not always felt would be welcome in other churches, just, asking the difficult questions really and having other people that are there in a similar place or just open to having those discussions about all sorts of things within faith and that's been really freeing and rewarding and something that's been very different. And probably I hadn't really noticed that it was something I was missing until we were part of it and found that to be a real, real joy.

I think it's obviously from kind of some of the stuff I do, it's been a really helpful space to partner with and look after some of the work that I'm doing with NPNPs and pioneering. A lot of that I don't think would be able to exist if it was based in another, you know, local church or circuit. It's good to have a group of people who kind of get it, and are able to provide support. And I think particularly kind of the values align with where we're at. So I'm able to have projects that connect with people outside the church. And I feel comfortable in saying we are connected with the Kairos movement, whereas I'm not sure how that would work if it was a kind of a local church or circuit that I'm not sure I would really want to point new people towards.

Yeah. What else?

I think it's been it's been really good to connect with some other families who are kind of have a progressive faith. It's, you know, having moved to rural Yorkshire, we've kind of been a bit isolated from other younger people and especially like with a family, it's not really that possible or feasible to travel to a city to find a kind of inclusive, progressive church, so it's been good to kind of connect with other younger people.

I mean, we're still kind of lacking on that front in Kairos, as with a lot of churches, but it's slowly growing and it's been really nice to be able to make, you know, establish some of those relationships, even though we're all spread out everywhere and don't often get to see each other. It's just kind of nice to know you're not alone.

Yeah, that's probably the main ones, I think.

JH - Great.

So on the flip side then, what have been some of the challenges and difficulties that you've experienced?

I2 - I think we've often discussed this idea of it being an online church, which was never really the intention it's just kind of come about almost because of the way that we are geographically spread. And for me, I'm very at home online and building relationships and connections online, but I think we don't quite have, you know, where everyone else is in life. I think some, a lot of our other Kairos people quite value still the physical spaces as well. So I think it has been a challenge to get to know people and so in some ways the kind of meeting primarily online as we have been doing has been a drawback and in some ways it means I'm connected to people I wouldn't have been otherwise. So there's always, you know, flip sides to it.

I don't know. I don't think there's any real negatives. There's lots of challenges with how it works and how we grow. The main challenge is often just how do we structure ourselves or how do we explain what this thing is? How do we invite people to the space?

I mean, I suppose very similar challenges to what a lot of other churches have. And what does it mean for some of our groups to be partnered with Kairos? But I don't think they're negatives as such it's just kind of the challenge of it being this being quite a new thing and it being quite early days still.

I suppose for me and some of the other leaders, I don't know, maybe a bit of kind of frustration that it sometimes does feel like slow progress just because of the way, yeah, I think people, the people we have that find value in Kairos nearly always are embedded in other places as well, which is part of the intention but it does mean that people are often split between different church communities and utilise Kairos to supplement what they're not finding elsewhere. That often means though that Kairos isn't their primary place to look to build community or faith connections and so like turnout to events and things can be very low because it's quite a high threshold to commit to something when it's not your primary place of belonging.

JH - What about in your district role? How much do you do outside of Kairos? And have you noticed any kind of difference in the way you're engaged with, with the wider district when you're doing it as a district person as opposed to a Kairos person? I mean, I don't know how your role works out that might not exist.

I2 - Yeah, that's interesting.

It's I suppose it's quite fluid. There's not a clear distinction, really. I'm a district employee, but most of my work kind of comes under the umbrella of Kairos. It didn't used to, and it slowly shifted that way because Kairos is becoming more of an umbrella body that can look after a lot of the new things and is able to support me. So, I think for a lot of the connections and the way I relate to other people and organisations in the district, it doesn't really make much of a difference. Like I said, I don't think a lot of people really understand what Kairos is. So it doesn't, yeah, like kind of register whether I'm doing something for the district or not, or if it's for Kairos or the district are very supportive that, even though I'm employed by the district, my role there's not a kind of they're not looking for my work to be provide value why are the district paying me to do all this work in Kairos? I don't think it's really seen like that because, the pioneering and New Places for

New People is such a priority for the district that it's just kind of a fluid sense of this is what's happening and it benefits everyone.

Yeah. Does that answer?

JH - Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

This one might relate a little bit to that, and you kind of covered a little bit about it, talking about Cumbria and stuff as well, but how does being part of Kairos compare to previous Methodist experiences?

I2 - There's certainly, as I was saying, that sense of openness and being able to have honest discussions and voice doubts and scepticism and things that I've not always found easy to do elsewhere, even if maybe we'd say it would be good to do that elsewhere. I've not always found it comfortable to do so. So it's nice to have a space that is very supportive of me asking awkward questions.

And what's different? I suppose just everything's different, really. It's hard to pin down exactly what just the whole notion of what we're doing in some ways on paper, I suppose it looks very similar. In practice, I think is where a lot of our values kick in that mean it feels a lot more accessible. For example, you know, going to my experiences in local church have always felt like there's a drive towards membership and as young people, when we turn up, there's always a real drive to get us involved in rotas and doing all sorts of things and that type of stuff and it just, it kind of happens in reverse in Kairos, where there's no expectation of anything. You can't really become a member of Kairos. You're just involved in whatever capacity and, everyone is kind of a leader and a shaper to some extent of what's going on and so there's not a constant drive to kind of be like, will you do this or be on this rota or whatever. So, I think it feels like a lot less pressure.

And then I suppose for us particularly, it's just, again, the accessibility for us in this moment in life, that church on a Sunday is just not very easy to get to or go to all the time. So having something that is online is really helpful online midweek. I mean, it's still challenging and awkward to find time to do it so it doesn't completely solve the issue. But yeah, I think, you know, other churches are, of course, doing things in the digital space, but I think just having, again, the group of people who are slightly more diverse and are on the same page and slightly younger in age means that things like the WhatsApp group works really well. We've experimented with doing kind of online games evenings, and we experimented with using Gather Town so that we could be little avatars and run about and interact with each other in a different sort of way and just all these things that have never been possible with other groups of Methodists because they're just not open to trying new stuff online or able to do that. So, we've not done a ton of it, but it's been really fun to have a community that's open to doing stuff like that and that's quite different to our previous experience.

I suppose that one of the downsides is we had, I think, our best experience at university because we were all in the same stage of life, in the same place, and able just to kind of do life together as Christians in community. Whereas that is a lot more of a challenge with

this kind of disparate group of people spread all over and I've got to know people, but it's not like we really kind of are able to do a lot of stuff together but then we don't with our local church either so for us, it's kind of, that's an issue all round but I think there is maybe an extra barrier to work around in some ways.

Yeah, I think it's kind of just, it's more the people, I think, rather than, I mean, the structure helps and the kind of everything helps, but to some extent, what's what I really value about Kairos, what is significantly different from past experiences of church is really just the relationships with the people involved and it being a space that has attracted those people and maybe that is a direct result of the way that Kairos has been formed and set up. But I suppose ideally that what we the kind of the structure of Kairos when it's working well is maybe not as noticeable as the kind of relationships. I don't know.

JH - Brilliant. Thank you.

So just to now that you've said you don't really care about the structure and to dive into questions about the structure.

How does the Kairos, I mean, this will depend as well how heavily you've been involved in other circuits, but maybe your district role will help you inform some of that. How does the Kairos movement run in comparison to other circuits and what was intentional from the start? What's been worked out as you've journeyed along?

I2 - It's hard to kind of navigate. Like I said, I think to some extent on paper it looks quite similar and that's partly because we have intentionally set things up so that it will work within Methodist structures so that we can officially be a church/circuit. And so there are things like the annual circuit meeting and annual church meeting and AGM and things where, we have trustees and members and all that sort of stuff still exists definitely on paper and so therefore, to some extent, it kind of works in a similar way.

If you maybe view like our groups as a bunch of online churches, and Kairos as a circuit that looks after them. I suppose in some ways it's not dissimilar, but I think in practice it does work in quite a different way, in the sense that it's been set up so that almost purposefully to try and distance ourselves from the institution to some extent, to allow it to be a space of freedom where people can congregate and play with new ideas as a sort of loose playground without feeling some of the restrictions of red tape and governance and burden that I suppose are often quite prevalent in circuits and I suppose that is 1 particular distinction that, you know, when we do have like our circuit meeting or whatever you want to call it in Kairos. We spend the time discussing what we're up to, what activities are going on, how things are developing, how we're going to grow and change. We're not stuck talking about kind of buildings or kind of those very practical elements. Some of which we do have and are complicated and, like the safeguarding and all the stuff around that that we, obviously still exists and is taken care of and finance and stuff. But it's certainly been set up in a way that helps try and minimize a lot of that burden and that not being the focus of what we're doing. So I think that's been helpful to follow that kind of route.

Again, I'm not heavily involved in like some of those governance type things either in Kairos or elsewhere so it's hard to know how they kind of comparatively whether they're similar or different. But from being someone who attends Kairos as a member and a trustee, it's kind of, we're constantly talking about the kind of the missional and community and the way we can be exploring new things, which I don't often find is kind of a focal point of my experience of kind of the way circuits are often set up, as much as we'd like them to be, I suppose, in an ideal world. And I think a lot of that was definitely intentional to try and achieve something that was able to remain within Methodism, but give enough space and freedom for people to feel comfortable to kind of get on with things, particularly because it was a movement born out of like supporting pioneers and it's kind of grown a bit beyond that. But, yeah, I think that was definitely the intention.

I don't know really how much what the shape looks like now, how much that differs from what the intention was. I mean, it's certainly something that we continue to discuss and adapt as we go along. We're not we're not worried about saying, oh, well, we decided it was going to take this shape, so it must stay in that shape. I think the whole ethos is really that we can be a structure that is nimble and that's part of what we would love Kairos to be.

JH - Brilliant.

So I think the next one I found particularly interesting so far, given the sentence you just said a little while ago worded it really well, the intentional distance from the institution.

So is there anything that gives you a sense of Methodist identity in Kairos movement? And do you think it's different or distinctive from yourself and others as kind of the leadership of it and those who are just the normal members?

I2 - I think it's really fascinating.

Clearly at the moment we definitely do have a very Methodist flavour and shape, particularly because we do have a significant number of Methodist people or ex-Methodist people involved in both the leadership and in being part of groups and leading groups and that's just kind of a natural part of how it's kind of been born out of the district.

It's hard to say really. I mean, as we've been putting together values and what we want Kairos to be known for, we've debated a lot about how we word things and I suppose there's a tension and some of us sit closer to the institution and some of us pull away more than others and we certainly have quite a diversity of people in where they are in their journey of faith and in how they relate to the Methodist Church.

So, questions about like, do we describe ourselves as a Christian organization? Or what I would like to do as someone trying to connect with people outside churches is be a little more vague, if you like, as being a faith community. Do we talk about Jesus? Do we talk about Christian? Do we talk about religion?

In most of our stuff so far, I think we do kind of reference that we come from a Christian tradition, and we don't obviously hide that we are connected to the Methodist Church.

But I don't think we generally go about saying we are a Methodist organisation. And certainly we've attracted people from all sorts of denominations and none who have come and been part of Kairos from here and from around the country and around the world. So, it's tricky to know exactly what that means.

I suppose there's those words we use, but then actually is it about more about, you know, what we're doing, does it have a sense of Methodism? And I think particularly because our two, you know, our leadership are rooted particularly in Methodism, they do shape a lot of what we're doing, for example, around the Methodist way of life and around other things that enable it to connect into some of the wider Methodist language and themes and values. We certainly do embody, I think, a lot of what Methodism is about in the sense of the way that we kind of have a particular focus on groups that are doing social justice type things and also groups that are kind of small discussion groups, reminiscent of classes and what not. So I definitely think there's a shape of Methodism there that is probably particularly been created because of where our roots are and our leadership has come from. I'm not sure how much people would recognize it. I think if you're just someone who turns up to one of the many activities that we run, I don't know whether it would be noticeable that it's connected to Methodism or whether that matters particularly.

For most people, I think they won't even know that it's connected to the Kairos Movement because of the way that it's kind of a network of partnerships and activities, each their own right, a little community with a name and a brand and a thing. Some of the stuff I run, like the podcast, you know, we're open about being Christian, about being connected to Kairos, but I doubt a lot of them have a sense of whether that has a Methodist shape to it or not. So yeah, it's probably there quite subtly. And it's done more maybe with the way that we approach faith rather than through structures and through typical, I don't know, however else, you know, it's certainly not in our branding or in our other ways that churches would typically connect in with the wider church.

JH - So the next one kind of relates back to some of the other bits we've said as well. and again, it might depend how much you can go into depth in it. But how would you describe Kairos Movement's relationship with other local circuits, particularly those maybe where people overlap and the wider district in general, where you said already people just don't get it. But is there anything else that you'd want to draw out of that?

I2 - I mean, there's certainly projects that have partnerships and things that overlap into circuits, normally those exist in places where one of our leaders is particularly kind of steering that and able to hold together something that has a connection to a local church and a foot in Kairos as well. I don't, I can't think of anything particularly where there's something that doesn't fit that really.

You know, I think there's a lot of people that dip their toe into Kairos, but also are involved in their local circuit, and yeah, it kind of exists in that way, kind of spread across the district but I don't, there's not really much interaction I don't think. I think increasingly that conversation might begin to develop as you know New Places for New People might

begin to spring up in a circuit and there's a conversation about does this want to have its support structure within the circuit or within Kairos and where's the best place for it and maybe that's when there's more conversation about that. I think in those instances, because that's something that's born out of a local church, there's almost a bit of relating them between Kairos and a church and I think that's maybe a little more tricky, whereas a lot of what happens at the moment is about individual people. So, you know, I'm part of Kairos, but I also do stuff in our local circuit and so it's not a relationship between a church and Kairos. It's just a relationship that I have between a local church and Kairos and so I just have a foot in both camps.

Yeah and I think again, it just comes back to that idea. I'm not sure that people understand what it is. So it just on the whole probably ignore its existence or don't know it exists. I don't know.

It'd be fascinating to me to know what some of our superintendents feel about this. I mean, I suppose it's as a district, we've kind of taken these steps quite slowly and kind of tried to bring people along on this journey of having district-wide non-geographical circuits and hopefully explaining well the idea that this isn't treading on people's toes, but actually allowing more things to take shape that aren't able to or aren't being able to be facilitated by a local circuit in that way.

JH - Brilliant.

So thinking about the kind of the name that it's got, why did, why was the title Kairos Movement chosen rather than Kairos Circuit? And what impact do you think that has had and with whom?

I2 - The first bit I cannot remember, someone else will have to tell you why it was chosen because I can't, I've no idea. Maybe I was involved in the conversations, but I can't remember now.

I think it's quite, it is important because, I mean, I suppose because I'm coming at this as someone who's a kind of comms person and a digital person, you know, it is, it's a structure that does relate to people. So because it's a combined church and circuit, it is the body that is kind of directly interfacing with, kind of, our groups and people. So rather than it being like a traditional circuit, maybe one step removed. So a church might have a name and so to call it a circuit, I think wouldn't make sense to me because no one would know what a circuit is. So I suppose for me it would be a case of is it the Kairos Church or is it the Kairos Movement? Rather than circuit, I suppose, in that sense that it is a kind of faith community as well as a structure body that looks after multiple groups.

And the movement thing, I think it really helps cement some of those values that were about trying to communicate that we are able to be nimble and flexible and hear the voices of people. We've always said from the beginning that come and be part of Kairos and you can help shape what it looks like. You can come and help start our next group and find enough other people that are passionate about the thing, you're passionate about it and let's get it off the ground and get things going.

I think part of that is why for me it's a movement, a collective of people, because, stuff isn't set in stone and that we're keen to do new things, that there's a sense of being willing to adapt and start things and stop things and find people that are able to make things happen and kind of adapt to whatever the need is in a particular time or place or anything.

And again, I think, as I've already said, that that sense of intentionally maybe trying to have a slight separation from the perception of the institution. So just having a different word enables it, I think, to be a more appealing place to people that maybe have had bad experiences of church in the past. I think that would be my take on it. I don't know whether that was always the intention, but that's kind of why I like the name.

JH - Brilliant, thank you.

So as part of the leadership, how do you decide what should or shouldn't be part of Kairos movement?

I2 – Our leader particularly has kind of oversight of that within his role and I suppose increasingly I've become involved in shaping things and being part of the core team. I don't think there's been anything that's been brought whilst I've kind of been in a leadership position where we've discussed should this or should this not be part of Kairos? It kind of happens a little bit more organically than that where it's conversations kind of happen before that point where we can work out whether what would be the best fit for something.

Certainly for my work, I have a host of little mini projects and there's always the question of where should this go? In the most part, they normally always end up in Kairos through the nature of it being pioneer work. And I suppose just the nature of not having another community or church that are particularly raring to utilize me in an outreach capacity. I've always said I'm in no way against doing some pioneering in other places that isn't Kairos. We would just need to find a good fit of somewhere that could, that would want to utilize some digital outreach in a particular way.

But in the most cases, because I'm doing a lot of stuff personally rather than on behalf of a church, the digital NPNPs need to sit somewhere. And so I found, you know, a lot of my colleagues who are doing digital NPNP work have hit significant challenges and push back and struggle with this because it's really hard to know where to situate some of them because they're non-geographical, because they're born out of an individual passion rather than out of a church. And therefore, you know, it's difficult to know who has ownership of it, which causes some tricky conversations, particularly when it comes to money, about how do you access some of the funding in the Methodist Church and whose time is it that you're doing things on behalf of? And I've kind of, very fortunately, kind of circumvented a lot of those issues through having the Kairos Movement there as a place that is able to hold lightly a lot of the stuff that I'm playing with and give it a place to rest. Otherwise, it would have to all be district really, and most other Digital NPNPs, I think, are finding that the district is the only place really to park it unless they're wanting to completely create their own structure thing.

That comes with a lot of challenges about, you know, it again sort of comes back to the values. And is this speaking on behalf of the district? Do we have to sign off on every little thing? Do we have to agree it? And the accountability about kind of micromanaging it and reporting back, what does success look like? Again, all of that, I don't have an uphill battle with because I'm within a community that gets it, you know, because Kairos is a pioneering community and it's come from its roots, a group of pioneers and so it's a really free place to be able to park a lot of that. So in that sense, a lot of that is part of the decision-making process about where would stuff naturally fit and some of the digital stuff is a good example and quite obviously works really well in Kairos.

Some of the physical stuff in churches is a little more complex about should it be in Kairos, should it not? Is it a partnership? Who's it a partnership with? But yes, it's just things that we work out as we go along, I suppose.

JH - Brilliant, thank you.

So that is the end of the official questioning. One thing I've been asking as I've kind of got to this point, feel free to go with it or not, because you're not prepared for this one.

Is there anything else you want to say about Kairos that you think is really important to what it is that hasn't come up in any of the other questions or you feel hasn't been drawn out so far?

I2 - I mean, probably, but I can't think of anything. It's that typical thing of working out what it actually is and I think because that is held quite loosely, I think that in itself is what is of value in some ways, particularly for me in a work capacity.

Yeah, it's, I don't know, we're always coming up with new metaphors about how does our structure look? What, how do we describe what it is? What is the, the value of it?

I think a lot of it, like I've said in parts, is just the way that as individuals we're approaching faith and for it to be a space that actually says we don't have all the answers and that it's okay to give people permission to kind of do their own thing with it.

It's not necessarily, it's not an organization that needs to have everything in it. It doesn't need to be a full church. We don't really have something that's like typical worship within what we do, but that's not really an issue because we're not trying to offer everything. I think for me it's about equipping people to be able to go off and explore faith and spirituality in a way that works for them and that might be with something with Kairos, starting something in Kairos, or it might be something on the edge out there.

I sort of see it as a kind of interface, I suppose. It's a really good grey area that enables stuff to kind of flourish between the kind of the more rigid church structures and engaging with people. I suppose, I often feel that if Kairos didn't exist, then I wouldn't have much choice other than to just go out and do stuff, but not on behalf of the church, just, you know, do stuff in a personal capacity and I don't feel like a lot of what I could do would fit within what is currently the church structures. Whereas Kairos gives me a place where I can still have a link back and still have support and still have a kind of tethered in some

way to our roots, but be able to really push out on the edge into new things. But a lot of that comes from my perspective as a pioneer, and it'll be quite different for others who aren't kind of in that space.

But I suppose it's outside of pioneering, it's almost very similar, but with faith in the sense that I could view the same kind of dilemma and the same kind of positives and negatives around, kind of, a church faith that, again, feels quite rigid, that we have doctrines and things that you have to agree with to kind of be part of the church and then kind of the outside where anything goes. And then this is a kind of a grey space in the middle where we can kind of still have links back and still kind of loosely hold on to some of our heritage, but also be able to not always agree with it all and question it and be free to play around with what does faith look like. Yeah.

JH - Brilliant. Thank you very much. Yeah, so that is your interview done.

Interview Three (With I3)

JH - So the first one, kind of how long have you been involved in the Kairos circuit? At what point in its formation did you become involved?

I3 - Well, I was there from the I was there from conception, if you like. So, yeah, the emerging ideas for that ended up being Kairos. So I've been kind of a partner or an encourager along that whole journey. And in terms of that journey, I take it back in my mind to when we were just within the district, we were trying to find ways in which we could encourage pioneers, well, find pioneers, enable them to be, enable them to recognise that they were as such, that there was some pioneering heart within them, how we join them together. So at that point, we started out with a thing that we called the potting shed, which our leaders started to co-host, which was just trying to gather these folks together, encourage them to discern a bit of what God might be calling them to and to take some next steps and then out of that started to set fairly organically grow the conversations around. So what if there are going to be things emerging in a pioneering way, where are they going to fit? And the dilemma, which inside out I'm sure, that some of our inherited circuits aren't the most easy places, ecosystems, for the new to actually be allowed to develop and risk and all the rest of it.

So out of that, just I think we just had loads of conversation and wondering and so that led us to the thought that actually maybe creating a different container, which nevertheless had Methodist ecclesiological credentials, if I can put it that way, but created a place where these things could be either permanently or temporarily might be something that was worth playing with. So it was out of that we then thought about creating the circuit as a single church circuit. And we actually, I think we actually used the vehicle of a church in the York Circuit that was closing and we kind of spun it out of the York Circuit and then made it and into its own circuit, if you like. So I mean, none of that was very complicated in a sense but it just gave us the vehicle to more easily do it because the church doesn't naturally know how to start a new circuit from nowhere. So we developed from there, really. Yeah.

JH - Brilliant. Thank you.

So, what have been some of the joys and blessings that you've received in working alongside them?

I3 - OK, so my vantage point, I guess, is more distant now, hopefully not too distant, but I'm not actually involved in much within the circuit. I see a lot of the stuff that, the comms that happens within the circuit and I see some of the stories that emerge, but I'm not actually involved in the detail of it anymore.

What have been some of the joys and the blessings?

I'm just thankful for it being a space that is available to accommodate some of the things that I think would continue not to know where to live if it didn't exist.

So I, wonder, is it going to, will we have Kairos in 10 years time? Don't know. I'm not in and of itself that bothered about that. But I know for this season, at least in the last few years, I think it's enabled it's enabled some people to stay somehow within the church, however we want to talk about that. It's enabled some people to feel that they still belong when their experience of local church has perhaps made them feel quite lonely. So it's given them another place to belong and sometimes they've felt more belonging within the Kairos community that they're part of, then the local church but nonetheless, it's enabled them to stay within the local church as well. So that's a bit of a tick.

I think it's provided, as I sometimes say, a safety net and a canopy within which we've been able to hold some other expressions of ministry that just wouldn't know where to fit otherwise. So the Methodist Youth Young Adults Fellowship is kind of just a thing that happens and I just don't think it would have known where to put itself and where to feel safe from a safeguarding point of view and to have some oversight and accountability but within Kairos, it was able to do that.

I think it's, I think I'm, I feel, I feel the joy and the blessing of some of the quite informal creative partnerships that have been enabled to develop. So some stuff in Hull alongside some of the eco farm, urban gardening network kind of stuff. I think it's just enabled there to be a liberty about some of that gathering.

And I think, Liane, for my money, is quite a rare individual in terms of how she looks at the world and is able to capture something about what the Spirit is doing but very often she sees that at the edge of the established church and the institutional church. And I think we need loads more of that rather than less. And I think Kairos has enabled her to be able to live in that world and still be credentialed within the church in a way that I think is quite valuable.

So I think it's a lot of really quite soft stuff but I think that's where often the really interesting stuff is happening. So it sometimes means that the metrics are hard to measure in a way that the institution knows what to do with yet. But I'm quite comfortable with that because I think it's early days.

JH - Brilliant, thank you.

So I intentionally asked the joys and blessings question first because the next one I think is a lot easier a lot of the time. What have been some of the challenges and difficulties that you've identified or experienced?

I3 - So given that we've, what we did essentially was establish a district-wide circuit in Kairos and the boundaries, to the extent that there are boundaries, are most neatly drawn probably around the district, although we have people from beyond the district who find some sense of belonging within Kairos because a lot of it's online, etc But given that we've done that, I think we realised from an early point, before we'd ever done it, that there was likely that there would be tension points where what Kairos was doing might inevitably either overlap or it would compete with or there could be some jousting for who's owning some piece of work with established circuits, inherited circuits, local

churches. And on occasion, we have had examples of that, I think notably in at least one of the contexts in Hull, where one of the leaders does some work. And you know, it's been a bit of an open question about when that work happens in a particular location. Is that Kairos work or is it the Hull Centre and West Circuit's work? Whose work is it? And yeah. And why does that matter?

Well, it can matter when there are issues around who's in charge of the safeguarding and the governance of it so there have just been a few clicking points there where it's just felt a little bit 'oooo' but we kind of knew that would happen in a sense, but I think we haven't had loads of that and I thought we might have more of that than we have, but I think that is one of the challenges.

Difficulties, I think, at various points in Kairos' life, we've wished though it was easier to get everybody together and to have a Kairos gathering. Let's just get, let's see who we are, let's be together. You know, could be hybrid, but let's just have a sense. And actually, it's proven really hard to get a real energy around everybody wanting to be together. And I wonder about that sometimes. And we talk loads about whether actually for people who are just finding an expression of Kairos' mission valuable because in their life it makes sense in that small connecting group that they're part of. It doesn't matter what Kairos is and they don't need to have that sense of belonging to a whole, they don't feel a sense of needing to be part of something bigger. But I think it's a really interesting, just a slight tussle about what does it mean to belong to Kairos and should it include, at some point or other, being part of a collective sense of here we all are together and I think that's interesting.

I think from a governance point of view, I think we just live in a, it's just about legal.

Don't quote me on that.

You know, it's so by our standing orders, we're in it, we're unable to have a single church circuit. It just about has enough members to be Methodist or ecclesiological legal formally. But, you know, we're not, making a big thing about Methodist membership, the Methodist members who we've got have tended to be ones who were already Methodist members somewhere else and felt sufficiently that Kairos was a home, that they were willing to almost lend their membership, give their membership into Kairos because it helped us to get to the ecclesial number that we needed to get. And I think, you know, going forward, we'll need to continue to keep thinking about that and how we keep it legal in that way that helps us. I think it's helpful for us to have the legal structure within Methodism because I think it helps to credential it. But we may need to rethink that at some point.

JH - So I guess from your specific perspective as opposed to the other people that I'm talking to. Have there been any joys or blessings or challenges or difficulties that have come, I hate the phrase, but from above, so from kind of the more Connexional side of the church rather than just locally?

I3 - No, not really. So we didn't get, well, hold on, hold on, I think.

It was interesting that a fellow connexional leader, who I love dearly, who is on law and polity, I think we caused him some consternation because we didn't have a physical building and he and I have had debates where he's kind of just said, well, yeah, it's probably okay. But I think our standing orders aren't entirely helpful about how we, I think they confuse what we mean by church too easily. So very often they will read something about church and in his mind, that's also including building. And I wanted to resist that quite often and I just thought it was such a non-argument.

I've got nothing against him, I love him dearly, but a non-argument saying that you couldn't have a properly constituted church if you didn't have a building. I just thought, crikey, well, that just hampers so much of the future possibilities of the church, if that's where we're at.

And so there's a bit of a, I don't think we've quite resolved that. I think there is a tension because I think if they were to come on this call, he would still be feeling a bit uneasy that we don't have a building, a church building that is at the heart of our church life. That's in that classical understanding. I hope I'm not misrepresenting him, but I think that was certainly a conversation.

But that was the only, that was the only push and I did wonder when we were forming Kairos, I remember having a conversation with the conference office, the ASC at that time. I said, what do we need to do to get, you know, the district's agreed? What do we need to do to get Conference to agree that Kairos exists effectively as a new circuit out of effectively nothing?

And in the end, we just agreed that as long as it appeared on the face of stations, and conference said 'aye' at the end of it all that it was okay and until it happened, I kept expecting that someone was going to jump up and down and say, you haven't got the necessary permissions. But lo and behold, we managed to do it. And there it is. And it is a thing. So that was okay.

And I think, I'm aware that it's created quite a lot of conversation around the place. And, it's interesting that, you've alighted on it as an interesting thing to explore. I keep wanting to say nearly everywhere I go where anyone talks about it, it's still early days. You know, I still feel like it's early days because it is finding its feet, it is exploring all the time exploring what does life look like to belong to Kairos? And what I was saying about, does it need a gathering point and all of that? It still feels to me like a really, really fluid thing and I'm quite content with that. I think we could probably do better trying to share some of the stories of what's happening. And I think you're, I'd been fascinated to read your piece when you've done more work on it. But I haven't had many pushes back apart from that.

I think there's a sense of, from some, will it really last? And what will lasting look like? I think that's interesting.

JH - Brilliant. Thank you.

And so the next one I think as well, probably build on some of that. How does being part of or your understanding of Kairos compare to previous or other Methodist experiences?

I3 - I think in its essence what I observe about Kairos is that the focus and the orientating energy about it all is, feels to me located in helping people to really dig into what it is to be a Christian, to have a spiritual life and what impact that might have on their everyday life. I think when you dig into it, I think that that's what resonates at the heartbeat of Kairos and I rejoice in that because I think it contrasts quite, distinctly, sadly, from what so often tends to feel like the heartbeat of many other local churches. And I'm not trying to contrast too hard here and I don't want to have a downer on lock, stock and barrel inherited churches, but I just know that I don't think it, I don't think it very often, if I'm honest, I don't think it very often feels that that's such centre stage stuff in the life of inherited churches because the buildings dominate, because they focus around Sunday morning, tradition can quite often dominate. And yeah, I rejoice in that. I rejoice in that.

And I think that's probably what I think is the most consistent contrast to many other Methodist experiences that focus on and encouraging people to dig deep and wonder. And I think our leaders are fantastic about that, but that's what I see all the time.

Where's reality in this? You know, where's reality in your life, in your community, with God? Where's reality? And I think the lack of trappings of some of the other things that we usually have in church life, the lack of those trappings just enables that to be centre stage.

JH - Brilliant.

The next one you've kind of touched on in the answers, but I'll ask it anyway, just in case there's anything. How does the Kairos movement run in comparison to other circuits and what was intentional from the start and what's been worked out along the way?

I3 - Okay.

So what was intentional from start was that we would orientate around the standing orders about being a single church circuit and therefore we would have the church council/circuit meeting would effectively be one body and that we would streamline that as much as possible and make it something that could do its job well so that the governance was all in hand appropriately, but in such a way that it was almost as lighter structure as possible so that most people who came and encounter Kairos in whatever shape, way or form wouldn't need to feel encumbered by that or wouldn't need to feel dragged into all of that. So that's what we sought to do and that's what we have done. And we've been, we've really benefited from just a few people who've kind of got the heart of Kairos but some experience of what belonging to a circuit meeting looks like and they've lent in their skills and gifts to enable that to happen. We could do with a bit more probably, but it's enabled that to happen.

So the circuit meeting meets twice a year. It tries to be as open edged as possible so that people from the community come along it tends to be fairly vision/values orientated, but it does the necessary business.

But of course it doesn't have a preaching plan. It doesn't have a local preachers meeting.

I don't know if they were sat here, he might, he might just about be collapsing. I've tended to just think, who cares, that it doesn't. I suspect that if we read standing orders properly, it should tell us that we jolly well ought to, but because there isn't a gathering that's in any sense normalized a pattern of worship, I mean, that is a very distinct, that is a very probably unique thing, isn't it?

I suspect to have a circuit that doesn't have a planned pattern of worship, and it may be that that does bite away at the legality in ecclesiological terms. But I guess that's a really big distinctive.

And that we don't need a property committee because we ain't got a building. That's great.

We did, I think we set off, and I used to say it a lot, we, you know, one of the things that we are set against is we'll never have a building. I think that's probably still the case, but I shouldn't say, well, we should never we'll never have one, but it was helpful in the first instance, I think, just to set it as a as a characteristic value, as it were.

What has worked out along the way?

I think we've grown into that pattern of saying we what it is to have a partner organisation. So MYAF, the Methodist Young Adults is one. Peace together is a national non-denominational thing called peace together where women get together and do craft work and talk and journal and have some spiritual and there was an expression of that within the district that didn't know where to live and we've partnered with that. I know our leaders have done quite a lot of work on what partner agreements might look like so that we know how we can take them under our wing, but enable them to flourish. So that's been an interesting thing that I don't think we thought of from day one, but as emerged as we've gone.

I think, and also the digital work that happens, I think that's, we clearly thought Kairos was, there was a lot about it, which was online. It has been mischaracterized by many from outside as, "Oh, it's that digital circuit" and we've always, no, it's not, it's, you know, it's more than that. It is that, but it's not just that and I think that's increasingly clear.

So there was a physical gathering on Saturday where wide open invitation, not loads turned up, but I heard some really good stories about how valuable it was for them who did. So Yeah, so I'm wittering away from your title of the question now, I think.

How's it run in comparison to other circuits?

I think as Liane has become more almost the hands-on day-to-day leader and Andy's stepped back, and more just as the superintendent I think that relationship has kind of changed weight intentionally. And I think Liane just inhabits the much more softer, wide open, let's see what God's doing approach, which is far more sort of Kairos movement rather than rigorous circuit. Yeah.

JH - Brilliant. Thank you.

Again, this is kind of something that's been touched on a little bit. Again, there might be more.

How would you describe the Kairos movement's relationship with other local circuits and the district as a whole?

I3 - Yeah. How would I describe it? Mixed. There are some circuits who have heard, there are some, it depends what you mean by circuit, doesn't it?

There are some parts of the district that I suspect it's heard of in all parts of the district. I think the level of understanding will vary enormously and there'll be some people who, including ministers, who are part of the district, who would have a very limited understanding of what Kairos is and probably just think it is probably that New Places for New People type thing that's happening that doesn't have much serious traction with where they are in their circuit, principally because there's not been anything on the ground that Kairos has done. There might be people who engage online, but there hasn't been an on the ground manifestation of something Kairos within that circuit.

Whereas there are other parts of the district where there have been groups which have been complete, which have been definitely labelled Kairos because it's felt helpful.

So Pateley Bridge, in Pateley Bridge, fairly small circuit as it was then, that there was a there was a fairly evangelically based church that had quite a serious bumpy time around the whole God in Love Unites. The conversations weren't, in hindsight, weren't handled brilliantly and there was some quite serious fracturing within the church where some of the folk felt, well, yeah, the church council decided that it would, that it wouldn't embrace same-sex marriages. That was their decision. But in that process, there were some parts of the church family who felt quite bruised and felt that they felt fractured in their sense of belonging. And it was really, it felt helpful at that time for a leader to go along and he created a Kairos community in that place, which was quite semi-detached then from the local church and circuit and badging it up as Kairos was a really quite helpful step.

Could have been done another way. If we hadn't had Kairos, I guess we could have, it could have been tried another way. But because we did have Kairos, it provided another good landing place for those people. And gradually over time, some of those folk have felt able to step back into the local church, some others have moved on to other things. Some still continue to live together in that group. But so that was another way in which the belonging happened and Kairos was helpful in that.

I think in Hull, where one of the leaders is, I think that's quite a, as I said, there's been just a few rubbing points, but I think because they are so influential, I think there's no doubt in Hull that people, a lot of people in Hull recognise Kairos as being something that Liane is involved in and others and I think that's been positive. I think when there was a presence in York Circuit, I think that they embodied Kairos and talked about it a lot more in the locale. So there was a lot more understanding of it.

So I don't think I don't detect apart from the Hull scenario. I don't detect that there's been much friction or negativity. I don't, I may be being rose-tinted spectacles, but I don't detect much of it of friction. And therefore, neutral at worst is how I would characterize it. And in most instances, I think circuits are probably tending towards glad it's there but not least if they don't feel they've got much energy to be put into New Places for New People, which I kind of regret, but that's a different story.

JH - Excellent.

I realise I missed a question in my keenness to talk about other local circuits.

Is there anything that gives you a sense of Methodist identity in the Kairos movement?

And you might not know so much the second part, but are there distinctives between the leadership and the team as opposed to the...

I3 - Yeah, OK. Yeah, I see that.

I guess it depends what we mean by Methodist identity of it, doesn't it?

So is there anything that gives you a sense of Methodist identity?

It's hard for me to answer that because of who I am and I can't escape my Methodist identity. And I realise that this question is aimed at different people in a sense, isn't it? So I suspect a lot of people will say, not sure about that. I suspect about Methodist identity. It'd be interesting.

I would want to say that at its best what Kairos is offering some quite Wesleyan identity in terms of being out there, beyond the parish walls, as it were, in a sense, it's a bit of a recapitulation of some of what John Wesley was doing, just getting out and about and in the mix of the marketplace and digitally or whatever Just getting out and about and having a fresh way of engaging with people beyond a church.

I'm aware that quite a lot of people who find their way to Kairos are the de-church or the deconstructing type of people. I think Kairos offers something of help to them quite often.

I hope that it's able to find its way to those who are that are like non-church, non-church, those, the disaffiliated, Trey would say, wouldn't it? The people well beyond, I hope so.

I think some of the work that Elliot's doing digitally, he's definitely aiming way beyond the dechurched, to people who are just spiritual but don't know where on earth that might intersect with church at all. So that's why he's aiming and I think at its best some of Kairos can aim way beyond those who've had much life with the church and beyond, which feels to me really Methodist in its Wesleyan roots.

Are there distinctives for leaders and teams opposed to members?

Don't know. I'm not sure I have. I'm not sure I can answer much on that, really I think.

I hope you're able to talk to people who are able to offer that.

JH - I've certainly got a good variety of people.

Yeah, I think that's one of those ones that particularly that's more from people who deal with the day-to-day and experience.

But I was particularly interested, obviously, with the more connexional role of a district chair, how Methodist identity would be interpreted.

I3 - Okay, yeah, good push.

I suppose I've always been keen because I thought it was valuable to have an ecclesial container that bore sufficient Methodist hallmarks so that nobody could, nobody within the institution of Methodism could say it's not proper. That was quite important to me at the time. Because I think I'm a bit anxious sometimes around some of the New Places for New People stuff that's emerging about how sustainable it will be and how it how the institution will be able to cope with it when it's when it's when it's governance and sense of belonging is uncertain.

We've got, I mean, this is just, we could all moan about this till the cows come home, I should imagine, but we've just got an NPNP approved through all the processes of Methodism to get a load of money in Beverley to work with new young families and to try and develop a new thing that we don't know what it will look like yet, but that's the point.

And we had a, and there was a circuit treasurer's meeting where they're struggling for money to keep the inherited show on the road.

And we haven't even launched this NPNP yet, but they were saying, well, why are we bothering with that when there's all that money going there, we could do with it, you know, oh my, do you know what I mean? And that centre of gravity is really quite powerful, I think, that is just always pulling back into the inherited, whether it's dying or not. And I just worry for that. And creating that kind of ecclesial container that effectively could say hands off, felt to me to be quite important.

JH - Yeah, I mean, cards on the table, that was kind of where this dissertation kind of started out but that's far more PhD level than master's dissertation. So I didn't want to try and fit too much in, which is why it's focusing on one way of having done this, but exactly those questions of New Places for New People. What is the long-term vision for it within the life of Methodism? How does it fit without some form of structural change alongside it?

I3 - Yeah, you see, I've wondered. On that bigger question, I've wondered whether actually the new, sorry, it sounds like I'm on know-it-all. I'm really not. I just read what other people say and then try and echo it.

I worry sometimes whether the whole NPNP stuff is radical enough because I think it is still, it's almost a lot of it is about, a lot of it is about newish places for newish people.

And whether we actually need a far, even more creative space, Connexionally, that just enables those with a real pioneering heart to really be entrepreneurial and imaginative and a real R&D department that is just said, okay, hands off, go, go and play, go and play, no metrics, don't know what will happen, just go for it and I think, we probably need to have more courage to do something more like that yet, because I still feel, I still see

and hear too many stories of people with a pioneering heart who feel misunderstood, dragged back into the inherited, not set free enough, I think. So that's kind of a concern.

JH - I guess that kind of links in a little bit with skipping the one that we've already done.

The title of movement rather than circuit. So I didn't have a conversation you were involved with that, but why was that chosen and what impact do you feel it might have had?

I3 - So I think we were talking about Kairos movement almost before we'd clarified that we were going to try and do this ecclesial thing, I think. And so, the ecclesial thing just demanded that it needed a, it needed to have a circuit label. So, it is a circuit. We can't, we can't get away from that.

But actually pragmatically, there was little point in trying to promote the title circuit amongst the people who were trying to communicate with much. Did that sentence make sense? I don't know.

Whereas Kairos movement that embodies the hopes and dreams of what it is, circuit is like the under the bonnet title that it needs to have from time to time because it sits within the Methodist structure. So if we have to talk to law and polity or the conference office, it's a Kairos circuit, but within the district and beyond, it's the Kairos movement.

Yeah, not sure I've got much more to say than that, really.

It's a good question.

Yeah, I think it's pragmatic, really, rather than anything else.

It's the same way as, you know, church.

I mean, you could you could have the same debate about the word church in a sense, but what are there expressions of church in Kairos as well? There are expressions of, as I call it sometimes, spaces for grace, grace spaces, churchy things are happening in all sorts of different ways, very effectively, I think, without it feeling like people are going to church. Yeah.

JH - Brilliant. Yeah, again, that one and kind of the next one as well that are mostly aimed at people directly involved. But that extra, that kind of slight detachment looking into it, I think is always helpful as well.

And so you might not have much to add to the last one, but I'll ask it again anyway.

How do you decide what should or shouldn't be part of the Kairos movement? Maybe you have no say whatsoever.

I3 - It's a really good question, isn't it?

Yeah. And as I say, I'm a bit, I'm a bit semi-detached. I'm my main role is to cheer, cheer everybody in Kairos on really.

So I would hope, I would hope that the answer is basically yes to anything that just feels like it's got the hallmarks of enabling something that moves people closer to what we want, what we see the kingdom of God being like. Does it move us in any direction towards what we think we're praying when we say your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven? I would say yes, for that.

I think I would hope, I would always hope. I would always hope that that didn't lead to a lowest common denominator stuff where someone's, I don't know, let me just pluck an example. Someone's passionate about photography and said, I want to set up a photography group. Great setup.

But I would hope we would still be asking the question. So, you know, where's the kingdom in this? What's the Spirit leading in this?

So we do, we do have a photography thing, but that it's about helping people to reflect on God's stories in this and what's happening within our souls on this.

So I would hope that we didn't let ourselves off or any group off the hook about wanting to discover Jesus in the midst of that in some way, however we define that.

And I'm very open about how we define that. Woolly liberal Christian that I am becoming. I'm really not.

But you know, where is God in this? You know, I hope that's going to be a locating question all the time. However, it's verbalized. How's this enabling the Kingdom of God to be more fully known. I hope that's always going to be in the mix.

JH - Brilliant.

So you'll notice that's the end of the official question list. Something I asked Andy when I met with him, I'll be asking anyone else, is there anything else you want to say about Kairos that hasn't had the chance to kind of come out in any of the questions?

I3 - I often say this is a journey that we've tried, that I think we're learning from and I genuinely would be really fascinated in what you think, you know thank you for alighting on Kairos because I'd be I think it'd be really interesting to hear what your what you come up with as reflections.

JH - No pressure then.

I3 - No, sorry, no. But, and what's the worst that can happen?

We could say, well, that was an adventure that we all learned from and gained from.

You know, I don't want it to be seen as something that is definitely going to succeed and definitely be there in 50 years time. I think this adventure that we need to be on now, I'm just glad that Kairos is there to be part of this adventure because I think the wider church needs adventures like Kairos. And, you know, let's do loads of other things. You know, there's the neighbourhood project and the thing, you know, there are other adventures going on around the place, aren't there? And I think we just need more and more

adventures so that we can alight more and more on what God's trying to stir up amongst us.

So I kind of just, I always want to be wary of ever implying we've found it. I wouldn't want to be so bold at all. We're just having a play and trying humbly to see what God's up to and join in.

JH - Brilliant. That's great. Thank you very much.

Interview Four (with I4a and I4b)

JH - So we'll start at the top and say question one, how long have you been involved in the Kairos circuit and at what point in its formation did you become involved?

I4A - Yeah, that was September '22, which was when we retired to the area. And so that would have been looking, we were looking back to find out when Kairos was actually formed and found out it was actually September 21 so it was only actually a year in, but we hadn't realised it was that new.

JH - Brilliant.

And how did that, how did you become involved in Kairos? Was it just where you happened to move to or?

I4A - Well, I mean, so Kairos is a, hasn't really got any physical boundaries and so when we retired, that we had to go and say to the Connexion, which circuit did we want to be stationed to?

I4B - Perhaps we ought to say, did you know that we're both ministers?

We are a presbyter and deacon couple.

I4A - So we had to go and say to the Connexion, where do we want to be stationed? And we were, I suppose we were a bit cautious to an extent about where that would be. Obviously, there'll be the physical location but we didn't want to be really sort of linked in with a particular circuit because we felt we were more connexional ministers and wanted to go and serve the district. And then we'd seen in the Methodist Connexion magazine that Andy had written an article, had been interviewed for that, was talking about Kairos. So we thought, yeah, that could actually work. So we got in touch with the chair of district and saying, look, we're moving up to the district. We're thinking about what our role will be in the future. And so would it actually fit better to go into Kairos than it would be into Thirsk and North Allerton? And they thought about it and then said, have a chat with one of the leaders. We thought it would fit. So that's where it was.

I think a lot of it was because we didn't want, we liked the fluidity of Kairos and not the formality of a circuit for stationing in retirement.

I4B - I think we both wanted to be open in retirement to where we could serve best in a supernumerary role and we have seen before supernumerary ministers come into a traditional circuit and there's kind of an expectation of what you might be doing or what your role might be. So I suppose in a little bit, we kind of kicked against the system in saying, well, actually, there is an alternative and, is this a place that we can serve and support, I think.

I4A - I think that it was this thinking of we want to serve the district rather than a particular area and this gave us that flexibility to go and do so, because we were saying that, well, the whole thing about saying you're actually stationed to a circuit in retirement was something which was a bit against us but that is what the system is. So you have to go

and say somewhere and by saying we're stationed in Kairos, it gave us that flexibility to even say to the circuit, okay, we're here, we're serving in this particular way, but we're not actually stationed to the circuit so therefore, don't keep asking us questions.

I4B - Oh yeah, I think, and I think three years, three years into retirement now. We live in Thirsk and North Allerton and we do attend face-to-face North Allerton Methodist Church as well and we have got involved in local things because a lot of what Kairos does is online and we wanted that face-to-face community as well.

So I think it's fair to say that we are able to use Kairos as a means of serving locally as well, without getting caught up with the kind of mechanics, if you like, of the Methodist Church. So I think it's fair to say that we've found a place locally as well on a face-to-face basis.

JH - Brilliant, thank you.

And that might link in with something of what you want to say potentially in the next question as well.

I've angled the next two this way around specifically, because often talking about challenges and difficulties is so much easier, isn't it?

But first of all, what have been the joys and blessings that you've received as part of Kairos?

I4A - I think one of the things which we've really appreciated is that we've been able to go and make connections with people who are younger than us, rather than older than us, and be aware of their current thinking and I've said this on a number of occasions during Kairos meetings, We have conversations here which you wouldn't naturally have within the local church setting.

I4B - I think Kairos keeps us grounded in the reality of the world today and the chat, that's a challenge, isn't it?

But a joy is the fact that we are kept up to and open to the challenges of where people are finding it difficult on the margins to engage with the church.

So I think that definitely, as you say, has been a meeting, as you say, meeting new people, not just being confined to one place. And the joy has been also encouraging, hopefully, and supporting the leaders who are heading up. And that's been a joy to get to know them. And one of the things that we felt in retirement was that we wanted to be able to encourage and equip and it's a joy to get to know the leaders and help them when we can.

I4A - And I wouldn't say we're naturally pioneers and breaking new ground with anything which we do, but we love to encourage those who are able to because they've got the energy and the insights to go and do so.

I mean, I think throughout, I've got to say, our Christian journeys, we've been looking about moving things forward and doing things in different ways and rather than being conformed to the ways of tradition, but also valuing the roots of Methodism.

JH - Brilliant, thank you.

So then the moment everybody loves on the opposite side, what are the challenges and difficulties that you've experienced and also where have those challenges and difficulties come from?

I4B - Yeah, so the challenges and the difficulty.

I think some of the challenges for me is getting my head round new ways of thinking and it pushes my boundaries and make, which is a challenge, but is good as well in thinking and I think some of the challenges as well has been some of the things that we do attend have been a fairly small group of people and the challenge is how are we using some of these things to push out to the edge and realising this is a slow piece of work.

I4A - But it's been going for four years.

But there's no direct church community so if we went along to North Alton Methodist Church, you know that Sunday morning, that's the core, where the core people meet and a substantial number of those will get involved in other activities during the week. Whereas at Kairos, that people will pick and choose what activities they go to and we are very much the same as that. But there's no one time when you go and get a gathering of all the people who you would say is Kairos Church in the traditional manner.

I4B - And I think that's a maybe that's a challenge for us because we've been brought up with the traditional system but I can also see that it can be an opportunity. So there's last year there was a physical gathering for a weekend and there's another weekend being planned. But again, not everybody from Kairos goes to this and they have had some, the other weekend, we were away, but they kind of had a gathering in the garden for some people. So they do gather.

I4A - But I would say that the majority of those times when there was the physical gathering, it's only about 15 to 20 but then, of course, the geographical width of Kairos, because we are without boundaries. And so I think there's even the family from Middlesbrough who are part of it. There's quite a core nucleus in Hull. And even on our Bible study, there's somebody who joins us from China.

So when you say, well, what is the physical area of Kairos? You can't really determine that. And so to expect a gathering, either physical or online, where people can all be together in the same place at the same time, that's an impossible task within the nature of the movement.

I4B - So I think that's why we felt coming, moving to a new place. So we'd never lived here before, never ministered, but we ministered in about 15 miles down the road. So we kind of knew the area, but in Northallerton itself, we didn't really know that it was, we felt being

part of Kairos was absolutely right but we also a challenge of that was we needed to get we needed to get to know local community face to face as well.

JH - Brilliant.

What about external to Kairos? Have you come across any challenges or difficulties from people external to the group?

I4B - I think a lot of people are interested.

I4A - Yeah, I think they're interested or intrigued.

I don't think there's been any opposition. I think that people struggle to understand what it is because it is very difficult to actually describe to anybody in a very short time what Kairos is and so people like from the local Methodist church will say, I'm intrigued about Kairos, can you tell us? And that is difficult.

So they know it's something good that's happening. It's something pioneering within the Methodist Church, and they're intrigued. But because it is so different from anything which they can relate to, that they struggle.

And I think also there's that age difficulty challenge as well, is because the majority of the people we talk to in our local churches would be generally older than us so this new way of communicating and being community in an online world is alien to their culture.

But they haven't been able to.

Well, they know it's good.

It's different.

So there's plenty of difference happening.

I4B – They're kind of happy to say, oh, yeah, that's interesting.

I4A - There's been no pressure upon us to say, oh, you need to give up Kairos and throw all your weight in here there is that recognition and understanding that's where we are.

JH - Brilliant.

It's almost going full circle back to a joy and a blessing then.

It kind of connects quite well as well with the next question. How does being part of Kairos compare to previous Methodist experiences?

I4A - I don't think you can really compare it, but...

Give it a go.

Yeah.

I4B - I think we both, well, you grew up as your father is a Methodist.

I4A - I've been in Methodist all of my life.

I4B - I didn't have that parental but we've both kind of been to most of our, I think all of our Christian lives just to a traditional Methodist church I think then when we came into ministry, we both were looking at missional ways and new ways and how to lead the church. So we went to various conferences about pioneering ministry and mission opportunities and kind of meeting people where they were and what society today.

I4A - Went to Easter people for about the best part of 20 years, apart from the first two of the last one, I think it was.

And there's stuff that was done at Swan Bank with.

Ash led things at Swan Bank.

JH - Navigating change.

I4A - So, yeah, navigating change, yeah.

That's it.

That's it.

Yeah, we attended that, I think, all the time, all the three years.

I4B - Things were in the background for us, which is why we thought, yeah, let's.

I4A - We were quite happy to go and give things a go, knowing it had those roots within Methodism. And I think what you've actually got, which is the same things, is you've got a group of people who are different, but with common backgrounds and themes, that you're a group of people who are willing to talk about faith and to be and to push things as well. So I think you have got those continuities.

What you do lack is worshipping space for that to happen and that day by day involvement with people. You don't see anybody walking down the street in North Allerton from Kairos and to go say, oh, well, shall we just pop in for a coffee, which you would do from the local church.

JH - Or apparently if you go to China, you might just bump into someone who knows.

I4B - Or if you get into trouble because she's a lawyer.

JH - Excellent.

So thinking about kind of some of the nuts and bolts of behind the scenes stuff of Kairos, how does the Kairos movement run in comparison to other circuits? Out of that, what was intentional from the start and what's been worked out along the way?

I4A - I don't think we can actually say what was intentional from the outset because we weren't there at the outset because a lot of it had been established along the way. I think what we try and do as far as the structures are concerned and everything is to go and see what CPD says and how we can make it fit to our circumstances. I think if somebody was really true to CPD, they would say, look, this does not fit the criteria. It is not.

But if you then look at it another way in a creative manner and say, well, have we got a treasurer? Oh, yeah, that's me.

Have we got trustees? Yes.

Have we got circuit stewards. Well, we have because we've said that the trustees are the circuit stewards.

And so there's been quite a lot of creative thinking around it to ensure that the titles and the roles fit what Methodism wants, but also are flexible enough for the reality of where we are. That the assessment is a bit of a gripe to me, being treasurer, because the district say that we have to pay an assessment which rises each year because all circuits pay an assessment. And that's because it's important that the district sees that all the circuits are being treated the same. Now then, the only way we can pay the assessment is because the district are actually giving us a grant so that we could actually pay the assessment. So there are those things where you need to be creative and be a bit flexible along the way.

I think where it doesn't work in that relation is that you don't have membership of Kairos per se. You've got people who have said, yes, I want to receive the newsletter. I want to receive X, Y, and Z. And I suppose that is the closest you can go.

I4B - It is membership. It has got members.

I4A - We have got membership which is written down.

I4B - I thought there were people that were now members of the church.

I4A - Yes, there are.

I4B - Because we have to have membership to be a church.

I4A - There are some people who have occupied us as members. I think again, that again is a bit of creativity around the numbers on that.

I4B - But yeah, said these people have now transferred their membership. So maybe that's.

I4A - Yeah, I think we've got far more people who are adherents in the Methodist tradition who will align themselves with Kairos, but are not members in the traditional tradition of those. I think that the people who are members of Kairos are those who are quite keen to go and support the movement going forward.

I4B - Yeah, I think we do have a required membership to be a church. I think that's really important to say. So we are, we are an established church and circuit. We have kept within those boundaries.

I4A - Yeah, but I think what I was, my line of thinking, which has quite rightly been corrected, is that when it comes to membership, the responsibilities of membership, which I know doesn't always pan out in the Methodist Church anyhow, is about that commitment to that particular church and circuit through financial giving, involvement, regular attendance, etc. So that we don't have that. So there are a few of us who make

financial contributions on a monthly basis. But not all the members do that. And certainly very few of the people who associate themselves with it by being part of the mailing scheme.

I4B - That was a very long answer.

JH – I mean, in many ways, this is kind of the core of what it is that I'm researching so the long answers on this kind of stuff is good and helpful.

I4B - And I think, you know, just thinking about, experience with on the edge communities in churches. I think very often my experience has been that your kind of traditional church financially supports very often the on the edge type of community, you know So Yeah, kind of in those pioneering senses, whereas we're in the traditional church, it's acceptable of offerings and financial giving. That pressure, if you like, or that expectation, because it's not maybe quite so prevalent on the edge and pioneering communities because the most important thing is to kind of have those faith conversations and not say, oh, can we have your money?

But that brings into question a whole different than thinking about how the community is financed and how people see return in their finances.

I4A - Because I would say that 95% of our income is grants, from district or Connexion. I haven't actually checked that figure out prior to the meeting, but that's...

JH - Brilliant.

Drawing on some of that in particular, I guess the question is about membership, which I think is a really fundamental thing. Is there anything within Kairos that gives you a sense of Methodist identity? And do you think that's distinctive between yourself as part of the leadership team and as opposed to those who are part of the gatherings in different ways?

I4A - I think a lot of people have got Methodist backgrounds And it's certainly that many of us are all very much Methodists within that, and I think a lot of the people who do attend events are disillusioned Methodists.

I4B - Yeah. So a lot have attended Methodist Church or other denominations as well and have found the structure of the traditional church, there have been perhaps past hurts or issues or difficulties. So they found Kairos is a new starting place for them in exploration and faith and healing hurts, I think, as well.

So I think it is, there is a rootedness in Methodism in terms of if you go back to John Wesley's heart for social justice and that evangelistic heart. But I think I use that word kind of very carefully within the Kairos Church because it's a church that will start where people are with no prerequisites if and kind of not a very, I don't know.

I4A - It is quite liberal, which for us from our evangelical background is quite different as that goes with Andy as well. That with some of the thinking, so that the thinking is actually quite diverse and at sometimes I wonder is some of the conversations, some of the

thinking we have actually within the broad church of Methodism? Sometimes it is very much on the edge.

I4B - Very liberal. Yeah, some of the conversations are very liberal.

I4A - It's a fact of some people find it difficult to talk about the Holy Spirit or Jesus, or they would prefer to talk about the divine rather than God. And I know that is the two, the two extremes which can actually come together in one church, which is what's happening with Kairos.

How much it is pioneering and how much it is that support for the disillusioned, I'm, yeah, it's one of those things we're working on, isn't it? Would you say?

I4B - Yeah, I think there's a variety of people that,

I4A - And I think some of the grassroots stuff that happens, because I know over at Acombe, when Andy was there, that work has continued since he moved on, and the work which Liane is doing on a face-to-face, that very much is engaging with people of little faith or no faith. And I think that is very good.

But how, so that's when it comes under the different groups which Kairos engages with and then can come under the Kairos umbrella where they may find it difficult to be supported by a local Methodist church and I think that's an area which we are gradually exploring more. And I know that the leaders will be able to give you more information on that than I can because he's far more involved with it and about how that's going to evolve over the years and what the shape of Kairos will be.

I4B - I think the root of Methodism in terms of small groups is very much the Kairos kind of ethos as well. We have grassroots groups and grassroots, if you like, is like home groups that meet online as well. So I think there are those Methodist elements there. Whether somebody looking in would say clearly, oh yes, this is a Methodist movement, I'm not sure. But I guess in any church now around the country, there may be Methodist churches that you would say, oh, didn't realise this was a Methodist church. I don't know.

The short answer is there are strong Methodist emphasis I can see within there. There is some really off the wall stuff that you would not associate with the Methodist Church as well.

I4A - That's right, yeah. And I would make a guess to go back to Wesley times that the Church of England would be saying, well, what Wesley's doing is off the wall and that does not relate to us, which is why they kicked him out.

JH - Absolutely.

The next question we've kind of touched on a little bit, so you might not have much to add to it, but just in case I'll ask it anyway.

How would you describe the Kairos movement's relationship with other local circuits and the wider district as a whole?

I4A - Yeah, I mean, I think it's got that recognition, it's got that awareness. I think it has been given a very good profile. And so it is recognised as something good which is happening within the district. And I don't think there is anything against it.

I think that some people in local churches will say they haven't got the time to engage with it because they would see it, this is an add on to something which we're doing at the moment and we're so busy locally. And I think they could actually benefit tremendously by some of the conversations which we have or some of the events which we can go and do. I mean, like I haven't actually attended and is the digital photography thing. But that sounds good. And when we did one, when we met for the weekend, that was great.

And I could see that all people from around this district to engage with that would be good, but they see it, oh, that's something which Kairos do, so therefore we don't engage with it. But I think generally speaking that the district specifically, and the individual circuits are very much aware of our existence, maybe a bit confused, but then how much would a circuit in, say, North Allerton relate to a circuit that exists in Hull that you don't? So that I think it is treated on the same levels of.

I4B - I think it's very much a, oh, that's interesting, that's very nice. If you said to the district, The district has a pioneering circuit and asking the other circuits to fundraise for it or to support it, I don't think they would. So the relationship is good, but it's not a particularly supportive one in that sense.

I4A - I mean, district leadership team, and they are very supportive. I mean, I think that five years on, Kairos is not quite where they anticipated it could be, because they thought it would be self-sufficient after five years. Now, with any pioneering movement, it could actually take sort of 8 to 10 years before it even becomes anything like that. So I think maybe the expectations of being self-sufficient within five years was pushing it. And I think that the way things have happened with Kairos has not generated the speed, but we are continually evolving and reevaluating.

JH - Brilliant.

So on that note, it might be some of the answers to the next question.

Why did you choose the movement, the title movement rather than circuit? What impact has that had and with whom?

Obviously, you might not be able to say why it was chosen if you weren't there right at the very beginning, but from your perspective, has the name choice made a difference?

I4B - I think, I was going to say, I think movement goes back to the Methodist movement?

John Wesley never set it up as a church, but a movement. I think the word movement for me shows fluidity and it all shows pragmatism, which I think both things are embraced in Kairos.

I4A - And that, and from my understanding of looking at some of the documentation, it always was Kairos Circuit and Kairos Church when it was, when it was formulated. And

then I'm not quite sure when movement was started to being integrated. Sometimes I wonder whether to have called it a movement right from the outset and not to try to go down the circuit/church identity may have helped, but then there would have been that accountability to whoever, whatever group it was we came under.

So by being a circuit and a church, we have got that greater freedom to explore and I suppose to be accountable to yourselves rather than be accountable to another body, another circuit would have been a challenge. But certainly I feel that movement is very much the word which reflects where we are at the moment as we continue to move forward and sort of see how we can be that umbrella support to other groups who are exploring things where they may or may not have the direct support from their local churches or circuits.

JH - Excellent, thank you. The last of the pre-drafted questions.

How would you decide as a leadership team what should or shouldn't be part of the Kairos movement?

I4A - I think that's conversations which we're actually having at the moment about that, about what groups, who is included in effect, because to an extent we don't want to exclude anyone who are exploring new forms of being church, but we recognise that there are those core identities and the core identities are being worked out. And I think where we are at the moment with our thinking, if a group wishes to affiliate itself to Kairos, it would be a case of saying, well, these are our core values. Core values, that's it. And so if you are happy to adhere to those core values, then we're happy to accept you.

And I think one of those core values, and I'm trying to work out what the right way of actually saying it is, that we don't have, we don't have boundaries to say where you're in or you're out or you're where I'm right and you're wrong and so I'm trying to work out what the phrase was which we've used on that. But I know that the whole thing about the core values has been an ongoing conversation about something which we as a leadership team or as a core group can actually align ourselves behind.

I4B - I think there's an importance in listening to one another and listening to understand, not always listening to agree. We have, there is different theological thinkings within Kairos, but there are some core things that bind us together. So I think anybody wanting to join Kairos or a group wanting to affiliate itself would need to recognise the breadth and that how we listen to understand one another.

I4A - And I think that's one of the conversations which we recently had with the leaders was that some pioneering groups are quite evangelistic and so how that would be supported within the Kairos umbrella if they saw things in a more black and white manner.

I4B - I think I would say some groups are more fundamental rather than evangelistic.

I4A - Yes, that's a better word. Yeah, it's the fundamentalism.

I4B - And I think a fundamental group would not be able to be part of Kairos. So it would be for the group to decide.

I4A - Yeah, for the group to decide for themselves.

I4B - So I think there's a heart within Kairos for helping people journey in faith.

I4A - And to recognise where people are and with that listening to understand is so important and recognising and supporting the rich variety of views within the life of Christendom.

JH - Thank you very much.

As the last question I've been asking that isn't on the thing because it's kind of a difficult one to pre-empt.

Is there any, I've been giving people essentially a chance to say, is there anything you want to say about Kairos that I wouldn't have a full picture of what it is if you hadn't said that hasn't come up anywhere else or anything you particularly want to highlight?

I4B - I think I would just say if you'd said where is Kairos going, I would say I don't know and I think that's the exciting part of the journey is I'm not sure where, and I think that comes back to it being a movement and the fluidity and yeah, the openness. But I think, you know, there is a heart at the centre of the Kairos movement. There is a heart for exploring faith, journeying with people, making, you know, a difference to lives and justice, peace and justice, living out Christ's manifesto, if you like.

I4A - And I think it would also be fair to say that we have only got small perspective on what Kairos is because it is so broad. We only engage in certain parts of the activities which happen. But then because we're sort of the positions which we actually hold, we have that glimpse in, but not necessarily the day-to-day.

So we fully recognise that when you speak to others, you will get possibly, not necessarily contradictory views, but it will be views which are seen through different eyes because they've got a greater understanding of what things are happening.

I4B - And I think our answers, my answers are biased to my personal theological stance and faith journey as to how I see that.

I4A - Yeah, I mean, I think the things which we engage with most are the Bible study, which again is more traditional. If you say that's possibly the closest you go and get to anything within traditional Methodism, maybe, by having a having a Bible study group and the Kairos Wednesday, which we have a rich variety of conversations within that. Unfortunately, that's not attended by as many as we would like. But I mean, the level of the conversations and the width of it, which Liane manages to come to find, is really good on that.

I've never been to anything which happens in Hull, it's a long way away from here, or anything in York on the physical side.

I4B - We've joined together in some of the physical gatherings and I'm a member of a grassroots group as well.

I4A - But some of the stuff which happening with Mosaic Church and other things down in Hull that's, which is, that's very much on the edge and working with people who are very much involved or on the edge of society. I think it's great work and that's because how you have that hybrid nature of who we are and what is part of Kairos and what is not.

I4B - And the podcast and what happens in online communities as well. So we haven't kind of been involved in that.

I4A - There's lots of little tentacles that are going out to reach people, which we would not necessarily engage with at all, but we're supportive of what they're doing.

JH - Brilliant. So I guess, thank you very much.

Interview Five (with I5)

JH - Tell me a brief bit of how long you've been involved in the Kairos circuit and kind of in what point in its formation you became involved.

I5 - Yeah, it's inception. So it began as an idea.

I was involved in youth participation and setting up One Opportunity before it became one opportunity, which was to work with teenagers and give them some employ and bring them together so they can offer some peer support. But it's a bit like the One Programme, except we did three hours a month and had sort of three or four gatherings in the year in an online community to bring them together. And it was about releasing their gifts, finding something they can minister into and helping them work out, well, discipling for a year really. And I'd done that for several years and I kept thinking it'd be great to do this with adults.

Also, out of frustration as a Methodist minister that I would constantly come across people with gifts, with callings, and they'd vocalise them in their church and to just nobody else was bothered about that particular thing. And all I could see was the lowest common denominator thing that everybody could get behind would happen. So like coffee morning, very dull, very unexciting, and just so many great ideas and motivated cool people going, either getting frustrated and leaving or just being diminished, really, and yeah, so it was that side of it, I think was the primary drive back in the early days.

And I realized the only way to really resolve that was even at circuit level, it was a struggle to get people together who shared that and realized we're actually talking about quite a big sea.

It kind of coincided with work with pioneers because I was, trying to draw together a peer network of pioneers and we did quite a few events and encouraged people to come along and sign up and I went around preaching in a few places, bigger churches and things and flourish events. But we were getting, we got a sort of dozen from the district. And I was kind of feeling a bit sad about that and realised then I kind of dug into the statistics of who might be called and how many called and realised 5% was probably quite a good return and I probably found most of the people. That was the thing there.

But we drew them together. And how we brought them together, Zoom became the answer. So I started being mentored by somebody in the States back in early 2019, maybe even 2018. So I started doing the Zoom thing for myself. And those of us who have been mentored in the UK were brought together on Zoom calls and were having webinars together.

So a light bulb went off in my head is this is how it's possible to draw people together across this geography to bring, to make, allow things to happen that can't normally happen. So that was kind of the starting point.

Also in working with pioneers and encouraging potential pioneers. What became very evident is that the supporting structures of the church, their local minister would kind of kill

things. Superintendents changing, they wouldn't recognise their gifts and they would just sit on people. And I was trying to nurture pioneers and get people into employment. Then at the other end, people, I was like, I'm nurturing seedlings and people going around chopping down trees. It's just a waste of energy and we need some way to protect these people to give them another authority structure by which they can be A, understood and B, affirmed and ideally C, given some accountability and even employed.

So I think that's at the point when my district chair, because I was wondering about what structure to use for that, and we came up with a potting shed and we were doing that, but he was kind of, no, I think we need more. And he came up with the idea of the circuit.

So we had a church that we were trying to revitalize, so we had a spare institutional body, trustee body that nobody was in, empty building. And so although it's TMCP find it very hard to create a church out of nothing for some reason. It's as if you can't plant churches anymore. They've forgotten how you do it. But so they really struggled with it.

But because we had a building, we just renamed it Kairos and were able to do some wriggling through the stations, through Connexion to set up the circuit. And yeah, and we've operated like that ever since.

Sorry, long story but it was really kind of kindled in COVID, because all my, obviously a lot of my day-to-day stuff fell away and the things I'd been thinking about of how we might operate and things we might do and how we might worship, I suddenly had an opportunity to do it. So when I literally began my online church from my 3 existing churches on the first Sunday, and I started doing a Bible study approach.

I didn't reflect the norm because I knew what I wanted my new church to be and this was a way of practicing. So yeah, so that's how it all got going. I think it took us a year to get the formalities done, but we started operating during that year.

JH - Excellent. Thank you.

So what have been some of the joys and blessings you've received in this work?
Obviously, you've touched on a few of them already, but what else?

15 - I've so we've we did go through a period of pulling together pioneers and I've seen some of them grow in their confidence and nurtured and released. Sadly, a lot of them have been pulled back into ministry in their churches, which is no bad thing, but I am a bit sad that they've lost that kind of edge. It would have been nice to continue, but we will be doing better with that when we were meeting in person and going around churches and COVID kind of diminished that a little bit. But that was a joy. It was a joy to see those people encouraged and grow.

What's been an unexpected joy is the people we've really attracted are people who have been burnt by church. So, they've passed through generally a more conservative church background and they've hit the grey of church life and rather than working it through, they've come out of church, a lot of them, a bit, quite wounded, some of them. So it's been good to journey with them.

It's been good to journey with some of the people like our digital worker, who was employed as a digital enabler but wasn't doing any ministry as such, he was just teaching people how to do web and things, but to walk alongside him and see him released as a digital pioneer, that's been fabulous.

I think it's been good to, yeah, it's just been good to slowly grow a group of people who feel quite liberated, I think. We've explored a lot of spirituality that you wouldn't normally find in churches. It's flowed. So they've come for a season that, yeah, still in joys, I'll get to the hard stuff, but things are seasonal, I've had to get used to that.

Yeah, lots of creativity and I think just enjoying a sense of God forming it. So we started with this idea, but it really has morphed and transformed and we now have a much clearer sense of what we are about, I think. Which has taken a long time, but it's nice to feel, it's nice to feel part of God doing something and part of that is lots of people around the UK hitting the same buff as I did and looking at us and going, actually, we could break the system too or we could use the system as it is to form some safe places. I've benefited massively from journeying with other pioneers but I've been really encouraged to see other versions of Kairos or different variants, different spins. And to sense God doing it when we haven't had a chat with anybody and they've done something similar and we've found each other and there's been a sense of co-discerning what God's doing between us. So It's nice to be, I mean, you mentioned there's a movement question, isn't that why movement? But it's nice to feel that we haven't just put in another static thing and that actually there is a move of the Spirit.

JH - Great, thank you.

Yeah, I mean, certainly the reason I picked on yourselves, rather than some of those other places where it felt like you were that bit further down the line that other people have been able to learn from. So hopefully that, hopefully this could be part of that conversation as well.

So now's your chance. Where have been the challenges and difficulties and where have they come from? Is it within the locality? Is it wider and within Methodism? Is it anywhere else?

I5 - We've been, I think we've been fortunate in our district because the chair is so on board. It's saddening to me that there's a bit of a cyclical thing to this for other places that people get excited and come forth and they're still getting squished and it's still quite hard going to convince people to give pioneers latitude, I think. So that's an ongoing challenge.

I felt it quite hard to be held up as an exemplar because we really are quite small. Like, you know, we only just make the 12 official members, I'm not even sure we do anymore. But like, I don't know, when a lot of focus comes your way, you think we don't deserve this, but at the same time, it's important that people see it and catch the vision. But there's a, there's a, there's a weight of, there's a guilt about not being good enough, I think.

Yeah, I think there's a joyful tension between the leaders. So I'm the Methodist minister, I'm a physicist background, I like the structure and the systems and I would kind of let's replicate, let's advertise, now we know who we are.

My colleague is a kind of no, this is an organic thing, people come by word of mouth, people come by godly encounter. And I think she's been right. And it's taken us best part of four years to actually work out what our values are and what it is we're asking people to join.

I think the challenge, is building community online, because we're not one community, we're several communities and the very core of it is where the faith community is. And they do journey together, but it's once a week and not everybody gets every week and it's not in person. So the being virtual is definitely a slower build for trust and things like that.

The other challenge of Kairos is we've picked up people, Brian McLaren talks about different faith levels, so simplicity, complexity, perplexity and harmony. I can't remember if that's the way around it is, but we have people at all stages. We realized quite early on, if we brought everybody in a room, we'd just have a big scrap and we wouldn't some people would trigger other people. So it wouldn't just be a case of annoying them, they trigger them because of their pasts. So it's made it difficult to build, claim a movement.

I think we've begun to call ourselves refugees on a pilgrimage journey so that we have people at different points and each group is a different point. But we do hunger for a faith community that's a bit more committed, a bit more intentional.

We have a lot of people whom it's a tertiary involvement, so they do their own church and then they come and get topped up with us. So we're much more like Northumbria community and you just yearn for that critical mass in the centre. And also, because we haven't become numerate, I haven't really achieved that goal of connecting people with calling. I think we need to get into the hundreds before we've got enough connecting ability. So while I think that's still a possibility for us to do, it's become not the core of what we do.

So there's all sorts of challenges. I think one of the difficulties is funding, big difficulty, because people are tertiary involvement, it's not a core giving place. It doesn't feel like a primary belonging place. So we haven't found a way of generating sufficient income that if we didn't have support, we wouldn't disappear.

We've got thoughts about that in terms of mentoring pioneers, like the role we have as a group of people who kind of are quite pioneering is when we have a new place is adding a level of kind of mentoring costs from us on that. But that's a fairly new thought.

And I think, yeah, they're the primary ones. I think just hunger for a hunger to be able to gather physically more often. We did early stages. We gathered in Hull and we're down in York, which is where we're both located. But it's a bit like when two churches come together, you get majority just don't come and then there's the old thing, people who support everything and you probably know the story, right? So the same challenges of normal church are present in Kairos.

And I think we'd flourished during COVID when everybody couldn't do anything else but online, but with, I think it's now like 30 to 40% of the population now work online. And I feel this myself sometimes. I don't want to go online in the evening to do church. And so at the moment, although it's a good vehicle for connecting, I am wondering whether we're entering a phase of actually trying to do the physical, build physical locations and try a more hybrid, like physically gather people in the space, but connect ourselves. We tried to do that at homes, that wasn't happening. So yeah, so all sorts of flux.

That's the challenge is it's constantly in flux, I think, and that partly comes because we've been run by pioneers who like change. So if we get bored, we move on.

Yeah, and people who've, because they're quite damaged, they can come with a lot of enthusiasm and do something for a bit and then fall away. So we have a few groups that no longer work.

So yeah, all sorts of stuff that's challenging.

JH - Brilliant, thank you.

So switching the focus slightly a little bit, how does being part of Kairos compare to previous Methodist experiences?

I5 - It feels more, well, it's designed and is more participative, so more people contribute. It's primarily conversational. You know, we are gobby because we're preachers, et cetera, but the goal is for other people to lead regularly and everybody contributes to the conversations.

And, that kind of ability to dig into things that are not necessarily doctrinally correct. I wouldn't say incorrect, but not, accepted, let's say. So I think we quite enjoy asking questions that nobody asks, looking at, looking at all the gospels that are in the canon, listening to podcasts that are different spiritualities and I think a freedom to try different spiritual practices. Yeah.

So all those things are great. We deliberately, we deliberately set up with a low rhythm and we do like we take August off and most things are monthly. I think that worked against us, that worked for us in terms of does a nice pace and a variety for us, those of us in leading. It worked against us in terms of relationships and so we ended up with the Wednesdays being a constant weekly thing and that has helped consolidate things, I think.

But yeah, I think what we've heard, I don't know if we've sent you our values document, but I think what we've heard is we're a place where people can properly express their doubts, their faith, ask the questions that you can't normally, a place you feel safe.

And actually you realise, sadly, that's not true in a Methodist church. So yeah, brilliant conversations that normally don't happen. That's a primary thing, I think.

JH - Great. Thank you.

So I'm thinking more kind of structurally, if you like. How does the Kairos movement run in comparison to other circuits you've been a part of? And what was intentional from the start? What's been worked out along the way?

I5 - So the intent at the start was that we, the circuit would be responsible for making sure we were meeting the requirements of the Methodist Church, safeguarding, trusteeship, stats for mission and all that kind of stuff was taking place in the circuit slash church council meeting. We deliberately set up with superintendents as part of the trustee body, A, because we were working across a district and not a circuit. So in a sense, at least having a few supers on board meant we had places to play with their agreement. We pay an assessment, even though that's kind of mad. But most of that's hidden from people in Kairos.

So we do just about, I mean, I don't think we do have 12 members, but we have a small core of trustees and they do shape things and much like a CLT might shape things so at that level, we obviously don't have buildings, which is lovely, because loads of things fall away but the finances are still a challenge.

Really and truly, I think many of the functions just don't take place like we haven't got local preachers. And the local preachers we have attributed to other existing circuits. We let anybody worship lead, but obviously we're there and we kind of disciple on the job. We co-create worship, so everybody gets involved when we do it.

So it's quite light, it's quite light, the circuit meetings are quite light. It's more a discussion on the life of the place. But I try my best in doing metrics and pulling together the data, doing the GDPR, doing all that boring stuff. But it's kind of an accountability place for those of us who are leading to make sure we don't go completely off the rails and to give an umbrella, to give a place of grounding for people who don't know what we are and what we stand for. So it's important when we communicate, we are part of the Methodist Church, I think. But that distance to the day-to-day running is quite big.

So we've called the trustee meeting and we've said, if you want to join, join. But most of the people are trustees previously haven't really been part of their life and I found that problematic. So increasingly, I've got rid of the supers because they haven't got time and we're just internal people who are part of Kairos with a few extras.

Yeah, so it's like, it's just light touch. We do the bare minimum of what it is to be circuit and church.

JH - Brilliant. Thank you.

So in that then, is there anything that gives you a sense of Methodist identity in the Kairos movement? And I guess building on what you've just said, where are the distinctives for leaders as opposed to the general membership?

I5 - I mean, we have built ourselves around the Methodist way of life in terms of as we assess the groups, perhaps more than I ever do in any of my other churches, we look at

the Methodist way of life and go, okay, where are we doing this? And, you know, we've several times we use that as a measure. We look at the groups that are formed.

The sadness is you only get the experience of Kairos if you're involved in lots of it, but we recognise for many people, we are the missing thing that's not present in their current church. So we're helping other people find a full Methodist way of life. So we use that and we have used that quite deliberately to look at things.

We do talk about our Methodist roots, but we don't demand people are Methodist and the Nomad podcast group, for example, is people all over the place, different denominational belongings. Most of the time it doesn't matter. I think when it comes to members, I would make sure that they are aware of our doctrines and things. But to be honest, so many people who journey with us are, they're anti-institution. So if you give too much of a whiff of that institution, they're going to run a mile.

And that's not just because they're broken. I think it's, I think it's a zeitgeist of, well, spiral dynamics, if you've come across that. Have you come across that?

JH - No, I've not.

I5 - I'd encourage you to look at that.

And I could send you a document about it, but the, it's kind of a predominant culture, psycho-cultural thing is that people don't want to be pigeonholed. It's so a bit like the, kind of climate activists. One of the things you notice is they can't form one group every time they form a group, it splinters into different factions, because really, they're all kind of want to be individuals. And there is this kind of, we want to act, but we don't want to be labelled dynamic going on. And that's kind of, I think a lot of people, we feel we were trying to reach with church is people, well, you've got them in your own church, probably. I come, but I'm not really a Methodist. I like to call myself a Christian, right?

Yeah, there's obviously certain roles that have to be members, but many don't.

So we're more encouraging of making sure people are on a journey of faith. So we focus on the discipleship, but not the destination. Like if your destination is out of Kairos and in somewhere else, that's grand. Like if we've moved you forward, if we've moved you from lost your faith to following Jesus and then you find a home elsewhere grand. I think that's where we see it today. So we're much less about what you believe and much more like the process, I think.

So yeah, we don't push the Methodist identity. We talk about following the way of Jesus.

It's a bit of a tension sometimes with the church, because when you talk to the actual hierarchy of the church, they'd like you to say it's definitely Christian based. And they're uncomfortable if you're talking about other things, even if it leads you back to Christ.

So then we kind of have, I certainly at some points have had communications for Kairos and communications for the Methodist Church. And that's a lot of my role I think.

JH - So kind of not wanting to put words in your mouth, but it sounds like almost using the kind of the principles and some of the kind of background to what Methodism is without being heavy on the structures and the institutional side of it. Is that a fair summary?

I5 - I mean, I think I've been quite interested in the early church in terms of having visited Greece a couple of years back from the sabbatical, looking at kind of, and reading Paula Gooder's books about how it was for those early communities like Lydia's community and I really see, I see groups of people who gathered and who know a partial story of Jesus. And they're very grateful when people visit because they bring more story. But actually, they're all fumbling along, doing their best with what they know and I feel like that's a bit like the Kairos groups, is that none of them are trying to be church on their own, but across them, if we can encourage participation in more of them, we get we get the whole.

I call it's my deconstructed black forest gateau metaphor. So, the 70s black forest gateau was everywhere. I don't know how old you are, but it used to be like on every menu, and then it kind of fell out of favour of being a bit twee, I think, but it's kind of returned. You'll find it quite a lot now, but deconstructed. So, you get chocolate soil, cherry compote a quenelle of cream, and so they've kind of taken the good bits of what the gateau, but you only really get the full sense of it if you take a spoon of each and eat it together.

But there's loads of people who've been just enjoying the cherry sorbet or the, so you can get a taste to church without having the whole thing. But the Methodist way of life helps us look at the whole thing and go, are we presenting the gateau?

JH - So do you name the Methodist way of life with the people more on the fringes of Kairos. Or is that something you use as a leadership, as a mode?

I5 - It's more of a leadership. It's more of a self-reflection thing. We have, I think we've used the Methodist Way of Life as a monthly focus in previous years. So we've gone month by month and looked at different ways in which it's expressed, but we haven't, we haven't waved that. Our own version has got palm trees and deserts and oasis. You know, and we talk about journeying and exploring the landscape of faith kind of just because for a lot of people there is that exile motif, I think. It got a drift. So we've used, I've used that more. But like I say, in our heads, we've, you know, as leaders, we kind of, okay, how do we hold this intention with how we communicate this?

I don't know if I've answered your question or not, but.

JH - Yeah, I was thinking.

The next one kind of looks a bit beyond Kairos itself. How would you describe the Kairos movement's relationship with other local churches, circuits, district?

I5 - I don't think they get us, if I'm quite honest. I think they're happy for us to carry on and we don't make too much of a splash. I have good relationships with the superintendents personally.

I think where there's membership of us from other places, they're open to it. What we tend to do is partner with other churches to get things moving. So where we've actually made a social action splash, it's actually been with physical churches, so Tea to Go, to Selby Street stuff that we're doing until recently. So where we can, we seek to bless and at the minute I'm exploring doing some stuff with my new circuit trying to bring in the Bible study with Kairos into a hybrid form and offer it physically in churches and connect it together.

So I hope we all make more splash. I feel like we're ready to advertise this is what we are now after four years. These are the values we stand for, come and try us.

But I think they've just quietly ignored us in some ways but because the funding's now up for grabs, we're obviously having to kind of go, okay, this is what we feel we are doing now. We feel we are a home for pioneers. We are a home for New Places for New People, where actually it doesn't fit very well into circuit. It wouldn't be understood, it won't be valued by circuit, and we could offer that an authority structure. And we are a faith community of sorts, a very small one, but we are a faith community for those who want more, who want to explore and be more honest. And so we kind of position ourselves with three different things, I think, all of which can come to the circuit.

The big area where I'm really struggling is because we, well, last question really, I won't jump, but one of the things we said from the start was we'll be inclusive. We will be pro-LGBT. We're not having a conversation about 'God in love unites us'. We are just going to be this from the beginning. And that automatically precluded a lot of people who self-labelled conservative evangelical.

Some people who were quite interested in Kairos would have probably done the whole let's work together and do meditation or whatever, but they just didn't come and part of me would like to have, we are a single church circuit, part of me would like to have two churches and or a number of churches within the circuit and some of them be conservative evangelical.

I struggle with that because I'm not sure we can make them safe because by their nature they're not explorative, they're not journeying, they're a destination. They're this is right and this is wrong. So it feels antithetical to bring them together.

So that, I know, is difficult in my circuit because I've got some very conservative churches and I've got some more liberal churches and I know what we stand for. We're great with some of them. But that's, yeah, I don't think we can be everything for everybody. My sense of where God's leading the church, or at least where God's enabling us to connect with new people or have any chance of connecting with new people is, I think, where we're at. And they can do their job in a different way. They can go and do a multiply plant or, you know, I'm happy to encourage that, but we just can't keep it safe, I don't think.

So I would love it if they kind of go, if people would pop up and go, we've got this person who's rattling in a cage about wanting to do the social action. Have you got anybody? I'd love to have that relationship, but we just don't. And my colleagues, they're just not

wired that way. They're wired to suppress difference, I think, and seek uniformity and conformity. And so I usually ask them, who's a pain in the arse in your church? And then go and speak to them because usually they're just frustrated and full of life and wanting to explore.

So yeah. But at the same time, the other supers go, I'm really glad somebody's able to do this because we can't. So it's a weird thing. It'll be interesting with New Places if we start to accumulate them, because we will be doing more of that structural stuff than we've ever done. and we'll be dealing with people who are much more mainstream than we've ever done, I think. So it's going to be an interesting tension. We might have to get our act together.

Like we might end up with a building, which would be a nightmare, but we might. I don't really want that, but we might end up with a building.

So we might have to have local preachers and then we'll have to put all that in place.

So there's all sorts of questions. There's all sorts of things that might undermine us as we are as quite a relaxed body that's quite free and yeah.

JH - Awesome.

So what about with the district itself and potentially the wider kind of Connexion? Are there any kind of dynamics there that you can pick up on?

I5 - There is, I keep getting rung up by people who are saying, I want to know how to protect this and we've been rung up by Cornwall, you know, the Surf Church.

They're saying it's just a ball ache for us to try and hold this place and we're at odds with them and our folks don't get them and they don't get us and it's really tense relationship and is Kairos the answer and I go, Yeah, potentially.

The point is a separate accountability. It's a real pain in the arse if you're a pioneer to constantly have to prove to people you're doing something of value, you're doing something of God. And it's just wearing, frankly.

So the Pioneer Pathway has been really good for that. The Pioneer Network is good for that. But yeah, I think there's a network of us doing this kind of, like the mother house in Newcastle. The Caleb Community is a bit different in terms it's much more the multiply intentional teams of faith, but there's still that authority giving structure. There's offering oversight and mentoring distinct from the existing circuits. So there's a relationship with, but an encouragement for the individuals. So there's been different ways of doing it. Liverpool, similar to us.

And we relate well and we keep getting together and sharing ideas and the district. I mean, I've been I've got I wear the title of assistant chair for new streams because very clearly, the District wanted to embed. So there's an assistant chair for Growing Church, an assistant chair for New Streams, he wanted to make a statement really that says this new stuff is as important as the old stuff. And no, it's not as formed and it's not as easy to

measure and it's hard to get your head around. But actually, there's this position. It's symbolic. I don't get much time to do anything with it. But yeah.

I mean, my feeling is the God for all strategy, there's intention built into it, those who are leading it, between those who do that and those who hand the money over. At every layer of pioneering, there's somebody like me, it doesn't matter where they are, but there's somebody like me who's translating this messy God-shaped stuff into how does that relate to the future of the Methodist Church? And how does it fulfil some of our objectives? And it's hard. So I don't think it matters whether it's at my level at circuit or whether it's a district level or whether it's a completely separate body or it's Trey and team. At every level, there's a filtering and there's a recapitulation of what's going on. So the people at top are still happy.

I know a friend of mine, I won't say who, but I think we sometimes see ourselves as the fleet of boats at Dunkirk, as in the big machine's doing what the big machine's doing, but there's a lot of us little people fluttering around actually doing God's work and making a difference and we're not sure if each of us feels quite vulnerable, but there's a growing number of us, I think.

JH - Brilliant, thank you.

So next question, why did you choose the title of Kairos Movement rather than Circuit? And what impact has that had with whom and in what ways?

I5 - I mean, I change language depending on who you're talking to. But we felt that the issue with the Methodist Church is it was a movement. If you remember the stuff of 'Discipleship Movement Shaped for Mission', you know, I think that's where the life is, when we were dynamic, we were active, we were evolving. You know, and the theory says, you start as a movement, you begin to fossilize and stagnate, you become an institution, and then you decline. And so we want to embrace as much of the movement as possible. We want to empower people in Kairos as well.

We're trying to be more starfish than spider, if that makes sense to you. So in a sense, we do new things when new things pop up, which is hard when things don't pop up and when they're declining. Because at the minute, we're kind of contracting, like a few things we set going seem to have reached their end.

And that feels like, it feels like because we're at a new point maybe, and that something new is brewing. But it's quite difficult because we're actually getting to the five year point of having to say this is the fruit of five years. So, you know, like a year or two ago, we had loads of groups and now we kind of like, oh gosh, they've all disappeared. And I can tell good stories about the individuals in those groups and what's happened to them and how their faith has continued. And how we witness growth and confidence and, you know, but it's quite hard when you're talking about the institution, the movement that's left because it feels like we're diminishing. But I think that goes hand in hand with movement.

And I don't know, my mentor talks about small is better. So you know, what's exciting is, one, two people a month will find us, make contact with us. There's an awful lot of seed

sowing we do through the digital stuff. That's really exciting. It's seeing people pick up on that.

What's really, really hard is creating a safe environment on Facebook or X because he's just been trolled to death. So we really struggled beyond Zoom to create a safe place, which is what we want to be. Yeah.

I'm kind of sanguine. If we die, if we cease to be, I think maybe our new locus is going to be about New Places for New People and mentoring and empowering those new things and less trying to be the new thing. I think it might be that's the process we're going through and moving into a physicality that we haven't had for a bit.

So, but like I say, maybe our purpose was to shake the tree, to wake people up around the Connexion to a need for something different and courage to explore something different. And maybe that's us and that's okay. I don't think we ever thought we were a solution, but we thought we were maybe moving the answer forward.

So I feel like it's had more impact on more people than it has on us. It's liberated people to ask questions and yeah.

JH - Great. Thank you.

The last one kind of picks up on bits of what you've said elsewhere. How do you decide what should and shouldn't be part of the Kairos movement? So when there's new ideas pop up, how do you decide what connects and what doesn't?

I5 - I'll pull you up the values of it and find it, because maybe that's the easiest thing. Because it's always been hard to discern. But as we've gone along, we've asked people to tell us what it is, why they've been drawn to us and what it is.

My fear is we've become a bit of a, we are the place where broken people come to recover. And so we've been maybe too dominantly shaped by those people and not by fresh people. Which is again why I think NPNP, where we actually might encounter new people, might bring new life into Kairos and transform it again.

All right, I'll share screen.

All righty.

So safe haven. Some places to wrestle with faith. So obviously what we do resist and we will seek to at least have a conversation with is those who come in and say, this is right. Actually, there is a right answer and this is it. And we're like, well, and we're quite happy for you to share your view but what we don't want is that kind of dogmatic, this is how it is. So maintain that safety for people, affirming people's exploration.

The, you know, the radical acceptance is important to us and again, that precludes certain people. Just again, a bit like when Inclusive in Birmingham was running, it's fine to come but we expect you to adhere to this is who we are and therefore, if you start venting off and undermining people's identity, then you will be uninvited kind of thing.

The vulnerability, the story sharing, like we want to go deep in every conversation. We want people to share their own stories, even if it's, you know, a story of faithlessness or failure or... So again, it's quite hard to protect. It's not something we exclude people from not being able to do. But we do need people who are going to treat those story sharing with respect, I suppose.

The co-creation, this is harder in that we encourage a lot of co-creation, but people are very wedded to the old way of being church that you sit and let somebody else talk. And I find it really hard not to talk. It doesn't help. My colleagues are better at it than me. But it is wonderful when we do co-create and people rock up with different things and it just does feel like the Spirit's at work and feels to me like being church. So I have to talk to myself about enabling other people a lot.

And collaborating, you know, not reinventing the wheel, if we can, come alongside an existing project, that's a wonderful thing, and that's easier to do than starting some from scratch. We can do that more readily because that because we hold quite lightly to that Methodist identity. We don't need to navigate quite so much, you know. We can just say we have people of all denominations part of Kairos. You know, we work, if we're going to, if we're going to lead it, we're going to work under the Methodist umbrella because that's who we are and we bring those values to it. But we, you know, we're not looking for it to be labelled Methodist and stuff

Then transforming. I mean, we're really recapitulating the Methodist way of life here. But this is, this is back to that original vision of getting a critical mass of gifts when we had three or four people who wanted to do quiet meditation, we started that group. Some of our climate activist groups, well, they've become a circuit group. So rather than holding them in Kairos, we did it in York Circuit and that's happened, and we just left it with York Circuit. But we initiated the work and we started, you know, we started drawing people together and handed it over. So again, we can say, well, that's a success for Kairos, but it's no longer a Kairos thing.

So those are the things.

So I think it's about making sure we don't put those at threat when we're, whether or not we allow people in, but how we maintain. So it's not that we wouldn't allow people in and we have, but it's a constant conversation of how do we deal with it if it happens? Because it's really kind of fundamental and it could all fall apart quite easily.

I still think New Places is going to threaten that and I think it's just a case of, I'm still not sure how we structure. I think circuit meeting might have to become a bit more robust and we treat it as if it's a, we treat each project as a different thing, have leaders and things.

The way we currently are is the leaders who've become, really have become the trustees of our kind of CLT, if you like. So that's morphed A lot.

JH - Excellent. Thank you.

That's, and I mean, that's all, as you see, all the official questions. I was just going to offer one last, like the last couple of minutes.

Is there anything you want to say about Kairos, what it is, what it wants to be that hasn't come up at any other point and that you think is worth mentioning?

I5 - I think it is just that the idea of it is more important than the reality day by day. It's far more vulnerable than anything I've ever done, but kind of gratifying and I still think we're working out how to measure it. Like, still racking my brains.

I still feel it's I still feel it's really important. I'd love to grow it, but I'm nervous of growing it.

I'd love to put an advert out saying come and join Kairos because I think we've got something to offer. At the same time, that vulnerability that we created, that safe space would be hard to maintain if we got a flurry.

Do you know what I mean?

So there's a real, which makes me question whether it's like there's a distinction between the structure and what it can offer and the faith community, and we've quite often talked about Kairos 2.0. So the faith community that does all this stuff with the security of, with the deep diving, with the story sharing is a different beast to Kairos, the we can hold you if you're different, and we can still apply Methodist accountability. So part of me wants to break the two, but we kind of, there's a lot of thinking about the branding and so I'm not quite sure how to go forward.

Like I feel like maybe the three different things I'm talking about in terms of the faith community, the place for New Places, New People and the pioneer mentoring place maybe need three different brands. But because we made the whole thing, the Kairos circuit and the Kairos movement.

So that's where we're at the moment is do we do we launch something different, but within the same structure? Because there's a tension holding the three things, I think.

So if I was starting afresh, I maybe wouldn't amalgamate. I'd probably keep that more clear, but we didn't know NPNP was going to be a thing. And so, you have to keep morphing, right?

I really love the mother house in Newcastle for pioneers. I think I wish we'd done it that way here and part of me yearns for that.

And the leaders are thinking of literally setting up their house as a mother house.

Yeah.

So we're at the end of four years, we were almost starting again. That's the bottom line because things have moved on and the requirements are different and what we're about is different. So yeah, that's my parting shot for you, I think.

JH - Brilliant. That's grand. Thank you very much.